

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."



SERVING ARMSTRONG, BEAVER, BUTLER, INDIANA, & LAWRENCE COUNTIES

FLC Quarterly NEWSLETTER



From the desk of the CEO

Early Learning Connections is continuing to provide quality services to children and families as we enter 2022. Our agency, as many others, has faced challenges, staffing shortages, and impacts from the far reaching effects of the pandemic. We continue to forge ahead and serve our families, children, staff, and communities in the best and safest way possible. The following is a list of our most recent efforts including updates, strategies, and implementations.

1. As a reminder to staff: we have a referral bonus and a new hire sign on bonus. If you know of anyone that may be interested in employment, please contact Nancy Feth at ext. 112.

2. Included in our building updates, the Mount Chestnut gymnasium windows were redone, and padding was installed. Bon Aire 3's windows were replaced, and the building's security system was upgraded. There are additional projects underway in other buildings as well.

3. We are continuously enrolling for our programs, and as fall begins, we will increase our efforts to fully enroll for the 22/23 program year.

4. The Focus Area 2 monitoring for the Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Butler and Armstrong counties are slated to occur in the spring of 2023. Program staff are busy making preparations for the review.



Please let us know of any community events or organizations in Butler and Armstrong counties where we could participate or inform the public about our agency and program slots available.

I want to thank all of our staff, families, and governing bodies for their continued support of our organization. We will continue to put forth our best efforts to build and maintain successful outcomes.

My Best – Elisa Spadafora – CEO Early Learning Connections



Welcome

New Team Members

BUTLER		
<i>Ashton Earley Oakland Parent Educator</i>	<i>Helene Goldstein Bon Aire Paraprofessional</i>	<i>Marisol Gozalez Butler Maintenance</i>
<i>Erin Radic Mt. Chestnut Administrative Asst. Education</i>	<i>Rachel Winberg-Hinch Butler Program Manager</i>	<i>Ashley Sweeney Bon Aire Paraprofessional</i>
<i>Janet Jasunas Oakland Parent Educator</i>	<i>Hannah Rausch Oakland Parent Educator</i>	<i>Brianne Smith Bon Aire Head Teacher</i>
	<i>Marina Woodson Bon Aire ITCS Group Supervisor</i>	

Welcome New Team Members

ARMSTRONG

<i>Christy Lamison Duncan Dayton Paraprofessional</i>	<i>Ashley Renwick Dayton Assistant Teacher</i>	<i>Natalie Simpson Ford City Assistant Teacher</i>
<i>Kameryn Livengood Ford City Paraprofessional</i>	<i>Joyce Myers Kittanning HSSAP 2 Assistant Teacher</i>	

Career Opportunities



Job Openings

HEAD START HEAD TEACHER	ITCS GROUP SUPERVISOR/PROGRAM LEADER
PRE-K COUNTS ASSISTANT TEACHER	ASSISTANT TEACHER
ASSISTANT GROUP SUPERVISOR - INFANT/TODDLER	PARAPROFESSIONAL(S) - VARIOUS LOCATIONS AVAILABLE
EARLY HEAD START PARENT EDUCATOR	PROGRAM OPERATIONS ASSISTANT (POA)
ELRC OFFICE GENERALIST	

\$1,000 Sign On Incentive

We still have this program going.

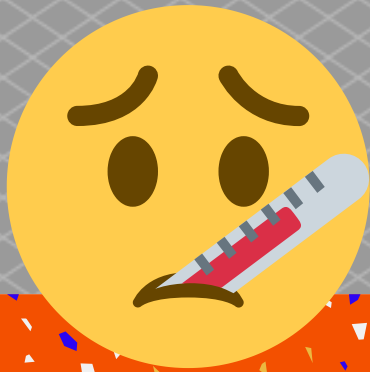
For new employees coming on board with us. It will be divided in 2 payments. The first payment of \$500 will be after 60 days of active employment. The second payment of \$500 will be 6 months after the first payment, if still actively employed.

\$2500 Sign On Incentive for ITCS

This is for new hires into the ITCS Classrooms in Bon Aire.

