



Arkansas Children's Week 2022

Planning Toolkit

Humor and Happiness

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Welcome to
Arkansas
Children's
Week 2022!

We're so glad
you're here!



Welcome

This toolkit is a resource for you as you plan activities and events to celebrate Arkansas Children's Week. As you read through these pages, you'll find information about Arkansas Children's Week, ideas for events, and suggestions for connecting with families, your community, and your local media.

About Arkansas Children's Week

Arkansas Children's Week (ACW) has been a statewide tradition for more than 30 years! ACW is a celebration of children of all ages and their educators and families. Through ACW, early educators and youth development professionals highlight the needs of children and families and the accomplishments of the adults who work with them.

Arkansas State University Childhood Services provides three free resources to support early learning and out-of-school-time programs.

- ▶ Arkansas Children's Week resource book
- ▶ Arkansas Children's Week workshop
- ▶ Arkansas Children's Week planning toolkit

These can be found under the **resources tab** on the **A-State Childhood Services website**, http://asuchildhoodservices.org/#!ar_childrens_week

Our statewide Arkansas Children's Week celebration occurs in April and coincides with NAEYC's Week of the Young Child.

Arkansas Children's Week

April 2 -8, 2022

Each year's celebration has a topic, guided by suggestions from the field. This year, our theme is "**Humor and Happiness.**" We'll consider the unique role that humor might play in children's experiences and outcomes. We'll also explore ways to create a positive environment for children and adults alike!

Big Ideas for 2022

Here are some guiding beliefs for this year's celebration.

► **Smiling and laughing together are essential for well-being.**

Silly moments offer serious benefits! Smiling and laughing together are beneficial for our bodies and our brains. Joyful interactions also relieve tension, strengthen relationships, and brighten the days we share. Laughing together even increases our ability to cope with challenging situations—now and in the future.

► **Children learn habits like positivity, warmth, and gratitude from important adults in their lives.**

Children are attuned to our words, actions, and reactions. The things we say and do around children strongly influence how they connect with one another, interpret their world, and manage the ups and downs of each day. Families and educators can be mindful of the attitudes and outlooks we model for children.

► **We can cultivate humor and happiness in the spaces we share.**

How does it feel to be a child in our program? This year, we'll explore the roles that books, songs, play spaces, and materials play in our vibrant learning environments. We'll also consider ideas for moving through each day with children in positive, playful ways.



Ideas for Celebrating Arkansas Children's Week

Traditionally, communities and individual programs celebrate Arkansas Children's Week in many different ways. In some areas, families enjoy community-wide events hosted by collaborating organizations. All sorts of program-specific celebrations also occur in child care centers and family child care homes across the state. Events in recent years have included open house events, children's concerts, fun fairs, and more.

At the time of this writing, health guidelines suggest that we may need to celebrate in different ways this year—but we can still celebrate! On the following pages, you'll find ten possibilities. These are just examples. You and your staff will also have ideas of your own.

Program Parade

Invite children to decorate t-shirts, make hats, or dress as their favorite funny book characters. You can also make musical instruments and streamer rings. Or, you could use instruments and props that you have on hand. Plan a safe, outdoor parade route around your program. Very young children can ride in decorated strollers or wagons while preschoolers march, skip, and hop along. School-agers might ride bicycles and kick-powered scooters.

If current health guidelines allow, families can gather along the parade route to watch and cheer. Alternatively, you can record small groups parading along the route. Encourage children to wave and call hello as they pass. This will be a fun video to share with families!

Chalk the Walk

Place baskets of colorful chalk along a pathway or low-traffic sidewalk. A basketball court or other concrete pad could also work well for this activity. Invite children, families, and staff to draw and write cheerful messages to fill the designated area. If possible, take an aerial photo to capture everyone's artwork.

Family Photo Booth

Create a cheerful outdoor photo booth area that celebrates Arkansas Children's Week. Station someone at the booth during pick-up times to capture photos of each family. Hint: Many different photo booth apps are available for phones and tablet computers. These can make it even easier to compile and share photos!

