



Spring 2006

Arkansas Early Childhood Association

President's Message

Dear Fellow AECA Members,

As you know, I am a strong advocate of educating our communities about the profession of early childhood. Many early childhood educators find it difficult to accept that they are *professionals* in the area of early childhood. Someone may say, "I am just an aid." Or, "I care for infants all day." Or even, "That administrator won't listen to me, I'm just a teacher." But it is important to keep in mind that we are *professionals*, if we want government officials and administrators to treat us as professionals. I continue to remind my students and I can always see many of them looking as if they don't believe it.

As in every profession, early childhood has entry level positions as well as advanced positions. You can set your educational goals as high as you want. This might not be the right time to seek advancing your education, but set a goal. Our state educational sector has excellent guides and resources to help you. You may visit <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/teachers/teachers.html> to find out how to obtain your teaching certificate in the state of Arkansas. You may also want to visit www.state.ar.us/childcare/ to find out more information on how to obtain and maintain your CDA, licensing requirements for child care centers in Arkansas, and how to achieve quality approval status for your center. Always be building on what you already know.

The stronger we become as professionals in our association, the stronger our credibility becomes. We want local and state leaders to have updated knowledge about our programs. Contact your local papers, political representatives, and community leaders with information on what you have been doing in your classrooms and how valuable early childhood education is to your students and our State. Invite them in to speak to your children and parents. It is always helpful to get to know who is making decisions about funding and regulations. Without communicating with your local communities and government representatives, they cannot possibly know the impact that your facility is making in the lives of children.

You are a valuable early childhood professional!

Janet Perkins

Janet Perkins
President

In this issue:

- ✿ Get out your pen and stamp... It's that time of year again! It's time to elect AECA board members for the upcoming year. We are hoping to have a big voter turn out this year and would like to encourage you to participate. Just read over the qualifications for each candidate and mark your choice on the ballot. Then tear it out, fold it up, put a piece of tape and a stamp on it, and put it in the mail. We are counting on you to be a part of this annual event!
- ✿ Also, be sure to check out the *Links to Literacy* article showcasing how Mississippi through collaboration, is getting involved in a movement to improve literacy. The program enhances literacy development by using real life literacy materials and experiences to promote and increase language and literacy skills for families with children from birth to age 5.

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.

2005-2006 Executive Board

President

Janet Perkins – Bentonville

President-Elect

Vicki Shelby – Paragould

Immediate Past President

Trude Puckett – Little Rock

First Vice President- Publications

Lindsey Smith – Little Rock

Second Vice President- Membership

Barbara Gilkey – Little Rock

Secretary

Marilyn Chambers – Hamburg

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Michelle Stephens – Bentonville

Historian

Mary Calcote – Bentonville

Members-at-Large

District #1

Katrina Blevins – Paragould

District #2

Johnnie Bridges – Little Rock

District #3

Deb Kee – Bentonville

District #4

Dianna Larkin – El Dorado

SECA Representative

Diana Courson - Magnolia

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

Candidates for Election to the AECA Board of Directors

PRESIDENT ELECT



Traci Johnston

- ❖ Program Associate for the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service
- ❖ Coordinates Best Care and Best Care Connected, child care training programs
- ❖ Served two terms as AECA First Vice-President of Publications
- ❖ AECA Conference Program Chair
- ❖ Active member of AECA, SECA & NAEYC
- ❖ BA in Child Development/Harding University
- ❖ MS in Human Environmental Sciences/U of A, Fayetteville

***This year we would like to give you, the membership, an opportunity to cast your vote by writing in your candidate's name for President Elect.**

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT/MEMBERSHIP



Barbara Gilkey

- ❖ Director of Arkansas State HIPPY for the past eleven years.
- ❖ MA in Early Childhood Education
- ❖ BA in Social Work
- ❖ Certified Trainer for the state of Arkansas
- ❖ Served as Coordinator of the North Little Rock School District HIPPY program.
- ❖ Experience in social work, foster parent recruiting, and trains for Arkansas HIPPY, HIPPY USA, and Pre-K ELLA.
- ❖ Co-authored "The Impact of the Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on Social Performance in 3rd and 6th Grades." (*Early Education & Development, Volume 13, Number 3, July 2002*)

Shirley Jercinovic



- ❖ Family Literacy Coordinator/ Parent Educator for School of the 21st Century in Paragould AR
- ❖ Previous work experience: preschool and elementary teacher
- ❖ Current member of AECA and of NAEYC.
- ❖ B.S. in Early Childhood Education
- ❖ Plans to receive her M.A. in Early Childhood Education in Aug. 2006 from Arkansas State University.

