



**EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS
A REPORT OF THE ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE
EVALUATION/RESTRUCTURING TASK FORCE
FEBRUARY 2002**

“The Next Step” A Blueprint for Continued Education Reform in Arkansas

Improved Pre-School and Health Care Access for Children

Implement expanded educational opportunities for pre-school including emphasis for reading and access to health and dental care:

- ? Assure access to Head Start, ABC, or other education-based quality pre-school programs.
- ? Increase phonics based reading opportunities for preschool age children.
- ? Increase adult literacy to assist in creating an “education friendly” environment for children in the home.
- ? Increase readiness to learn by improving access and utilization of basic health care, with attention given to visual, aural, and dental health as well as basic health care.

Governor Mike Huckabee, January 8, 2002

“Waiting until three years of age is too late. I’m an advocate for services earlier, we need to start early, we need to take early care and education seriously and we need to put our money in early care, not remediation.”

Tommy Arant, Northeast Arkansas Education Cooperative Director

Police Chief’s say, “If America does not make greater investments in educational child care programs to help children now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs.”

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, May 2001

Research has shown that quality child care and education before age six increases student achievement, decreases retention and remediation, decreases drop outs and the number of incidents when students are in trouble with the law. Our districts early childhood programs have proven this research.

**Marilyn Chambers
Hamburg School District**

“Every child deserves to realize his or her dreams. From the crib to the classroom, it is essential that children have parents, teachers and others in their lives who prepare them for success in school and in life.”

Laura Bush, First Lady

“Quality early childhood education is the best predictor of social, economic and financial success for children. All children should have access to quality early education, and it should be a fundamental part of our state’s public school system.”

Amy Rossi, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

“As the father of a 4 ½ year old in a great pre-school program, staffed by loving and attentive teachers and healthy little classmates...I can’t imagine how any child could compete later if he doesn’t have good pre-school now. I also find it amazing that he could be sitting all day watching the TV and that would be legal. This job has taught me that all children should have high quality early care and education.”

**Joe Quinn,
Communications Director,
AR DHS**

As a kindergarten teacher of 30 years I have seen many educational programs come and go in the state of Arkansas. In my opinion, the ABC program and other pre-school programs such as Head Start and Hippy are perhaps some of the most valuable. They are irreplaceable in providing the services to children that we at the public school level now struggle to provide.

**Mary Jane Callahan,
Kindergarten Teacher
Walnut Ridge Public Schools**

“After having two daughters (one that didn’t have the luxury of a pre-kindergarten program and one that is currently in Pre-school) I am more convinced now than ever that the preparations for the next level provided by a good pre-kindergarten program is a great advancement in the academic as well as the social education of any student. The level of preparedness, awareness, and the knowledge of expectations of a student after a good pre-kindergarten program give the student a huge advantage in learning when they enroll in kindergarten. Early Childhood Education begins at the earliest stages of a child’s life. The sooner we are able to reach these children and place them in proper learning environments, the better their chances of success for the future will be.”

**Tommy Thompson, Superintendent
Midland Schools**



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ANNUAL COST FOR ABC CORE QUALITY HOME BASED MODEL

**Home Based Educator (HBE) - Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)
30 Families/Children ages 3-5 years**

	<u>Low</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
Low Student to Teacher Ratio/Well Compensated Staff (One HBE per 30 Families - CDA Credentialed)	\$12,000.00	\$13,500.00	\$15,000.00
(One Coordinator per 180 Families) (FTE Salary of \$23,000-\$31,500-\$40,000) (1 Coordinator per 6 HBE @ 16.67%)	\$3,834.10	\$5,251.05	\$6,668.00
Fringe @ 25%	\$3,958.10	\$4,687.76	\$5,417.00
Professional Development (\$50 per staff for college coursework/training)	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Developmental screening (\$50 per child excluding health)	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
Meaningful Parent and Community Engagement Activities (\$25 per child)	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Proven Curricula and Learning Processes (\$110 per family)	\$3,300.00	\$3,300.00	\$3,300.00
Travel @ 15 miles per day (1 HBE per 30 Families)	\$626.00	\$626.00	\$626.00
		\$29,664.81	

	Cost Per 30 Families	Cost Per Family
ABC FUNDING (state portion - 60%)	\$29,664.81	\$988.83
REQUIRED LOCAL PROGRAM MATCH @ 40%	\$19,776.54	\$659.22
TOTAL OF ABC (60%) MATCH (40%)	\$49,441.35	\$1,648.05
Projected Home Based ABC Costs (Core Quality Component Model)		
ABC Cost per Family (state portion)		\$988.83
HIPPY Families (SFY 01-02 funded capacity)		4677
Projected ABC Commitment (state portion)		\$4,624,757.90