Virtual Concerts

With permission from families, record small groups of children performing their favorite silly songs and rhymes such as:

- ▶ Down by the Bay
- ▶ Herman the Worm
- ▶ I Had a Tiny Turtle
- ▶ The Great Big Spider (adaptation of Itsy, Bitsy spider)

Share your virtual concerts with families and friends of the program through secure (private) social media posts.

Theme Days

Invite children and educators to dress in a fun way each day. You might try Silly Socks Day, Backwards Day, Favorite Color Day, Hat Day, and so on. What ideas do you have to celebrate a Wacky Wednesday?

Laugh-Out-Loud StoryWalk

A StoryWalk is a story-sharing event that takes place along a sidewalk or walking trail. Laminated pages of a book (or parts of a story) are mounted on stakes or weatherproof signs. These are placed in order along the trail. As children travel down the path, they encounter the story a bit at a time. Families can read each "chapter" as they progress along the StoryWalk.

Here are three books you might try—or use one of your group's favorites.

- ▶ *Blue Hat, Green Hat* by Sandra Boynton
- ▶ *Boogie Monster* by Josie Bissett (can be shortened)
- ▶ *Do Like a Duck Does* by Judy Hinley

Find more tips for a successful StoryWalk at <https://letsmovelibraries.org/storywalk/>

Giggle-Grams

Throughout the week, send daily messages to families and friends of your program. These "giggle-grams" might include:

- ▶ Photos of children laughing and playing. (Ensure that photo releases have been signed by families.)
- ▶ A fact about the value of smiling and laughing together. Did you know...
 - A hearty belly laugh strengthens the heart, lungs, and muscles. It might even help boost the immune system!
 - Singing and laughing together is a wonderful way to build positive relationships!
 - Laughing together leaves us feeling peaceful and relaxed. That's because laughing relieves tension and releases endorphins in our brains.
 - Humorous stories invite children to think creatively, recognize quirky ideas, and solve problems in unique ways.
 - Research tells us that children of all ages learn best when the environment is positive and playful.
- ▶ A song to sing, a book to read, or a fun suggestion to try at home. How about playing peek-a-boo or making funny faces in the mirror? Or, try putting on lively music while "skating" on carpets or rugs with paper plates under your feet.
- ▶ A family-friendly joke such as the ones below.
 - What do you get if you cross a frog with a rabbit? *A bunny ribbit!*
 - What do cows do for fun? *They go to the mooooooo-vies!*
 - What is fast, loud, and crunchy? *A rocket chip!*
 - What do you call a sleeping tyrannosaurus? *A dino-snore!*
 - What do you call a dog magician? *A labracadabradore!*
- ▶ A quote from an educator about "something that made me smile today."

Outdoor Fun Fest

If you can safely do so, create playful stations across an ample outdoor space. You might set up a bubble machine in one area and a beachball bouncing activity in another. And, how about a dance party? This event could also include a box lunch picnic.

Funny Face Collages

Send a large construction paper circle home with each family. Challenge them to design a face on the circle. Anything found around the house or yard might be used creatively for this activity! For example, one family might use pebbles for eyes, a spoon for a nose, a row of checkers for a mouth, baby socks for hair, and so on. Another family might use silk flowers, crumpled tissue paper, and ribbon.

Encourage families to text or email photos of the funny faces they create to a program staff member. A compilation of creative faces can be shared on an Instagram page, slideshow, or in another way.

Create a Happy Place

Invite small groups of children and/or adults to work together to transform a courtyard, entryway, or another outdoor area. Groups might plant flowers, hang wind chimes, decorate a bench, paint a mural, or liven up the space in other ways. Your Happy Place could become a place for small group gatherings or staff breaks, or it could be made accessible to families.



Celebrating Educators

Many programs view Arkansas Children's Week as an opportunity to celebrate program staff. Families and administrators might write notes of appreciation or make brief video tributes for each educator. Here are some other ways that programs have recognized and thanked staff for their role in children's learning.