Employee Information

Revised Employee Handbook
will be distributed to all
current employees

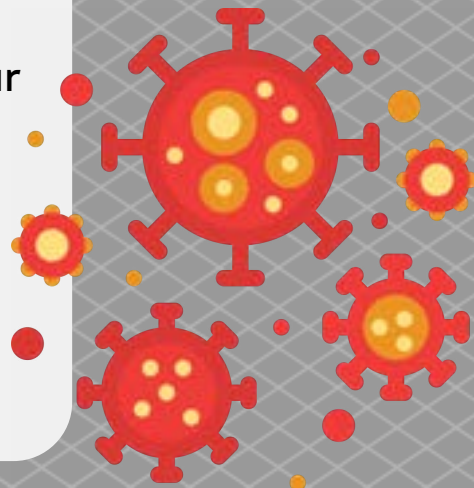


ATTENTION

**If you are exposed to Covid
or have symptoms:**

1. Notify your supervisor of symptoms or exposure
2. Send the COVID form to covid@earlylearningconnections.org
3. Wait for HR to contact you...check your emails!
4. If HR requests a Covid test, contact Millie to set up a zoom meeting mzier@earlylearningconnections.org

**NOVEMBER 6TH, 2022
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS
SET YOUR CLOCKS BACK 1 HOUR.**





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.

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

Program-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PW-PBIS)

We have been steadily moving forward with our implementation of PBIS! Many teachers were able to participate in a training to review critical features of PBIS including teaching behavior expectations, using visuals, using our bucket filler system, and using positive descriptive feedback. These elements alone can play a huge role in reducing challenging behavior at home and in the classroom. Those who attended the training were also provided with some resources to support PBIS and social-emotional development in the classroom.

Looking forward, we will be completing assessments and beginning coaching across the program. Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K Counts will participate, with home-based also receiving supports in a manner appropriate for their program. New teachers will be able to participate in a new teacher coaching cohort that can help support them starting very soon! We are so excited to be able to continue supporting our staff, children, and families in this way!

Our program wide approach is guided by a leadership team that uses data for decision making, provides training and support to teachers, and values the importance of fostering partnerships with families. Program-wide implementation is also called Program-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PW-PBIS)

We have established the following program-wide expectations for all children and adults:

- Be Safe
- Be Kind
- Be Respectful

All staff members teach children about these expectations and link classroom rules to these core values. The expectations can also be taught at home and connected to the rules that you might have for your child at home and in the community. We find that when we are all on the same page with our expectations, children are more able to understand and meet those expectations.

Early Learning Connections has adopted the following program wide expectations:



Early Learning Resource Center 3



The Early Learning Resource Center (Region 3) provides a single point of contact for families, early learning service providers, and communities to gain information and access to services that support high-quality child care and early learning programs.

MAIN SERVICES OFFERED:



The subsidized child care program helps low-income families pay their child care fees. The state and federal governments fund this program, which is managed by the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) office located in your county.

If you meet the guidelines:

- The ELRC will pay a part of your child care cost. This is called a subsidy payment.
- You will pay a part of the cost. This is called the family co-pay.
- The subsidy payment and the family co-pay go directly to the child care program.

NOTE: If your child care subsidy does not pay the full amount that your child care program charges, the provider may ask you to pay the difference between the subsidy payment and their private charges.

Keystone STARS is a quality rating system that promotes quality improvement in early learning and development programs and school-age child care. A Keystone STARS designation informs parents that their children are in a safe, respectful environment in which they are learning new things every day to support their current and future successes in school and in life.



 EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER 3 OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING	
Serving: Armstrong, Butler, Indiana, and Lawrence Counties	Serving: Beaver County
Location: 139 Rieger Road Butler, PA 16001	Location: 303 Beaver Valley Mall Rd Monaca, PA 15061
Phone: 724-285-9431	Phone: 724-847-0145
Toll-Free: 888-864-1654	Toll-Free: 800-322-8504
Fax: 724-285-7320	Fax: 724-847-1593

724-285-9431 OR 1-888-864-1654

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

Family Engagement Corner

SCREEN TIME AWARENESS FOR CARE GIVERS



In today's world it is hard to navigate throughout our day without technology. Our children are watching and learning from observing us and how we use technology. So just as we should model good behavior, like teaching them how to share, play and communicate, we should be modeling good behavior when it comes to technology as well.

There are a number of simple guidelines we can establish to model for our children.

