

Fall 2021

Early Learning Connections Quarterly Newsletter



Our Mission:

Mission Statement: "The mission of Early Learning Connections is to provide a variety of high-quality early learning programs that foster a safe and positive culture through kindness and respect to meet the comprehensive needs of families."

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO:

Happy fall to all! I hope you are enjoying the crisp weather of autumn and all the fun things that go along with it. We at Early Learning Connections are busy as always. Our children and staff have returned to their classrooms, and we have continued to make improvements and additions to our facilities. The most recent project has been the landscaping at Mt. Chestnut. It's revitalized our outside area, and we thank Gargiulo Landscaping for all their hard work and wonderful ideas to make our space not only beautiful but interactive. In other news, we are also dealing with COVID related challenges. In following CDC guidelines, we are closing classrooms on a daily basis. This is a necessary but unfortunate outcome of the impact of the pandemic. Through mandates, advisement, and utilization of multiple resources, we have also issued a vaccination policy, along with incentives, to ensure safety and best practice. Please continue to use our newly updated website; check on notifications through Child Plus and the Call One Now system. We remain focused on a full return to in person programming, and kindergarten readiness. Following our protocols will assist us to achieve this goal. Your continued support and understanding is truly appreciated. My Best, Elisa Spadafora CEO Early Learning Connections

Virtual Open House 2021

Early Learning Connections, Head Start, held a virtual open house for Butler County as well as Armstrong County on October 7th and 9th.



Parents and children "ZOOMED" in and were able to meet teachers, see classrooms and buildings as well as get some great information. Our Health Services Director, Heather Efaw, was on to talk about the agency policies with COVID and other communicable sicknesses and how we have practices in place to keep everyone as healthy as possible. She also spoke about hearing and vision screenings being conducted in the classrooms and the importance of physicals and dental checkups.



HEALTHY EATING

EAT BETTER, EAT TOGETHER MONTH

Eating with your family and friends on a regular basis has been associated with improved social skills, better eating habits, and fewer behavioral problems in teenagers. It is also helpful for reducing stress in adults. Every year, October serves as Eat Better, Eat Together Month. While the history of the day is unknown, it is meant to promote better eating habits, and encourage us to share more meals together.

EAT BETTER, EAT TOGETHER MONTH TIMELINE

18th Century
The Sandwich's royal roots

John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich and a notorious gambler, invented this convenience food so he could play cards longer – and spend less time preparing meals.

16th Century
Cafes make their debut.

The world's first cafe opened in Constantinople, which is Istanbul in the modern world.

15th Century
Spice trading began.

Portuguese spice traders reached South Africa and India. This enabled the exchange of culture, particularly in terms of food and recipes.

6th Century AD
Coffee cultivated.
Arabica coffee was cultivated around this time, most probably, in China.

25 to 200 AD
Metal stove invented.
The Chinese used cast iron to build a stove, paving the way for modern cooking methods.



HOW TO OBSERVE EAT BETTER, EAT TOGETHER MONTH

1. Make a meal together!
Designate one day in October when the whole family makes a meal together. Get the kids involved. If you live away from your family, invite your neighbors or coworkers.

2. Organize a barbecue party
There is nothing more fun than a barbecue party in the backyard. Make sure you pick healthy alternatives, though.

3. Clear your kitchen!!!
Toss the cookies and chips. Replace them with some healthy alternatives.

WHY EAT BETTER, EAT TOGETHER MONTH IS IMPORTANT

1. It focuses on food.

Many of us have simply forgotten how to enjoy a meal. This month shines a spotlight on one of the most important things we do to survive. That would be eating.

2. It encourages community spirit.

We often have no clue what is going on in the lives of those closest to us. The month is meant to foster a community spirit through sharing meals.

3. It helps us make better food choices.

The month-long observance encourages us to be more aware about what we are eating. That triple

WELCOME TO OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS!

burger might taste delicious, but if that is all you are having, you are missing out.

BUTLER COUNTY

First Name	Last Name	POSITION	Location
Daniel	Fitzgibbons	FACILITIES MANAGER	MT CHESTNUT
Addison	Llewellyn	POA	BUTLER
Allison	Helman	SECRETARY	MT CHESTNUT
Rebecca	McCallister	PRACTICE BASED COACH	BUTLER
Mariann	Facemire	ASSISTANT TEACHER	BON AIRE
Molly	Mclean	CLASSROOM ASST.	DASSA
Deanne	Sayers	HEAD TEACHER	MT CHESTNUT
JuWanda	Thurmond	HUMAN RESOURCES	MT CHESTNUT
Haley	Wells	HEAD TEACHER	BON AIRE
Gabrielle	Oldenburg	CLASSROOM ASST.	BON AIRE
Katarina	Braun	OFFICE GENERALIST	ELRC

NOW HIRING!