- ▶ Children's Week t-shirts or aprons
- ▶ Door decorations on the entrance of the program or each classroom door
- ▶ Ice cream bars and popsicles, or other packaged treats, in the staff break area
- ▶ Gift cards to a nearby coffee shop or another favorite place
- ▶ Flower bouquets, a water bottle, or other tokens of appreciation for each classroom staff member

Who can help your program thank the people who ensure positive, playful experiences for children every day?



Spreading the Word About Arkansas Children's Week

Celebrating with children, families, and staff is part of the Arkansas Children's Week tradition. ACW also provides an opportunity to spread the word about Children's Week and the important issues and ideas for children and families in your community.

Before Children's Week begins, consider reaching out to other programs in your community to share ACW resources and encourage participation. You might also connect with college and CDA educators who help prepare future teachers, home educators, children's museums and libraries, and so on. Who are the people and programs that support children and families in your community?

You can spread the word through traditional and social media before, during, or after Arkansas Children's Week. Write a newsletter article for families, send a letter to the editor

of your local newspaper, or craft blog and social media posts to share with your online community.

You could talk about the Arkansas Children's Week tradition or this year's topic – "Humor and Happiness" – and the significance of positive, playful experiences for children. Arkansas Children's Week can also offer an opportunity to highlight the importance of high-quality child care and other relevant issues.

Safe and Respectful Sharing

Be sure that you have a release form for every child whose picture or video you would like to share! All parents or guardians in a child's life should give consent and be fully aware before their child appears in print, television media, or social media posts.

Some strategies to help keep children safe include private and non-shareable social media posts, photos/videos that do not show children's faces, and posts that do not use children's names.



Connecting with A-State Childhood Services

We'll be posting before and during Arkansas Children's Week, and we'd love to hear from you. You are invited to follow and share from our social media accounts!

- ▶ Our Facebook page can be found by searching for "Arkansas State University Childhood Services."
- ▶ Our Instagram account can be found by searching for "astate.childhood.services."

You can subscribe to our weekly digital newsletter [here](#) or by emailing TLewis@AState.edu.

And, we'd love to hear all about your Arkansas Children's Week ideas and events! You can reach us by emailing MWhite@AState.edu.

Sample Timeline for Planning ACW Events

Most programs begin making contacts and planning events well in advance. Here's a suggested timeline. This timeline is just an example and can be adjusted to meet your program's needs.

January and Early February

- Brainstorm partners for planning.

Make a list of program staff, family members, and other program friends who might want to help with planning. If you are planning a collaborative community-wide or regional event, your planning team might also include partners from child care and early learning programs, schools, and support agencies in your area. Think about the knowledge and skills that each potential team member might contribute to your event(s).

- Picture how planning will take place.

Think about when and how your planning group might connect. Do you envision phone calls, video conferencing, emails, or something else? You don't need exact meeting dates yet but should have an idea of the commitment that you will need from group members.

- Finalize a planning team.

Reach out to the people on your list. Tell about the Arkansas Children's Week tradition and explain your timeline for meeting and planning. Are they willing and able to participate? Establish a first meeting date.

February

- Meet with the planning team to brainstorm ideas for Arkansas Children's Week.

Focus on your goals. What makes each potential event feel like a fit for children? How could you involve families, and what health and safety protocols should be considered? You'll also think about the cost and time commitment needed for various ideas. Narrow your list down to the ideas that feel most appropriate and feasible.

- Determine a budget or funding source.

- Plan dates and times for event(s).

Look at other community events that are scheduled and think about the days and times when families will be most likely to participate. This year, special consideration might be given to times when families usually use social media.

February, cont.

- ▶ Decide on locations for your event(s). Are any permissions needed to use these spaces? Are there any insurance/liability or safety/security concerns? Will all areas be accessible to children or adults with limited mobility?
- ▶ Break your event(s) down into tasks that can be managed by different team members.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Gaining permission to use spaces and making reservations
- Gathering materials and supplies
- Working with all classroom staff to ensure that everyone is included
- Contacting and coordinating with local businesses or other partners
- Designing flyers and social media posts to share information about your event(s)

For example, one sub-committee might create flyers while another collects needed supplies.

