

EARLY LEARNING CONNECTIONS

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."



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO, ELISA SPADAFORA



Early Learning Connections is continuing to provide quality services to children and families as we enter 2022. Our agency, as many others, have 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. We are offering a monthly open house for prospective employees interested in employment at Early Learning Connections in both Butler and Armstrong counties.
2. Early Learning Connections will be attending an in person job fair in February
3. 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.
4. Included in our building updates, the Mount Chestnut large conference room floors and wood trim were redone, and the Bon Aire kitchen was painted. There are additional projects underway in other buildings as well.
5. We are continuously enrolling for our programs, and as spring approaches, we will increase our efforts to fully enroll for the 22/23 program year. 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.
6. 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 2022. Program staff are busy making preparations for the review.

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

Human Resources



Job Fairs/Hiring
ELC is hiring for all classroom positions at various locations.

Please visit one of our upcoming job fairs/open interviews or submit an application on our website.
www.earlylearningconnections.org

Welcome to the Team!

- Katarina Braun**
ELRC Provider Liason/Mt. Chestnut
- Kaitlin Anderson**
Head Teacher/Shannock
- Sarah Irion**
ELRC Generalist/Mt. Chestnut
- Mildred Zier**
Executive Assistant/Mt. Chestnut
- Lee Dittman**
Head Teacher/Dassa
- Renee Holby**
Data Management Coordinator
- Stephanie Johnston**
Paraprofessional/Ford City
- Melea Hinchberger**
Assistant Teacher/Bon Aire #5
- Mikayla Shuler**
Paraprofessional/Kittanning HSSAP 2
- Susanne Hamilton**
ELRC STARS Quality Coach /Remote
- Carla Snyder**
Assistant Teacher/Bon Aire
- Summer Wynkoop**
Paraprofessional/Dayton Head Start




Early Learning Connections

JOB FAIR

On-site interviews

January 20th 1012, Sixth Ave, Ford City PA 16226
3pm-5pm

January 25th 139 Rieger Road, Butler PA 16001
8:30am-10:30am

\$1,000 Sign-on Incentive
(Paid in 2 installments)

Positions throughout Armstrong & Butler counties:
Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Paraprofessionals,
Maintenance staff, Program Office Assistants, Parent Educators

Competitive rates, comprehensive benefit package

For more info: (724)287-2761
www.earlylearningconnections.org



Health and Nutrition



Mobile Dentist Visits

Friday January 14th - Butler County - West End
Location - 14 children's teeth were cleaned and examined. We have a tentative back update in February for the children that missed the first date.

Friday January 21st - Armstrong County - Ford City
Location - 15 children were given a cleaning and examination.
Tentative Back up date for Armstrong: February 18th

Special thanks to Alice Valenta, RDH PHDHP with "Golden Onsite Dental" with the help of Lisa Tovcimak-Smith RDH PHDHP with "Link the Valley" who helped make this possible!

Young children need help brushing their teeth. Use a proper amount of fluoride toothpaste to brush after breakfast and before bed. Does your child's toothpaste have fluoride? Using toothpaste with fluoride is the best way to prevent tooth decay! Brush up on oral health at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/oral-health>.

Your children's teeth deserve the best protection against tooth decay. Use toothpaste with fluoride. More info at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/brushing-your-childs-teeth>. Help children brush their teeth after breakfast and before bed. Until children can tie their shoes (about age 8), they need help brushing their teeth.

PEDIATRIC ORAL HEALTH

Dentistry for Better Kid's Dental Health

There are **1,440** minutes in a day. But your teeth needs only 4 minutes of them. Children spend their most of the time in watching tv, playing indoor and outdoor games, using computer, sleeping and so on. Make sure they give 4 minutes to brush their teeth daily.

Brushing
 Just for **2 mins** & **2ce** a day can help prevent painful dental problems.

Oral disease causes parents to miss their approx 25 million working hours per year to take care of their kid's dental health.

Oral disease causes kids to miss their approx 50 + million school hours per year because of the extreme pain in teeth.

Tooth Decay is the **#1** chronic infectious disease affecting children in United States. Dental decay is 5 times more common than asthma.

42% Tooth Decay affects 42% of children aged 2-11 years in US.

39% 39% children ages 5-11 years have had a tooth filling.

20% 20% children ages 5-11 years have cavities that aren't filled.

Catch my toothache!!!