ARMSTRONG COUNTY

First Name	Last Name	POSITION	Location
Jacqueline	Sweeny	FSW	ARMSTRONG
Miriam	Dosch	CLASSROOM M ASST.	SHANNOCK
April	Huston	ASSISTANT TEACHER	SHANNOCK
Brettlyn	Martin	ASSISTANT TEACHER	KITTANNING
Danielle	Morton-Klingensmith	PARENT EDUCATOR	APOLLO
Lisa	Dumbaugh	ASSISTANT TEACHER	SOUTH BUFFALO
Christian	Moore	ASSISTANT TEACHER	KITTANNING

ELC is hiring for Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers and Classroom Assistants at various sites in Butler and Armstrong Counties. We are also looking for POA's, office and maintenance staff too. Apply today at www.earlylearningconnections.org

Or join our weekly Virtual Job Fair through PA Career Link every Friday from 11am - 12pm.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CORNER

Calling Head Start and Early Head Start Parents/Guardians to Join Policy Council!!!!

What is Policy Council and how do I participate?

1. Who are the members of Policy Council? Parents from Head Start and Early Head Start are elected to Policy Council. Additionally, Community Members who want to be involved in Head Start and Early Head Start are elected by the parents to be members.

2. What does Policy Council do? As a member of Policy Council, you'll be involved in the decision-making process for Head Start and Early Head Start. Some of these decisions include program goals, funding, Policy Council procedures, the hiring of Head Start and Early Head Start employees, and items that parents have interests and concerns about. Child Outcomes and School Readiness Goals will also be reviewed.

3. Where and how often does Policy Council meet? Meetings for the 2021-2022 school year will be held virtually using the Zoom platform. We usually meet once a month at 12:00 pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the month for Butler County and the 3rd Thursday of the Month for Armstrong County.

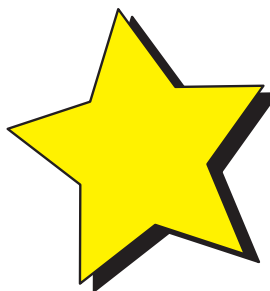
4. How will I know what to do at the meetings? Staff members and parents who have been on Policy Council before will help you. After a few meetings, you will be an expert yourself!

5. What's in it for me? As a Policy Council Member, you will be provided with technology to participate virtually in meetings. When participating in meetings you will be eligible for incentives or prize drawings, and your participation counts towards agencies non-federal share (in-kind) hours requirement.

If interested, please contact your Family Service Worker or Parent Educator. You can join at any time. If you have any questions contact Emily Snow, 724-287-2761, ext. 302.



Early Learning Resource Center 3



EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER 3

OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

Serving:

*Armstrong, Butler, Indiana,
and Lawrence Counties*

Location: 139 Rieger Road
Butler, PA 16001
Phone: 724-285-9431
Toll-Free 888-864-1654
Fax: 724-285-7320

Serving:

Beaver County

Location: 402-2 Brkich Way
Beaver, PA 15009
Phone: 724-847-0145
Toll-Free 800-322-8504
Fax: 724-847-1593



ELRC 3 - Serving Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Indiana and Lawrence Counties

The Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) provides families, early learning service providers and communities access to information and services that support high-quality child care and early learning programs

Main Services Offered:



Child Care Works (CCW) is a subsidized child care program that helps low-income families pay their child care fees. We can also help find quality early learning programs that may meet their needs.



Keystone STARS is Pennsylvania's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is a continuous quality improvement systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early learning and school-age programs.

VISIT OUR "NEW WEBSITE" FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION AND ON-LINE SERVICES: **ELRC3.COM**



October Fire Prevention MONTH Resources & Ideas



HomeGrownHeartsAcademy.blogspot.com

FIRE SAFETY

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Every day at least one child dies in a home fire.

And every day, 293 children are injured by fire and burns.



Home fires account for nearly 90 percent of all fire-related fatalities.

Working smoke alarms reduce the chance of dying in a home fire by half.



77% of families have not developed and practiced a home fire escape plan, one of the most important components to surviving a home fire.



Fire can spread rapidly through a home, leaving a family as little as two minutes to escape safely once the alarm sounds.

HAVE WORKING SMOKE ALARMS.
PRACTICE AN ESCAPE PLAN.

SAFE
KIDS
WORLDWIDE

FIRE SAFETY

October is fire safety month, but this is an important topic to talk about at any time!

Remember to change your smoke alarm batteries and to have fire drills to practice at home. The children do this at school every month.

Here are some great resources to check out:

<https://www.safekids.org/st-art-safe-fire-resources-parents>

<https://www.redcross.org/g-et-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/fire/fire-safety-for-kids.html>

<http://www.firefacts.org/parents.htm>

<https://www.lessonplanet.com/lesson-plans/fire-safety/all?gclid=CjwKCAjw h5qLBhALEiwAiodszw0d OINNd7O2T3G0XosZFab6 vZ d2bVz1XPRHaCOo8Q wJ9Og3nv5BoCIUUQAvD BwE>



Fire Safety



- Smoke is dangerous - get low to avoid smoke
- Tackle the fire if you are trained to do so
- Evacuate your place if the fire gets out of control
- Don't stop to collect your personal belongings
- If you catch fire, drop and roll on the floor, or cover with a blanket
 - Inform the authorities at the site

At Early Learning Connections, we are an early learning community committed to providing safe, respectful, and positive environments for academic and social success for all. To support this commitment, we are implementing Program Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS).



