



Winter 2007

AECA Update

President's Message

Dear AECA Members,

I hope that each of you had a wonderful holiday season. It's now time, with the New Year, to begin to work on our resolutions and goals. I hope that each of the members of AECA can find time to work on Advocacy as a goal for the year. With the Arkansas Legislature in session, meeting in Little Rock as we speak, are we doing everything in our power to advocate for the education of our youngest? Based on information from Governor Beebe and weekly updates from Arkansas Advocates, it looks as if Pre-K is at the top of the priority list which would bring the total to \$111 million. Your help is needed to talk with your senators and representatives to make sure this happens. If you would like to receive an update on the session each week, contact Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families at acf@aradvocates.org and ask to be added to the e-mail listserv.

I hope many of you are making plans to attend the Southern Early Childhood Association held this year in Jacksonville, FL on March 28-31, 2007. It should be an excellent conference. If you have not received any information on it, go to www.southernearlychildhood.org for more information.

In closing, our AECA newsletter is having somewhat of a facelift. It's exciting to know that so many of our members have submitted articles to be included in the upcoming additions. If you have any suggestions, please let us know. Also, if you know anyone interested in running for an office for AECA, please e-mail me at vshelby@paragould.k12.ar.us

Have a great New Year and hope to see you at SECA in March!

Sincerely,

Vicki Shelby

Vicki Shelby, AECA President



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- † Pg 3: Feature Article – Why I Chose to Work in Early Childhood
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AECA UPDATE

is a newsletter of the Arkansas Early Childhood Association, an affiliate of the Southern Early Childhood Association. Membership is open to those interested in the development of young children.

2006-2007 Executive Board

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Diana Courson - Magnolia

AECA Officer Nominating Form

It's that time of year! Would you like to nominate a fellow member for an AECA office? If so, please complete this form and submit it to the AECA Nominating Committee. (If you would like to nominate more than one individual please submit a separate form for each person to be considered.)

Name _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email Address _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Place of Employment _____

Job Position _____

Please list the qualifications of the nominee:

Has this person agreed that his/her name be submitted? ____ Yes ____ No

For which office do you wish to submit a nomination?

- President-Elect
- 1st Vice President - Publications
- Treasurer
- Member-At-Large District #2
- Member-At-Large District #3
- SECA Representative

Note: All positions are 2-year terms except President-Elect, which is a 3-year term (one year as President-Elect, President, and Past-President).

SECA Representative also serves a 3-year term.

Please check one of the following:

- Vita and picture are enclosed with this form
- Vita and picture will be sent by individual to nominating committee

Signature _____

Date _____

Nomination, vita, and picture must be received by Monday, **April 2, 2007**. Nominees must be in good standing and a current member of AECA.

Please mail to:

AECA Nominations
PO Box 2898
Little Rock, AR 72203

AECA Mission Statement : Enhancing the lives of children, families and early childhood professionals in the state of Arkansas.

Why I Chose to Work in Early Childhood...

I chose to work in early childhood because daily, when I come to work, I make a difference! I make a difference in not just the children's lives but the lives of their families and friends. Working in early childhood special education allows me to invest in little people and big people. It is rewarding to see each developmental milestone mastered by the babies growing up, and then displaying readiness skills for kindergarten. It is rewarding to be a person to whom parents can express their deep emotions about their child with a disability. It is also rewarding to teach parents to be advocates for their children. My worklife is driven by working with Early Childhood Special Education and making a difference in the lives of children and families.

JoAnna Piker, PJ-AECA

Because the blessings are bountiful!

Kaye Hoover, EEA-CA

I think early childhood education chose me... Our youngest child was enrolled part-time in a Montessori school. I had the opportunity to do some volunteer work teaching foreign language to the children. I got "caught" and have remained that way, loving every minute of it. Our youngest child will soon be 31 years old.

Jackie Buxton, OM-AECA

I chose to work in early education because I didn't want to be a nurse. Back in the day, the only careers that I knew about for women were teaching and nursing. The times may have been a-changin', but they hadn't changed yet in Oklahoma. Thus, I became an elementary education major. I specialized in early education because it seemed to offer freedom for the teacher to create and play and improvise and generally do cool stuff with the kids. My perception was that, unlike elementary grades, there was no pressure to cover a set amount of material by a designated date. That certainly appealed to my spontaneous style and independent spirit (hey, it was the '60's!). I'll have to say that it's worked out pretty well for me.