SECRETARY**Joanna Grymes**

- ❖ Teaches early childhood education courses at Arkansas State University
- ❖ Provides professional development on topics such as infant toddler care and assessment

- ❖ Current chair of the Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development System Steering Committee
- ❖ Co-Coordinator of the Arkansas Better Chance Work Sampling System Implementation project.
- ❖ Served on the AECA board as a Member at Large, 1st VP of Publications, and President.
- ❖ Actively involved in her local affiliate, NEAECA.

Katrina Caveness (Picture not available.)

- ❖ B.S. in Psychology/Human Services from the University of Arkansas at Monticello
- ❖ Director of their 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) after school programs for Monticello and Drew School Dist.
- ❖ Served as ABC program administrator at City Park School

MEMBER AT LARGE DISTRICT #1**Susan Smith**

- ❖ Directs and teaches in the ABC pre-kindergarten program in Hamburg, an official Core Knowledge Preschool and a 21C/Yale Visitation Site
- ❖ Director of the before-school, after-school, vacation and summer care programs.

- ❖ BA in Elementary Education from Southern Arkansas University
- ❖ Has taught for 27 years.
- ❖ Member of the Southeast Delta Early Childhood Association.

**Dianna Larkin**

- ❖ Education Coordinator for Families and Children Together, Inc. in El Dorado (F.A.C.T., Inc.) which serves five counties in southern Arkansas with Head Start, ABC, and Early Head Start programs.

- ❖ Member of AECA/SECA
- ❖ Member of the National Head Start Association
- ❖ Registered trainer through the Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development Registry

MEMBER AT LARGE DISTRICT #4**Susan Lindblom**

- ❖ Program Coordinator for ASU Childhood Services
- ❖ Coordinates Pre-K ELLA trainings for northeast and north-central Arkansas
- ❖ Conducts several other workshops on early childhood curriculum

- ❖ Active member of AECA for four years.
- ❖ Served as the Conference Chair for the AECA Annual conference in Hot Springs in 2005
- ❖ Currently serves as president of the White River affiliate of AECA.

**Amanda Baldwin**

- ❖ Member of the Arkansas Early Childhood Association
- ❖ Currently a Parent Educator for the Parents As Teachers program and After-School Site Director at School of the
- ❖ 21st Century, Paragould, AR

- ❖ Combined experience as a classroom teacher, parent educator, and site director
- ❖ Obtained her CDA and will complete an Associate's degree in Early Childhood in December 2006
- ❖ Currently working toward a Bachelor's degree in social work.

***Please tear out the ballot found on page 5 of this newsletter to vote for your preferred candidate.**

Links to Literacy: A Literacy Enrichment Program for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers



Julie C. Parker, MS, CCLS
 Anne Burgess, Ph.D., CFLE, CFCS
 The University of Southern Mississippi
 Department of Child and Family Studies

The Links to Literacy Enrichment Program was a collaborative effort between the University of Southern Mississippi; Bridges, Inc.; and the Hattiesburg Housing Authority to enhance literacy development for families with children birth to age 5. Research in literacy development tells us that early school success has a direct relationship with language and literacy experiences prior to entering kindergarten. Literacy development should begin early in life and continue throughout life. Environments that facilitate and encourage language and literacy enrichment establish a solid foundation for future reading success (Lizakowski, 2005). Early language and literacy development begins in the first three years; infants and toddlers who are engaged in literacy rich environments learn to become good communicators and eager readers.

Children from disadvantaged homes are often defined as “at risk” for academic failure beginning in the primary grades. If “at risk” children lack background experiences in literacy development they are found to have limitations that affect vocabulary development and literacy learning (Morrow, 2005). The Links to Literacy program was designed to provide real life literacy materials and experiences to promote and increase language and literacy skills.

The goals of the Links to Literacy program included the following:

- Provide opportunities that would enhance an interest in books and reading for young children.