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ANNUAL COST FOR ABC CORE QUALITY CENTER BASED MODEL

Classroom 20 children/ages 3-5 years

	<u>Low</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
Low Student to Teacher Ratio/Well Compensated Staff (ABC Student/Teacher ratio 1:10 for ages 3-5 years)			
Degreed Classroom Teacher.....	\$23,000.00	\$31,500.00	\$40,000.00
Child Development Associate/Aide.....	\$12,000.00	\$13,500.00	\$15,000.00
Fringe @ 25%.....	\$8,750.00	\$11,250.00	\$13,750.00
Professional Development (\$500 per staff for college coursework/training)	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Developmental Screening (\$50 per child excluding health)	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Meaningful Parent and Community Engagement Activities (\$25 per child)	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Proven Curricula and Learning Processes (\$60 per child)	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00
			\$59,950

A B C F U N D I N G (m i d - r a n g e 2 0 c h i l d r e n , 3 - 5 y e a r s)	\$ 5 9 , 9 5 0 . 0 0
R E Q U I R E D L O C A L P R O G R A M M A T C H @ 4 0 %	\$ 3 9 , 9 6 7 . 0 0
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C O S T P E R D A Y (1 7 8 D A Y S)	\$ 2 8 . 0 7
C O S T P E R H O U R (7 . 5 H O U R D A Y)	\$ 3 . 7 4

Projected Center Based ABC Costs (Core Quality Component Model)

ABC Cost per Child (state portion)	\$2,997.50
ABC Children (classroom capacity SFY 01-02)	3123
Projected ABC Commitment (state portion)	\$9,361,192.50



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NEXT STEPS
NEW FINANCING RESOURCES ARE CRITICAL

The Arkansas Better Chance Programs are funded through June 30, 2003. The “Child Care for Working Families Act” sunsets on June 30, 2003. Funding commitments from the Public School Fund for the state fiscal year 2003-2004 are not known at this time. Without stable, adequate financing these programs will not continue. The following recommendations are made with the knowledge that secure, adequate funding must be available for successful implementation.

1. Ensure parental choice, allowing parents to be the decision maker for their own child. Options for part-time and home-based education programs should be available to address the parent’s choices, their values and preferences regarding their child’s learning styles and developmental needs. Parental choice takes into consideration the needs of working parents for high quality early care and education for their children, thus enhancing the parents productivity and stability in the workforce.
2. Support stable, dedicated financial commitment (from all available funding resources) to Arkansas Better Chance programs for children at risk. (Funding resources may include: separate funding stream, continue beer tax, use of federal funds, new state general revenues, etc.)
3. When increased funding is available, expand the ABC program model to include participation by “any willing provider”, defined as any provider (faith-based, for profit, non-profit, school district, etc.) meeting the ABC standards for quality care. Prioritize new service areas in unserved, and under-served communities, communities that have high populations of low-income families and areas that have low literacy levels using the current ABC eligibility criteria.
4. Universal financing of early care and education for children in Arkansas (using at-risk factors to determine eligibility for the program) such that **all families with children at risk** of entering school without readiness skills will have access to high quality early care to meet their children’s needs for a safe, intellectually stimulating, socially nurturing environment.
5. Stable and adequate financing of early care and education for **all families** of young children in Arkansas so that every family has access to high quality early care to meet their children’s needs for a safe, intellectually stimulating and socially nurturing environment. Expand the high quality model to all Arkansas children through early care and education programs which target school readiness. (Projected cost for **all children age 4:** \$80,234,759.90 and **all children age 3:** \$86,524,136.50, excluding facility costs).
6. Establish a parental fee based on the family’s ability to pay for the service.
7. Coordination with all local and state collaborative early care and education partners (Workforce Education, Faith-based Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Economic Development, Department of Education, Education Service Cooperatives, Head Start, Department of Health, etc.) to ensure the greatest return of our state investment in early care and education programs.
8. Identification of specific school readiness indicators and a system to monitor our investments of individual child progress, family well-being and health of the local community. Ensure a seamless system of delivering services and transition for children entering kindergarten.



