



Literacy



Math



Science

Provider Buzz | September 2025



better beginnings
EVERY CHILD DESERVES OUR BEST



**A NOTE FROM
KELLI HILBURN**

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Math can be learned in many, unexpected ways, including during story time! Books with numbers can help children learn to count, identify different shapes, and recognize patterns throughout their routine. *Mouse Count* by Ellen Stohl Walsh is a great example of this! Using books and our imagination can make math fun, connect math to everyday life, and help children develop problem-solving skills.

Books aren't the only way to help children learn key math concepts. Check out the three [math resources](#) included in this month's *Buzz*. As you keep reading, you'll also find:

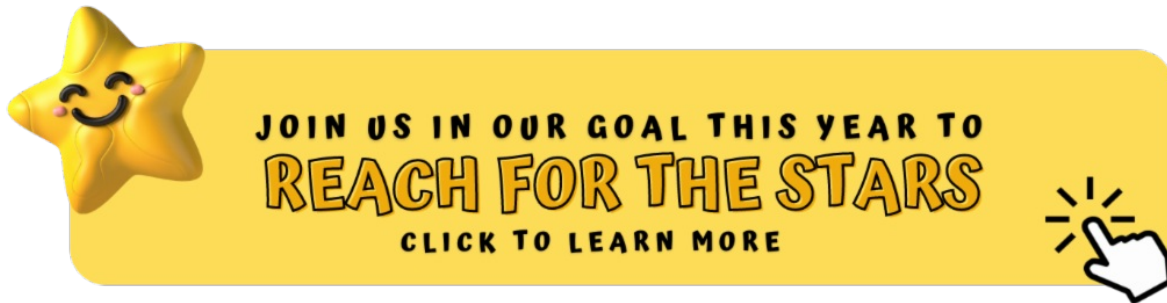
- How to get assistance from a [BehaviorHelp](#) consultant.
- The [licensing regulations](#) for screen time with children.
- The latest news from the Office of Early Childhood.

Don't forget, the Arkansas Early Childhood Association Conference is next month! I hope you'll join us as we celebrate 15 years of helping providers, children, and their families [reach for the stars](#).