Steps to better dental health for KIDS

Fun Tooth Brushes & Flavored Tooth Paste

Always keep a variety of colorful, fun toothbrushes for kids to choose from everyday. Also, use some additional fun accessories like funny floss holders.

Use flavored toothpaste that increase interest of your kid in brushing.

Healthy Eating, Limit Snacks & Sugar

Teach your children which food is good for them and which can cause severe pain in their teeth.

Show them examples so that they can better understand. Ask them to eat healthy, limit on snacks and sugary food products.

Reward them, if they follow your Instructions

Reward your kids when they follow your instructions for daily brushing and flossing.

You may gift them some games, toys or let them go for an outing, movie etc. It will boost them to do a great job brushing and flossing.

Find Right Dentist

Pediatric Dentists has expertise on kids dentistry and they are specialized dentists who know how to deal with kids.

Issued & Published by Great Hill Dental

GREAT HILL DENTAL PARTNERS, LLC

Family Engagement

On December 7th, the Armstrong Family Service Workers held a virtual Winter Event. This event included 3 dances; the often-requested Freeze Dance, the Winter Hokey Pokey, and the Penguin Dance. We read a classic children's story, "The Mitten" and followed up the story with a craft. We sent home a box of animal crackers wrapped in white paper, a pair of gloves, and various art supplies like gems, markers, pipe cleaners, and googly eyes. The families worked together to create their own unique snowman. While the children ate a snack, the Family Service Workers talked to the caregivers about the importance of dressing warm in the winter. They also reminded the families about making sure children stay safe in their car seats and never wear a puffy jacket under the straps. Every family that participated in the event were put in a drawing and the winner was the Dingess family from Ford City who won a \$50.00 Walmart gift card. Butler County is planning a similar event in February.

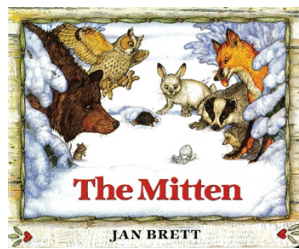


Check This Out!

Positive Solutions for Families
(For parents of children ages 2-8)

Join us for 6 Friday mornings, Virtually on Zoom, from 10:00-12:00 for a Free Training Series!

Being a parent of a young toddler or preschooler is an important part of your life! It can be fun and rewarding, but hard work, too! You can pick and choose which trainings to attend, but if you attend all 6 sessions in the series you will receive a \$50.00 gift card. Please RSVP by the day before for each training you plan to attend, by calling Emily at 724-287-2761, ext. 302 and a ZOOM link will be emailed to you.



February 11, 2022 - Making Connections, Building positive relationships-The power of positivity

February 25, 2022 - Making it Happen, The Importance of play and learning-Building friendship skills

March 11, 2022 - Why do Children Do What They DO?, Understanding behavior - Household rules

March 25, 2022 - Teach me What to Do - Identifying feelings-Handling anger and disappointment

April 8, 2022 - Facing the Challenge Part 1, Reasonable expectations-Getting Cooperation

April 22, 2022 - Facing the Challenges Part 2 - Behaviors: prevention, skills to teach, follow up.

Winter Weather Safety



DRESSING FOR COLD WEATHER

adding layers will help keep you warm as the temperature drops

CHILLY

- 1-2 layers
- long layer
- outer layer to keep out wind, rain
- warm shoes water proof

COLD

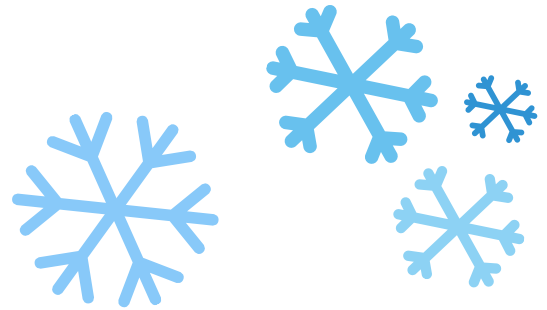
- 2-3 layers
- gloves
- warm hat
- outer layer to keep out wind, wet snow
- boots water proof

EXTREME COLD

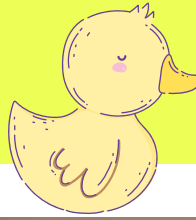
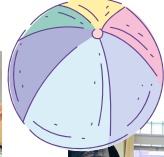
- 3+ layers / insulating
- gloves
- warm hat
- face mask
- outer layer to keep out wind
- boots water proof