Diana Courson, MECA

I chose to work in Early Education because there is nowhere I would rather be.

Stacy Aldridge, NE-AECA

I fell in love with children when I started working in childcare in 1992. I have owned my own center for 5 years. The knowledge that we spend more time with the majority of these children than their parents do was a wake-up call as to what our responsibilities are to these children. The time that we spend with them we utilize to teach them morals and to help mold them in to the best person that they can be. What an awesome privilege.

Katherine Corrigan, ECA-FC

I chose to work in early education mainly because of the desire parents have to be good parents. They want to make sure that their children have the knowledge and skills to be successful in school and in life.

Linda Russell, NW-AECA

When I interview staff I always ask people why they started working in this field. A staff member from China told me she sold computers and made big money working in China. She started volunteering for a school that had a philosophy that was new to China. They did not beat the children but instead believed that children would learn if you believed in them. After volunteering there a while she quit her high dollar job and began to study in the education field. She told me that her mother thought that she was crazy. In her broken English she told me, "So I say to my mother computers not important, that not change the world." That is why I work in early childhood education.

Debbie Kirk, AECA

Note: Due to the high volume of responses received for this quarter's feature article, more entries have been posted on the AECA website.

[Click here to see more entries](#)



Sometimes Bouncing, Sometimes Rolling, but *always* M-o-v-i-n-g

AECA Advocacy Committee

Early education in Arkansas is *MOVING!* We occasionally encounter challenges, but we have been picking up speed in recent years and we are moving in the *right* direction. The ball, as they say, began to roll faster on February 6, 2004, when the Arkansas General Assembly passed Senate Bill 55 to provide an additional \$40 million in public funding for PreK for 3 & 4 year old children whose families are at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline (\$40,000 a year for a family of four).

The ball picked up speed in July 2004 after the DHHS/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) issued requests for proposals for “any willing provider” to renew or expand current ABC (Arkansas Better Chance) programs or begin new ABCSS (Arkansas Better Chance for School Success) programs.

As we near the three-year anniversary, it seems like a good time to reflect on our accomplishments. Currently, a total of 18,746 children are being served in ABC & ABCSS programs, up from 7,412 in 2003-2004. Public schools have been a strong partner in the implementation of the ABCSS programs, but what you may not know is that since 2004, the number of private providers participating has increased 36%. Private providers accounted for 56% of all new slots this past year, compared to 44% from school districts.

In this short time we have already seen a positive impact on children’s development. In November 2005, 23.7% of children in ABC and ABCSS programs demonstrated proficiency across seven developmental domains (social, physical, mathematical thinking...). By May 2006 that number had increased to 82.2% of the participating children.

So, ABC & ABCSS is going well, but how about things for the “rest of us”? That is looking better too! From 2003 to 2006, the number of providers that had earned Arkansas Quality Approval

accreditation increased from 432 programs (centers and homes) to 615 (a 42% increase). Beginning in July the daily reimbursement rates for subsidy providers has been increased an average of 19.72%. An example: the average rate for infant/toddler full-day care was \$16.41 and it is now \$19.89 per day--a 17.5% increase. Why? New dollars free up old dollars and they can now be invested in new ways. A number of children who had been in the voucher system enrolled in the new ABCSS programs. The money that had been used as voucher reimbursement for those children was then used to fund the rate increases.

Why did we get new dollars? In large part it’s due to YOU and your colleagues. Many early education professionals have worked long and hard to educate their legislators and community leaders on the significant contribution early education makes to children’s academic and life long success. You have shared the struggles that families face in finding and paying for high quality care and your own barriers to providing it. The message was heard and the legislative leaders demonstrated their understanding by overwhelmingly supporting this effort.

Many of us will not benefit directly from the funding. However, knowing that more children will receive quality child care, especially those whose families could not otherwise afford it, and knowing that our leaders recognize the significant contribution early education makes to our children and to our state, makes us **ALL** a little *richer*.

Get in on the action... **SECA 2007**
 March 29-31, 2007
 Hyatt Regency Jacksonville
 Riverfront
 Jacksonville, FL

*Embracing
 the Joy of Southern
 Children & Families*

For more information go to
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org
 and click on “Conference”

Arkansas Offers Resource and Referral Service to Many Counties

Kristen Black, Child Care Connections, Inc.