- Provide opportunities for young children to listen to and discuss story books.
- Promote language and literacy development by engaging young children in language games and literacy related play activities.
- Provide parents with literacy materials and opportunities to enhance language and literacy experiences in the home.
- Increase awareness of literacy development by encouraging parents to read daily to their children and develop a language rich home environment

The Links to Literacy playgroup was a positive enrichment experience for the children and families involved. On average, seven toddler and preschool age children and eight kindergarten age children participated. The children in the kindergarten group met weekly and were provided with after school enrichment activities and literacy experiences; the infant and toddler group met monthly and were provided with activities and materials that encouraged and promoted language and literacy in the home and community. Family literacy packets were given to parents to promote parent/child interaction and enhance the richness of home experiences.

Parents involved with Links to Literacy were encouraged to read to their children daily, respond to questions, and cultivate language and literacy throughout the day. Language experiences were encouraged through the literacy rich materials included in the family literacy packet. In addition to family education materials, the packet included a parent evaluation of the group activities that surveyed the effectiveness of the group experience and suggested family activities. Families were

(Article continued on page 7)

Cut Here

AECA 2006 Executive Board Election Ballot

Please place an (X) for the candidate you choose for each office. Please fold this ballot, using the dotted lines on the reverse side and tape the back. Place a stamp on the outside and mail.

PRESIDENT ELECT

___ Traci Johnston

___ Other: _____

(Print name of candidate for whom you are voting.)

By voting for this candidate, you are verifying that the candidate is a member of AECA, has demonstrated abilities in the areas of management and administration, and that the candidate has agreed to have his/her name placed on the ballot.

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT/MEMBERSHIP

___ Barbara Gilkey

___ Shirley Jercinovic

SECRETARY

___ Joanna Grymes

___ Katrina Caveness

MEMBER AT LARGE DISTRICT #1

___ Susan Smith

___ Dianna Larkin

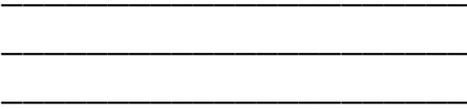
MEMBER AT LARGE DISTRICT #4

___ Susan Lindblom

___ Amanda Baldwin

All ballots must be received by June 5, 2006

Fold Here 2nd



Place
stamp
here



P.O. Box 2898
Little Rock, AR 72203

Fold Here 1st

encouraged to provide feedback via the evaluation on a monthly basis. The evaluation component was encouraged but did not limit participation if not returned. Thematic activities were planned for each meeting. The children were engaged in developmentally appropriate, integrated activities that included flannel board stories, music and movement activities, creative art, and literacy based one on one and group activities. Some of the themes included: Bugs, Bugs Everywhere; The Wild, Wild West; Our Outer Space Adventure; Who Says Gobble?; and Holiday Celebration.

Even though the parents orally expressed an appreciation of the group and the additional literacy materials and activities provided, there was a poor survey return rate. Unfortunately, it was not possible to collect sufficient data for analysis. Qualitative data from the parents included how they enjoyed reading the books provided and talking about new activities with their children. Several parents inquired about additional literacy activities and were provided with more materials and suggestions. A few of the suggestions included doing follow-up activities after reading books, such as painting a brown bear after reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*; or making a cotton ball collage after

reading *Little Cloud*, both books by Eric Carle. Each additional activity continued to promote quality time for the child and family and enhance language and literacy skills.

The monthly infant and toddler group continues to meet on the first Saturday of each month. This will continue to provide parents and children with educational opportunities to build language and literacy skills and participate in activities that promote family bonding, literacy development, and school readiness. The partners in the Links to Literacy project are very pleased to continue to benefit from the generous grant from the Southern Early Childhood Association.

References:

- Lizakowski, T. (2005). Minnesota early literacy training project: Final report highlights. *Early Education and Development, 31*(1), 1-20.
- Morrow, L. M. (2005). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write*. (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Join US... for the 45th Annual Conference

Hot Springs Convention Center

October 19 – 21, 2006

Key-note Speakers:

Frank Winstead

Mary Jo Huff

Be watching the web-site for more details.

www.arkansasearlychildhood.org



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Call (888) 429 – 1585 for details or visit us on the web at

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

It is important that your legislators and your community understand the significant contributions that early education lends to later academic success and lifelong achievement.

Here are some ideas about how you might help make quality preschool an important part of education in Arkansas.

- 1. Build/Grow/Maintain Support**
- 2. Work With My Elected Officials**
- 3. Generate Media Coverage**
- 4. Work With Families**

For more information on how to be a more effective advocate visit the AECA website at www.arkansasearlychildhood.org click on the **Public Policy** link then click on **Checklist for Advocates**.