1. Limit the use at specific times and places. Dinner time can be a great place to model conversation skills, so avoid pulling out phones or devices at the table, this includes when out to eat as well.

2. Take note of how much time you are on devices. You can track this through features on your phone or device. It will be hard to set limits later for children if we are not setting limits for ourselves.

3. Try to avoid distractions. Silence your ringer or notifications when possible. Turn television off if no one is watching it. Try engaging in conversations when waiting at appointments or traveling, instead of getting on devices. A game of I spy is a great way of engaging children and it helps increase language and build relationships.

4. Keep the conversation going. When you are watching movies and television with them ask them questions like "what was your favorite part" or "how do you think the character felt". Just like when reading to children you can utilize this time to increase their learning.



Here are a couple of great resources available to caregivers when it comes to parenting in a digital world.

<https://www.common sense media.org/>

This site is designed for parents, educators and advocates to help create a safe, healthy, and equitable digital world for kids and families. They provide research, education and media ratings.

<https://shapethesky.org/>

Shape the Sky is dedicated to spreading awareness to help parents and professionals create safe and responsible children online.

Fire Safety Month

Get The Facts



No one knows who invented the fire hydrant, because its patent was destroyed in a fire.
 A typical house fire will double in size every minute.
 It can take less than 30 seconds for a fire to become difficult to control.
 More people die from smoke inhalation than flames.

Flames (in most cases) will not cast a shadow.
 0.22% of deaths in the world are due to a fire.

There's an average of 3,170 deaths each year in the US due to fire.
 In the US, there were 115 victims of fires and explosions in the workplace.

The US suffered \$25.6 billion in property losses due to fire in 2018.
 Children aged 15 years and under accounted for 9.3% of the total fire fatalities in
 30% of all fires are residential home fires.

50.7% of home fires start in the kitchen.
 Pets accidentally start about 1,000 home fires every year.



Keeping Your Home Safe

Fire Prevention

CHECK YOUR SMOKE DETECTORS

- 20% of homes have smoke detectors that do not work or are missing batteries.
- Replace batteries twice a year and keep alarms free of dust.
- Working smoke alarms can double your chances of survival in a fire.
- Smoke alarms should be installed on every floor of your home.

KNOW THE RISKS

- There is a house fire every ten seconds in the U.S.
- Home fires can spread in as little as thirty seconds.
- Make sure that your family has a fire escape plan for your home and practice it regularly.
- Cooking is the leading cause of house fires.
- More than 18,000 fires a year are started by clothes dryers. Clean the vents at least once a year.
- Remember: If there's ever a fire, GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL for help.

MAINTAIN YOUR ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- Electrical fires can be caused by: broken wires, wire insulation drying out, loose switches or receptacles, and overheating caused by dirt and oil.
- Get your electrical system checked by a licensed electrician every four years.
- Faulty wiring is the number one cause of electrical fires. The warning signs? Flickering lights; breakers that always trip; fuses that blow; a burning smell when you plug in appliances; outlets and switches that spark; and discolored wall outlets.

Only **26%** of families have and practice a fire escape plan.*

80% Of Americans don't know home fires are the most common disaster in the US.*



Fire Safety Month

HOW TO PREVENT OUTDOOR FIRES

OUR TOP 7 TIPS...

-  **1.** Ensure cigarettes are completely out
-  **2.** Do not throw cigarettes out of car windows onto grass verges or vegetation
-  **3.** Put disposable barbecues on bricks, do not place directly on grass
-  **4.** Do not leave glass bottles lying on the ground - the sun's rays reflect through the glass and can start a fire
-  **5.** When camping, do not leave campfire unattended and make sure it is completely out before you leave it
-  **6.** Use barbecues on a hard, flat surface away from grass, shrubs or fencing
-  **7.** Talk to your children about the dangers of starting fires outside



Make a Fire Escape Plan

Draw a map of your home.

Include all doors and windows.

Find two ways out of each room if you can. All windows and doors should open easily.

If there's only one exit from a room, make sure it has a charged phone in it. That way, as a last resort, you can call for help.

Make sure your home has working smoke alarms. Push the test button weekly.

Pick a meeting place outside.

Pets are part of the family! Plan who's going to grab them on the way out.

Practice twice a year: Once at the beginning of the school year, again at the end.