Arkansas, along with several other states, offers a Child Care Resource and Referral service available to both parents and providers. Through the Resource and Referral service, parents call a local number and talk to a representative about their child care needs. The representative then matches their request to Providers that meet their needs and have current openings.



The service, often provided through state grants, is FREE. Other resources offered by local agencies may include: aiding families to buy school supplies, providing assistance for special needs children, offering tutoring services, conducting parent and provider education classes, conducting health screenings, providing summer programs, making counseling services available, serving youth in the juvenile system, and more.

Early Childhood Professionals benefit from the R & R when letting them know when they have openings and special programs. A database, called NACCRRAware, randomly selects the centers to refer. The representative does not recommend or endorse any particular type of child care or particular child care facility or home. It is best used as a supplementary method of advertising.

Currently in Arkansas, the R & R is available in the following counties:

- Benton
- Carroll
- Clay
- Cleburne
- Craighead
- Crawford
- Crittenden
- Cross
- Franklin
- Fulton
- Greene
- Independence
- IZard
- Jackson
- Johnson
- Lawrence
- Lee
- Logan
- Lonoke
- Madison
- Mississippi
- Monroe
- Phillip
- Poinsett
- Pulaski
- Randolph
- Saline
- Scott
- Sebastian
- Sharp
- St. Francis
- Stone
- Van Buren
- Washington

For more information on this valuable service, contact your local R & R listed below or visit the DHHS website: <http://www.arkansas.gov/dhhs/sgChildcare.html>

Arkansas Child Care Resource and Referral Center
501-682-9699 or 1-800-445-3316

Northwest Arkansas Child Care Resource and Referral Center, Inc
479-751-3463 or 1-800-KIDS-LOG

Children of North Central Arkansas Resource and Referral Center
870-793-5233 or 1-800-737-2237

Crowley's Ridge Resource and Referral Center
870-931-6331 or 1-800-753-5827

Child Care Connections Resource and Referral (Central Arkansas area)
501-374-0330

JCCSI Childcare Links
(870) 536-0520

If you would like to submit a session proposal for the 2007 AECA Conference, visit www.arkansasearlychildhood.org and select **Conference Information**.

Welcome, Winter!

Marcy White, NW-AECA

Here are some simple nature experiences to share with your children during the short, chilly days of winter:



- Attach a small bird feeder to your classroom window using suction cups, or simply sprinkle bird seed along your window sill. You'll soon have feathered friends to watch throughout the day! Extend the learning opportunity by placing a field guide near the window, or help children identify birds using the free, online guide at www.enature.com
- Add natural materials, such as pine cones and needles, tree bark, stones, and twigs, to a large bowl of water. Place in the freezer. After the water has frozen solid, run warm water over the outside of the bowl so that the ice slips out; you'll have a dome of ice that the children can explore all day long as it melts and reveals natural "treasures".
- If it happens to start snowing while you are at school, bundle up the children and head outside, even if only for a few minutes. The children can hold up sheets of black construction paper to "catch" snowflakes for close-up examination.
- "Adopt" a favorite tree near your classroom. Investigate the tree with small groups of children. Can they find any evidence that the tree is a winter home for animals? (Look for holes in the ground near the roots, insect activity along the trunk, squirrel nests high in the branches, etc.) As warmer weather approaches, visit the tree regularly to check for signs of spring!

CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

If you would like to contribute teaching ideas, small group activities, tips for the classroom, etc. We would like to have your contributions! You can email your entries to lsmith@uaex.edu, or you can mail them to:

Lindsey Smith
PO Box 391
Little Rock, AR 72203

Working with Interpreters in Early Childhood

Darlene Kurtz, AECA

Across the nation, families are moving to small towns and cities bringing with them different traditions and languages. Some newcomers speak English well, many are still learning the language, and others cannot speak English at all.

In view of the changes in our state's population, teachers often need to have interpreters available for parent conferences. By following these steps, meaningful dialogue with the parents and families can be achieved at your center.