**A BLUEPRINT FOR QUALITY:
GIVING ARKANSAS CHILDREN AT RISK A “BETTER CHANCE” FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION:

1. Adopt a core quality component model for classroom and home-based education programs to include the components of successful, high quality early care and education:
 - ? **Low student to teacher ratio**
 - ? **Qualified well-compensated teachers/Professional development**
 - ? **Strong health, safety and developmental screening standards**
 - ? **Meaningful parent and community engagement activities**
 - ? **Proven curricula and learning processes**
2. Establish a core quality component funding formula for both classroom and home-based early care and education programs.
3. Fund current ABC program sites using the core quality component model to provide equitable funding across programs. Funds are available to implement this recommendation from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003. The current beer tax sunsets on June 30, 2003 and there is no stable, dedicated funding after that time.
4. Maintain the match requirement of 40% provided by the local program.
5. Revise current ABC program standards to include a listing of “approved curriculum models and developmental assessment screening tools that may be used by participating programs.”; require an AA degreed teacher as lead teacher when there are multiple classrooms in the same location; and increase the minimum allowable accreditation score for quality approval from 4.5 (above minimal) to 5.5 (above good), establish a minimum of a 7.5 hour day for classroom programs and 178 day requirement for ABC programs.
- * 6. Conduct a longitudinal study of children who are three years of age in the fall of 2002 and follow these children through their school experiences and completion of the fourth grade benchmark assessments. The children and their families will be followed for seven years with annual reports provided of the well being of the family and the child’s academic achievement.
- * 7. Develop “wrap-around” services to extend the ABC program to full-day and full-year programs to ensure services for low-income working families.

*Funding from private foundations, federal grants, Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), blended/braided services and use of multiple funding sources in collaborative partnerships will be utilized to implement the longitudinal study and development of “wrap-around” child care services for working parents.



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Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) programs offer high quality early care and education services to children at risk of school failure. First established by legislation in 1991-92, the programs serve an average of 8,373 children ages birth to five years of age each month. ABC programs maintain the state early childhood accreditation standards to continue participation in the program. Programs are sponsored by school districts, educational cooperatives, Head Start agencies, universities, and community based organizations. The primary goal of the program is school readiness.

The ABC program is one of numerous educational programs located in the Public School Fund of the state budget. Programs in the Public School Fund receive state general revenue through the Educational Excellence Trust Fund.

During the 2001 legislative session, a late change in the state general revenue forecast reduced the amount of new state general revenue available to fund programs during the 2002-2003 biennium. To compensate for significant general revenue cuts in the ABC program, the legislature adopted Act 1841, a 3 percent retail excise tax on beer. Revenues from the tax are dedicated to child care and early childhood education. Eighty percent of the funds are designated to support and expand the Arkansas Better Chance Program (ABC). The remaining twenty percent of the revenues will be used to provide child care for non-TEA, low-income working families. The tax was expected to generate \$6.6 million during SFY 2002 and \$9.7 million in FY 2003. This retail excise tax on beer will sunset on June 30, 2003, unless it is re-authorized.

The new revenue from the beer tax, combined with remaining general revenue, allowed the State Board of Education to approve an overall increase to a level of \$11.9 for SFY 02 and \$12.1 for SFY 03 for ABC programs. Funding for the Arkansas Better Chance program after July 1, 2003 is uncertain. The State Board of Education charged the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, the administering agency for the ABC program, to study and make recommendations regarding program and fiscal issues in the ABC program.

CHALLENGE

The ABC Evaluation/Restructuring Task Force was challenged to study and make recommendations for action on the following:

- ? Program design and other funding issues
- ? The types of services provided and eligibility criteria for the program
- ? Evaluation design, program quality and school success indicators
- ? Cost, quality and rate structure for the current program
- ? Various funding sources
- ? Comparative data regarding differing models of early care programs
- ? Collaborative efforts in local communities
- ? Potential uses of new revenue; such as increasing funding for current programs, expanding current programs or establishing new programs.

SCHOOL READINESS/EARLY LITERACY

High quality early care and education programs help young children build their language and literacy skills and enter school ready to be successful. All too many children are not prepared for school or enter kindergarten already behind their peers. Low-income children are particularly at risk, many children from low-income families are less likely than their peers to enter school with the language skills they need.

? Low-income children may have a more limited vocabulary.

By the time they are in first grade, children in low-income families have gained 5,000 word vocabularies. In contrast, children from more affluent families enter school with vocabularies of 20,000 words. (Hartand Risley, 1995)

? Low-income children may be read to less often. Nearly one in four poor children is read to or told stories less than three times each week, depriving them of opportunities to hear and use language in ways that will encourage strong literacy skills. (Urban Institute and Child Trends)

? Low-income households may have fewer books. A study of low-income families found that over half the households had fewer than 10 children’s books and a quarter of these homes contained fewer than 10 books total. (Pamela High, Marita Hoipmann, et al, April 1999)

Arkansas Better Chance programs are designed to serve children at risk of entering school with underdeveloped language and literacy skills. Early care and education professionals in Arkansas will participate in a thirty hour professional development training which focuses on developing emergent literacy activities for young children. The training Pre-K ELLA (Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas) is a comprehensive, coordinated approach that complements the Literacy Training for K-2 teachers-ELLA.