Ford City

THE FIRE COMPANY, CHIEF MCAFOOSE, CAME TO VISIT
ALL FORD CITY CLASSROOMS (EHS & HS) ON
THURSDAY OCTOBER 20TH, 2022



Bruin

THE BRUIN VOLUNTEER FIRE RESCUE CAME TO SEE THE KIDS FOR FIRE SAFETY WEEK. THEY GOT TO SEE A FIREFIGHTER ALL DRESSED IN HIS GEAR, ASK SOME QUESTIONS, AND HAD THE OPPURTUNITY TO CHECK THE OUTSIDE OF THE TRUCK. THE FIREFIGHTER ALSO LET THE KIDS WALK THROUGH AND TURN ON THE LIGHTS AND SIRENS ON AS WELL.





EARLY LEARNING NATURE TRAIL @ MT CHESTNUT

The early learning nature trail was implemented approximately 5yrs ago.

It is 900 ft in length, and it includes:

- informational kiosks, where educational items can be placed
- a picnic area
- a rock garden,
- new musical area with a few different children's instruments (Completed summer 2022) Pictures Above
- an outdoor classroom, with benches for the children
- a bridge
- activity center at the end



Classroom
Corner

Shannock



**GETTING
CREATIVE**



**LEARNING
TOGETHER**



FUN WITH FINGER PAINT

Classroom Corner



**FORD CITY-
DURATION 2**



Kids in Action



Safety and Nutrition

October



When was the last time you sat down to eat together with your family at home? October is National Eat Better, Eat Together Month. It's a great time to start enjoying meals together if you're not already. Eating together as a family allows children and adults to focus on the task at hand...EATING!

Sit down and enjoy your meal as well as each other's company. Setting aside your phone and turning off the television allows you to focus all of your attention on each other. It can lead to great dinner conversation, which opens the lines of communication within your family.

If your family isn't currently eating together, then aim to eat one meal together a week. Schedule it on the calendar. Make sure each family member knows that it's a priority. Once you've consistently met that goal, consider trying to increase the number of meals you eat together to 2 or 3 times per week.

Eating together as a family has many social, physical, and emotional benefits.



YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

SWEET POTATOES AND MUSHROOMS

prep time 20 MINUTES cook time 50 MINUTES

total time 1 HOUR 10 MINUTES

Sweet Potatoes and Mushrooms are roasted together for a tasty side dish anytime of year and this will be a hit with people who like savory sweet potatoes!

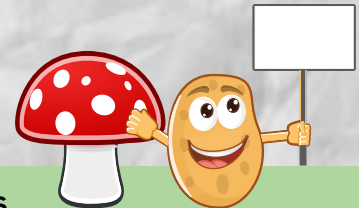
INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 400F/200C.
- Spray a large baking sheet with nonstick spray or olive oil.
- Peel sweet potatoes and cut into 1-inch cubes, trying to make cubes all close to the same size so they cook evenly.
- Whisk together the broth, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and dried thyme.
- Toss sweet potatoes with about half the balsamic mixture, then spread them out in a single layer on the baking sheet and season with salt and fresh-ground black pepper.
- Roast sweet potatoes for 20-25 minutes, just until they're starting to get tender and barely browned on the bottom.
- While sweet potatoes roast, wash mushrooms if needed and spin dry or dry with paper towels.
- Cut mushrooms into thick slices and toss with the rest of the balsamic mixture. (Use the same bowl as you used for the sweet potatoes.)
- When sweet potatoes are getting tender and barely starting to brown, turn them over and spread out on baking sheet again.
- Use a slotted spoon to remove mushrooms from the balsamic mixture (so you don't pour the leftover liquid out onto the roasting pan) and distribute mushrooms among the sweet potatoes, making sure they're in a single layer.
- Roast sweet potatoes and mushrooms 20-25 minutes more, or until sweet potatoes are tender and nicely browned and mushrooms are done.
- Remove to serving bowl, season with more salt and/or fresh ground black pepper if desired, sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve hot.

NOTES

You need about 2 lbs of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes; these are called yams or sweet yams in some stores.