- Find bilingual interpreters in your community:
 1. Invite candidates to your center for tour and interview
 2. Request local references regarding experience, skill and reliability.
 3. Look for interpreters who are truly bilingual and can speak the dialect of the families you serve.
- Prepare in advance:
 1. Schedule to meet with the interpreter 15 minutes before the family arrives for the conference.
 2. Inform the interpreter about the general points to be covered at the meeting
 3. Stress the need for confidentiality on the part of the interpreter.
- Actively engage with all in attendance:
 1. Have plenty of chairs for the parents, other family members and the interpreter before they arrive;
 2. Speak directly to the parents/family with the interpreter situated between you and them;
 3. Invite observations and questions from the parents/family members;
 4. Summarize key points at end of meeting;
- De-Brief with Interpreter:
 1. Provide each other with constructive feedback so that future sessions will be more effective, or structure with desired changes for future sessions;
 2. Repeat the standard of confidentiality for any and all matters discussed;
- Children as Interpreters:
Children ages 4 to 17 should not be expected nor asked to act as interpreters for conferences of any sort.

Winter Recommended Reading List

Marcy White, NW-AECA



Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening

by Robert Frost

A warm introduction to a favorite poem, especially suited for a cozy winter story time.

Stranger in the Woods: A Photographic Fantasy

by Carl R. Sams and Jean Stoick

Photographs show forest animals discovering a wonderful surprise left by two young children

Sky Tree: Seeing Science Through Art

by Thomas Locker

A tree is stunningly painted throughout the changing seasons, accompanied by thought-provoking questions for children. Tiny details on each page make this a great choice to share one-on-one or with a small group.

The Snowy Day Board Book

By Ezra Keats

A simple but magical depiction of a small boy awakening to a snow-blanketed day; board book format makes it perfect for infants and toddlers!

Make plans to attend the...

Northwest Arkansas Early Childhood Conference

Saturday, April 21, 2007

Bentonville High School in Bentonville, AR
8 a.m. – 3 p.m.Hosted by Bentonville Public Schools Childcare
Enrichment Services

Pre-registration is required. Call (479) 254 – 5040 to request a registration packet. We are currently accepting presentation proposals & exhibitors!

Calendar of Events

March 28, 2007

Deadline to Submit Articles for 2007 Spring Update

March 29 – 31, 2007

Southern Early Childhood Conference

April 21, 2007

Northwest Arkansas Early Childhood Conference

April 22 – 28, 2007

Arkansas Children's Week



WHAT ARE YOU STILL WAITING FOR?

Become a part of the **Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development Registry** and gain:

- Easy **online** access to your training transcript, consisting of the verified trainings you have attended over the years
- One-stop shopping for **training opportunities**. On-line registration can even be done quickly and at your convenience!
- The ability to move forward to reach professional career goals by use of the **SPECTRUM** as your guide
- Satisfaction of knowing that you are taking control of your professional development!

It's Free!

Call (888) 429-1585 for an application or
visit us on the web at

<http://professionalregistry.astate.edu/>

Thanks!!!

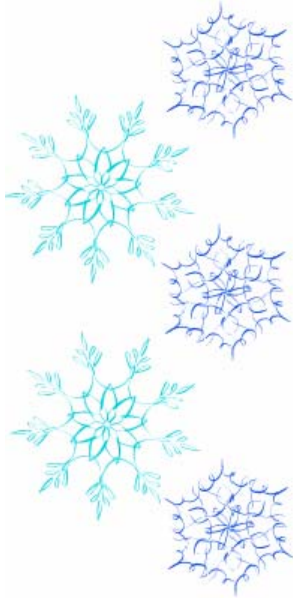
A big **THANK YOU** goes out to the 21 of you who contributed to this quarter's Update! We had an abundance of contributions this quarter and we look forward to hearing from even more of you next time! Next quarter's feature article will be, "*Advice for New Early Childhood Professionals.*"

Entries can be emailed to
lsmith@uaex.edu



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Little Rock, AR 72203

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To all affiliates and members,

The last edition of the AECA Update was a huge success thanks to all of you who helped solicit articles and those of you who contributed articles to the issue!

The Update is meant to be a medium for our members to voice their ideas and opinions. So, if you would like to share activities, stories, tips, etc. with your peers, here is your opportunity! Affiliate leaders can also use the Update to advertise project reminders and upcoming events such as affiliate meetings and area conferences and trainings.

The 2007 Spring Update feature will be, "*Advice for New Early Childhood Professionals.*" I look forward to hearing from many of our more experienced early childhood professionals. Certainly, they will be able to offer a few pearls of wisdom to those who have not been in the field very long.

Remember, you can submit as little or as much as you like. Contributions can be sent to Lindsey Smith at lsmith@uaex.edu or 2301 South University, PO Box 391 / Little Rock, AR 72203.

I look forward to hearing from many of you!

Lindsey Smith

Lindsey Smith, First Vice President - Publications