- ▶ Make a list of agreed-upon responsibilities and set a timeline for each major task. You or a designated coordinator will check in with volunteers and sub-committees throughout the month.
- ▶ Share information about Arkansas Children's Week plans with all other program staff. "Save the Date!"
- ▶ Begin collecting orders for Arkansas Children's Week t-shirts, if desired. The 2022 Arkansas Children's Week t-shirt will be white with a bright, fluorescent logo! **Click [here](#) to view and download this year's logo.**

Shirts may be ordered from your favorite local or online print shop. Most shops will need orders by mid-March to ensure timely delivery.

Programs may wish to plan open-ended, hands-on ways for children to help decorate the shirts. For example, preschoolers might "spatter paint" their shirts with neon fabric paints, while schoolagers use tie-dye.

T-shirt Day is Thursday, April 7, 2022.

Join with others across the state and wear your ACW shirt with pride!

March

- ▶ Register for—and plan to participate in—an Arkansas Children's Week 2022 virtual workshop. The workshop will be available in mid-March.
- ▶ Continue to follow up with all sub-committees. Is everything going according to plan and schedule? Work together to solve any challenges that arise.
- ▶ Finalize t-shirt orders if desired.
- ▶ Finalize all reservations for spaces and any associated contracts or agreements.
- ▶ Begin making decorations, assembling kits for families, or completing other labor-intensive tasks. Starting well in advance will make this fun, rather than fatiguing!
- ▶ Advertise your event(s) with signs, banners, social media posts, and/or family reminders. Check that families have complete information about dates, times, and locations.
- ▶ Contact local officials about issuing an Arkansas Children's Week proclamation. By reading a proclamation, officials highlight the importance of children and families in their community.
- ▶ Contact local media about coverage for your upcoming events.

This year, it may not be possible to invite television and news reporters into our programs. However, we can still write letters or guest blog posts or suggest safe ways to report our events. For example, the Outdoor Fun Fest or StoryWalk events could be filmed or photographed from a distance.

Sample media invitation for local television or newspaper

[Name(s) of your Program/Affiliate/Organization(s)] is celebrating Arkansas Children's Week, April 2-8, 2022! This is an opportunity to show what [your city] is doing to help young children here in our community.

[Describe your event, highlighting any opportunities the news station can video or the newspaper can photograph. This could include the reading of a proclamation by a local official, or it could be something visually interesting at your event.]

[Name(s) and Title of your Affiliate/Organization's Leader(s)] will be on hand to discuss Arkansas Children's Week and the local impact of important early childhood education issues. For more information about covering Arkansas Children's Week events, please contact [Name(s) and Title of your Event Coordinator] at [email address] or [phone number].

April

- ▶ Continue to generate excitement about your upcoming event(s)!
- ▶ Schedule a final meeting to ensure that all event preparations are in order. Think about each person's roles on the day of your event(s).
- ▶ Share specific event plans with all program staff and answer any questions. This year, it may be imperative to follow schedules or traffic patterns that reduce crowding.
- ▶ Find ways to recognize families and staff as part of your week-long Arkansas Children's Week celebration.
- ▶ Carry out and enjoy your well-planned event(s)!



April and early May, after your event(s)

- ▶ Have a get-together (can be virtual) with the planning team to celebrate and evaluate. How did it go? What were your successes?
- ▶ Send letters of appreciation to community leaders, businesses, volunteers, and others who supported your event(s).
- ▶ Begin or continue an Arkansas Children's Week file for future reference.
- ▶ Tell us about your event! We would love to hear your Arkansas Children's Week 2022 stories! You can share your experience with us by emailing MWhite@AState.edu.



You and your program set the stage for humor and happiness every day!
Thank you for all you do to support Arkansas children, families, educators,
and communities.



Childhood Services



Division of Child Care and
Early Childhood Education