I used homemade chicken stock; you can also use canned chicken broth or use vegetable broth for Vegan. I used regular white mushrooms, but brown Cremini mushrooms would be great.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 large orange-skinned sweet potatoes (see notes)
- 3 T chicken broth or vegetable broth (see notes)
- 2 1/2 T extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 T balsamic vinegar
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- salt and fresh ground black peppers to taste
- 12 oz. mushrooms (see notes)
- 3 T chopped parsley for garnish (optional, but recommended)

Fall 2022

Cooking With Kids

APPLE FRIES WITH CARAMEL CREAM DIP



Prep Time 20 mins Cook Time 10 mins

Total Time 30 mins

Servings

8

Ingredients

For the Apples:

- 4 to 5 tart apples Granny Smith or Pink Lady
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup Wondra flour
- vegetable oil for frying
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/8 cup cinnamon

For the Dip:

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 8 ounces Cool Whip or 1 cup whipping cream with 1/2 cup sugar whipped until stiff
- 1 cup caramel sauce store bought or homemade (see above)

Step 1:

In a fry pan, or deep fryer heat vegetable oil for frying. Mix together the buttermilk and sugar in a medium size bowl. Peel and slice apples and add them to the buttermilk mixture as you go to prevent browning.

Step 2:

Spread wondra flour evenly in a shallow dish. Pull the apples out of the buttermilk mix, one at a time, and lightly coat all sides in the flour.

Step 3:

When oil is nice and hot, gently place coated apples into the oil so they are not touching, when the bottom side begins to turn golden brown, flip them over and brown the second side.

Step 4:

Quickly remove to a tray lined with paper towels to soak up excess grease and cool. Sprinkle immediately with cinnamon and sugar while they are hot.

FOR THE DIP

Step 1:

Mix together the the cream cheese and cool whip until completely blended then stir in the caramel sauce. Place into a bowl for dipping and drizzle a little extra caramel sauce over the top.

Crafting With Kids

Pinecone Hedgehogs

If the pinecones you collect are all closed up, that will be due to them being damp, so they need drying out. You can let them dry out naturally by placing in a bowl on the windowsill, but we are impatient! We pop ours in our airing cupboard to open up, alternately you can bake them in the oven. Yes, you can! Line your baking tray with foil and place your pinecones on the tray spaces out and then put your oven on its lowest setting and watch as the pinecones "pop" and open out. I can not give you a time as it depends on how wet they are or how big they are.



Step 1:

We decided to make a family of Hedgehogs, so the size you cut your felt will depend on the size of your pinecones. We cut the face in the shape of a triangle with the corners rounded and used two different colors of felt. We then cut circular noses out of the black felt



Step 2:

Using a low melt glue gun we stuck the noses on to the face and also used it to stick googly eyes on to the felt faces before gluing the faces to the pinecone hedgehogs.

Materials

1. A selection of pinecones
2. Felt -we used black, brown and pale beige
3. Scissors
4. Low melt glue gun
5. Googly eyes



Fall Shout Outs

Professional Milestones

Rebecca McCallister
Director of Education

Chosen for 2022-2023 Educators Neighborhood Cohort
through the Fred Rogers Institute

Brittany Rocco-Wilson
Head Teacher -Bon Aire

Received her Level II Teaching Certificate
that she was able to obtain over the past
three years of proficient and distinguished
teaching performances. This is a very big
accomplishment especially not being in the
PA Public School System

Kaifa Mulvey-Hibbs
Practice Based Coach-Kittanning

Preschool CLASS Certification

Family Blessings

Tying The Knot



CONGRATULATIONS!

KATIE ANDERSON (FROM SHANNOCK)
GOT MARRIED APRIL 30, 2022! SHE IS
NOW MRS. BRADLEY MOORE



CONGRATULATIONS!

KAILA MULVEY (PRACTICE BASED
COACH-KITTANNING) GOT MARRIED
OCTOBER 15, 2022! SHE IS NOW
MRS. CHRISTOPHER HIBBS!



CONGRATULATIONS!

NICHOLLE BERIE (FROM CVE PRE-K)
GOT MARRIED OCTOBER 8, 2022! SHE
IS NOW MRS. GREG WICKERSON!

Welcome Little Ones



Welcome

Robert (Bo) Hardy- named after his grandfather

Date- 8/17/2022

Parents- Rob and Taryn Hardy

Weight- 7 lbs 13 oz

Length- 21 inches

B A B Y