Until next time,

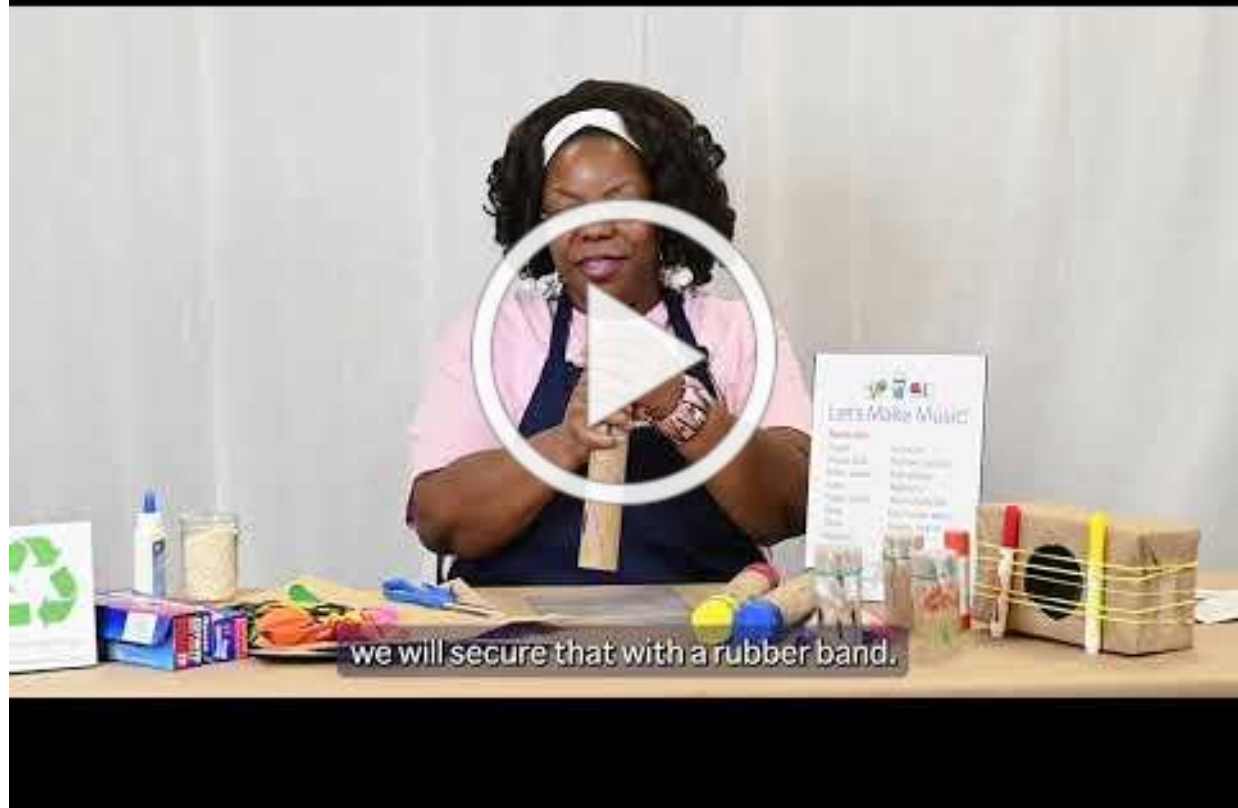


Kelli Hilburn
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM SUPERVISOR
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



WATCH NOW 

Music can be a great way for kids to learn their math basics. While playing, they can count the beat. By building instruments, they can create music on their own. Check out this video on how to create these easy-to-make instruments.

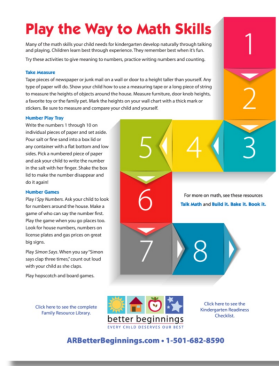


LEARNING RESOURCES

PLAY,
LEARN,
EXPLORE



The graphic features a large orange background. On the left, a circular inset shows a young child with curly hair playing with blocks. To the right of this is the text "LEARNING RESOURCES" in large, bold, white letters. Below this text is a smaller orange circle containing the text "PLAY, LEARN, EXPLORE". At the bottom right, there are two more circular insets showing children playing with blocks.



Play the Way to Math Skills

Children learn best through play. In this resource, these games and activities encourage using imagination and creativity to build math skills.

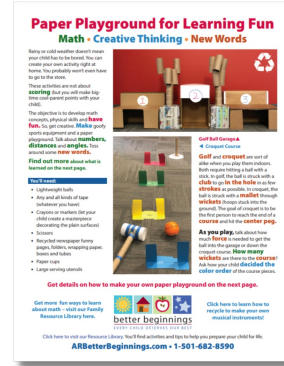
[View Resource](#)



Simon Says Roll

You've played Simon Says before. We created a new version with a math twist. Check out this resource that combines the traditional game of Simon Says with numbers to help children learn to count.

[View Resource](#)



Paper Playground

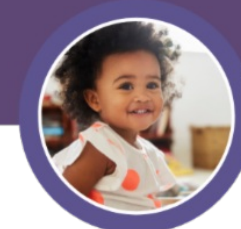
Who says playgrounds can only be outside? With this resource, you can help children create an indoor playground with things around the classroom to play golf and croquet. Building and measuring can help children understand the math concepts they need for kindergarten and beyond.

[View Resource](#)



LEARNING IS FUN!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Behavior Help

When working with a child whose behavior is challenging, remember you don't have to do it alone. The BehaviorHelp team is ready and willing to give you the support you and that child need. Click the link to contact a consultant.

