



we are **#keyPLAYers**
in children's education.

STRONG BRAINS are built through
RELIABLE RELATIONSHIPS and **STIMULATING PLAY** with loving adults.

Early childhood educators not only support brain development and school readiness, parents of 130,000 Arkansas children rely on our services to earn a living.



Our Vision

Arkansas will have high-quality care & education options for every child & family and a diverse, highly qualified, well-supported early childhood workforce.

In Arkansas, 2 out of 3 children under age 5 live in homes where both parents work. Many Arkansas children spend about 11,500 hours of their lives in child care in the years before kindergarten. That's more time spent in early care and education settings than they'll spend in school from kindergarten through 9th grade!

Birth to 5 years old is the most critical period of brain development for humans. It is a disservice not to maximize this time. Communities will benefit from investments in high quality care starting in infancy. As part of that investment, we must begin to educate, pay, and value early educators as professionals.

Our Mission

To connect, develop, & represent Arkansas early childhood care & education professionals. In doing so, we elevate the diversity, equity, and vibrancy of the profession and to ultimately promote high-quality care & education for all Arkansas children & families.

AECA 2021 Priorities

1. MAXIMIZE FEDERAL RESOURCES

The child care sector cannot sustain operations with continued financial losses. Arkansas must use federal investments to ensure that licensed homes and centers can keep their doors open to meet the needs of children, families, and employers within their communities.

AECA will review state plans for two federal funding streams, the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and COVID relief funds. We will continue to work with state leaders and share recommendations. We will base our recommendations on AECA member surveys and on our review of practices that have led to expanded access to high quality early care and education in other states. AECA will share information and guidance to its members regarding opportunities to engage in the CCDF and COVID relief planning processes.



2. DEVELOP TEACHING EXPERTISE

AECA will support legislative efforts to expand the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program. This endeavor is led by the Excel by Eight Foundations Collaborative.

Investing additional state funds in T.E.A.C.H. will:

- improve quality of care for Arkansas children
- stabilize small businesses by helping retain a more qualified workforce
- support Arkansas's higher education partners
- increase the number of adults in Arkansas with a college education

3. PROVIDE ADEQUATE COMPENSATION

Recent workforce studies indicate many Arkansas early childhood teachers and staff do not earn a living wage. AECA will support legislative efforts to pass the *Working Taxpayer Relief Act*. The Asset Funders Network is leading this endeavor. This Act would establish a refundable credit for Arkansas tax filers at 10% of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Bill SB10, sponsored by Sen. Dave Wallace has already been filed.

Take action with us

Use [#keyPLAYers](#) in your social media posts and our virtual “button” in Zoom meetings and email signatures. Help us spread the message. Go to arkansasearlychildhood.org to download a button.

We also invite you to join the nearly 1,500 professionals from around the state who have come together for more than 50 years on behalf of children and families in Arkansas. Visit our website and join today!

we are **#keyPLAYers**