PBIS is a process for creating safer and more effective early childhood environments. It is a systems approach to enhancing the capacity of early childhood programs to educate all children by developing research-based, program-wide classroom behavior support systems. The process focuses on improving a program's ability to teach and support positive behavior for all students by teaching social skills and on building a safe and positive environment in which all students can learn.

Early Learning Connections has adopted the following program wide expectations:

- **Be Safe**
- **Be Kind**
- **Be Respectful**

Help Us Have a Good Day!

Positive Strategies for Families

Give me choices
Do you want your breakfast in the orange bowl or the green bowl?

Remind me of the rules
Remember, we keep ourselves safe, so go up the steps, down the slide.

Help me know when something is going to end/change
Five more minutes until dinner.

Catch me being good
Wow, thanks for trying something new. I hope you feel proud when you try new things!

Tell me exactly what to do
First we get into the bathtub and then we do bubbles.

Show me what is going to happen

In addition to our behavior expectations, PBIS has additional components:

1. A **Behavior Matrix**, which explains behavior expectations in each area of the school and during each activity of the day.
2. **Direct Teaching** of the expectations throughout the school year. Teachers will help students learn what the expectations look, and sound like in every setting during the school day. These lessons will be re-taught and reinforced throughout the school year and become a regular part of our instructional program.
3. **Student Recognition** for demonstrating the expectations throughout the day. The Teachers provide positive descriptive praise and send Good News Notes home when they notice children following the rules and expectations.
4. We have created a **PBIS Core Leadership Team** that consists of Administrators, Teachers, Program Managers, Program Coach, a parent and other support staff. If you are a family member who would be interested in participating on the Core Leadership Team contact your Family Service Worker.

Social and Emotional Development

Strong, positive relationships help children develop trust, empathy, compassion and a sense of right and wrong.

Starting from birth, babies learn who they are by how they are treated. Loving relationships provide young children with a sense of comfort, safety and confidence. They teach young children how to form friendships, communicate emotions and deal with challenges.



CLASSROOM CORNER



Heather Efaw, ELC's Health and Nutrition Coordinator helped to install and build garden beds outside of Mount Chestnut and Bon Aire sites over the summer. The children in the summer program planted various veggies and helped to maintain them and learned about what plants need to grow, healthy eating and how plants are living things and need lots of care. Thank you to Heather, children and staff for helping with this summer project! YUMMY!

GIVING THANKS...

Our children took the time to make thank-you cards and posters for the staff at Butler Memorial Hospital and all the work they do to keep us healthy. We love to give back in any way we can.



STAFF SHOUT OUTS!!!
Congratulations to everyone celebrating something special in their lives.

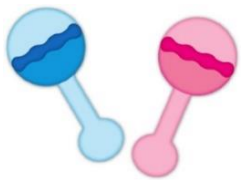


Weddings...

Hunter (Legge) Pisor



Robert Hardy



Bundles of Joy...

Addison Llewellyn:
Baby Girl "Bayleigh"



Ashley Pennington:
Baby Girl "Rayna"



Brittney Courson: Baby Boy
"Pennington aka: Penn"



MORE SHOUT OUTS...

Professional Milestones:



Kathy Fredrick, Program Manager/Director

- Independent Program Wide PAPBS Facilitator Certification
- Selected by Pa Keys and OCDEL to serve on the PA Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Advisory Board for 3 years.

Tim Sissinni, Program Manager

- Selected by Pa Keys and OCDEL to serve on the PA Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Advisory Board for 5 years.

Jen Stewart, MH Consultant

- TIPITOS Certification

Rebecca Barker, Disabilities Coordinator

- TIPITOS Certification

Crystal Long, Armstrong Coach

- Infant, Toddler & Preschool CLASS Certifications.

Rebecca McCallister, Butler Coach

- Preschool CLASS Certification
- Chosen to be a Co-Presenter for the NHSA Parent and Family Conference Dec. 2021

Kelly Herbert, Program Manager

- Preschool CLASS Certification
- CDA Professional Development Specialist Certification
- Adult Mental Health First Aid Certification
- Chosen to be a lead presenter for the NHSA Parent and Family Conference Dec. 2021

Kaila Mulvey, Lead Teacher Armstrong

- Passing her Pre-K- 4 Certification

Gena Hinchberger, BA Infant Toddler Room

- Completing her CDA Credential

Arlene Roth & Kaitlynn Christy, Lead/Assistant Teachers, South Butler

- Nominated by parents as All-Star Teachers on behalf of the Pirates Organization.