[Learn More](#)



Child Care Licensing – Screen Time Reminders

Physical activity is crucial for children 0-5 years old. As their provider, you can help them get the activity they need by limiting screen time. Remember, kids older than 2 years should be limited to age-appropriate content that does not exceed one hour of screen time and should be offered other choices. Educational computer programming for children under 5 should not exceed two hours.

[Learn More](#)



Tonya Williams Announces Retirement

Tonya Williams, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood, is retiring after more than 30 years of dedicated service to Arkansas children, families, and educators. Under her leadership, she guided the state through the implementation of the early childhood requirements in the LEARNS Act and:

- The transition of hundreds of staff from DHS to ADE.
- The statewide rollout of the CLASS observation tool in early childhood classrooms.



- The launch of the Local Leads program.
- The modernization of licensing regulations.

The early childhood field and the State of Arkansas are grateful for Tonya's leadership and her lifelong commitment to building a strong, more equitable early childhood system.

In light of OEC transitions, the upcoming fall town halls are canceled. ADE will host a virtual update later this month to cover all early childhood priorities for the 2025-2026 school year. The date and webinar link will be announced soon.

A Note from Tonya:

"It has been an incredible honor to serve alongside OEC staff and early childhood programs. I am deeply grateful for the opportunities I've had to contribute to meaningful work alongside such dedicated colleagues. The mission we share - to improve lives through education and service - has been a source of pride and purpose throughout my career."



Zoom with representatives from the Office of Early Childhood to hear the latest news and updates on early childhood education in Arkansas. If you're unable to attend, don't worry.

All calls are recorded and available to watch on the OEC website.

[Learn More](#)

A-State Early Childhood Conference

October 8-9, 2025 North Little Rock

Join us at the Arkansas Early Childhood Association Conference in October! We're very excited to gather with you and celebrate your great work. We've got some big plans for this conference, so stay tuned for more information and get registered today!

[Register](#)



Congratulations on reaching your next star level! Share your achievement with your community and client-families using our [Star Kit](#).

FOUR-STAR PROVIDERS

The following programs are now **4-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- AEL Mt Ida, Mt Ida
- AEL Perry, Perry



The following programs are now **3-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- Burtons Childcare Center, McGhee
- Carolyn's Learning Center, Osceola
- Excel Program LLC, Jonesboro
- Kids R Us Childcare & Learning Center, Fordyce
- Lil Dog House Daycare and Preschool, Star City
- Little Angels Playland Daycare, Texarkana
- Mobius Learning Academy, Bentonville
- UAMS Head Start Little Learner, North Little Rock



The following programs are now **2-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- HE Taekwondo LLC, Hot Springs
- Kingdom Builders, Glenwood
- Little Lambs Learning Center, Highland
- Kidz Den, Little Rock
- The Nature Academy, Hensley
- Viloa Little Longhorn Preschool, Viola

Level Up Resource

Looking to increase your star level? Check out our [Provider Tools](#) to get started!

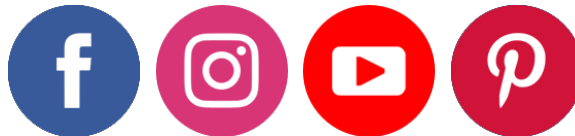
Visit our Website

WHAT IS BETTER BEGINNINGS?



Better Beginnings means better opportunities. Investing in quality early care and education for all Arkansas children creates better opportunities for our children, families, workforce and communities.

Visit our
Website



**FOLLOW US
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RESOURCES**



Better Beginnings is Arkansas's tiered quality rating and improvement system for child care, early education, and school-aged programs that have gone above and beyond the state minimum requirements. Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Education Office of Early Childhood.



Better Beginnings | OEC Attn: Better Beginnings PO Box 1437, Slot S150 | Little Rock, AR 72203-1437 US

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