SLEDDING SAFETY TIPS

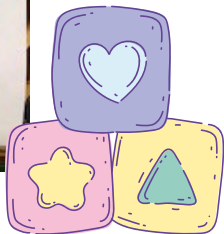
- ✓ Choose the right hill – don't pick one that is too steep and ends in a street, parking lot, or body of water.
- ✓ Choose hills that are snowy rather than icy
- ✓ Sled during the daytime, when visibility is better.
- ✓ Wear water-resistant winter clothing
- ✓ Avoid loose scarves that can get caught and have a possibility of strangulation.



Classroom Corner



Spotlight on Armstrong County!

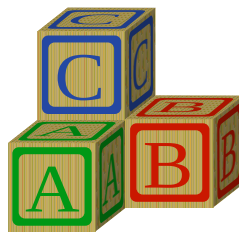


EHS/HS Home-Based Program



New Home-Based EHS/HS socialization classroom located at Butler Oakland site.

Early Head Start and Head Start Home-Based children and their families come and spend time in the classroom with their teachers. They are given health screenings when they enter and get to play and socialize for about 1.5 hours.



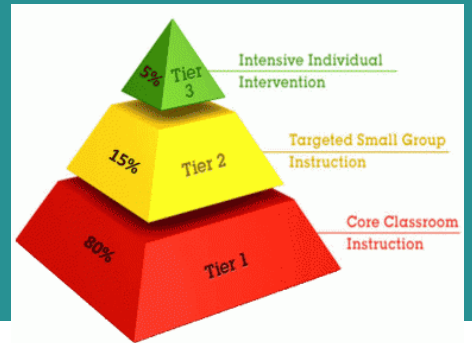
Early Head Start (EHS) is a comprehensive child development program. It offers FREE linguistically and culturally appropriate health, education, and social services to income-eligible families that include a pregnant woman and/or children, ages 0-3. Child-centered services of the highest quality are provided in the family's home or the childcare center. Early Head Start's family-driven philosophy empowers parent to support and nurture their children, while meeting other critical social and economic goals. Early Head Start recognizes the demands in caring for very young children. Our staff values the involvement of families in their child's early learning, social, and cultural experiences. Early Head Start helps pregnant women stay healthy and have a healthy baby. Early Head Start assists parents with very young children to take a lead role in their child's learning and development, become their baby's first teachers, and build positive family relationships.

Early Head Start Provides the Following Services:

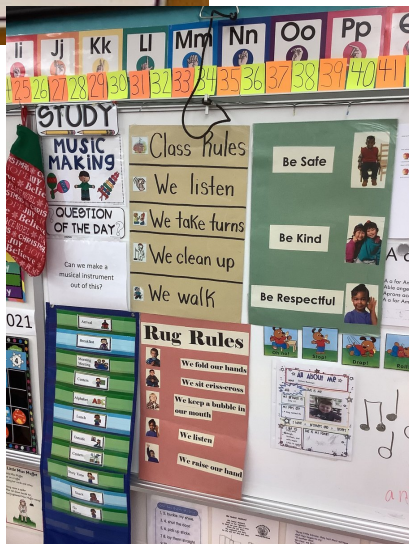
- Weekly home visit by a Parent Educator
- Prenatal education and support
- Parent support and parent/child activities
- Partnership with full-day child care for infants and toddlers
- Referrals for healthcare, social services, housing, and food assistance
- Help with job training, GED, health insurance, and public benefits
- Support for children with disabilities and their families
- Group activities and socialization

Armstrong County
 Apollo - Home-Based (Apollo, PA)
 Ford City - Center-Based (Ford City, PA)

Butler County
 Bon Aire Early Learning Center - Center-Based (Butler, PA)
 Oakland Learning Center - Home-Based (Butler, PA)



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:

- o Be Safe
- o Be Kind
- o Be Respectful





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



Staff Shout-Outs

Happy Retirement

Karen McAndrews
47 years! We Will Miss You!

Professional Accomplishments

Brittney Courson, Program Manager
CLASS Recertification Preschool

Jacqueline Hranica, Program Manager
CLASS Recertification Preschool/Infant-Toddler

Kimmy Hillebrand, Quality Assurance Coordinator
CLASS Recertification Preschool

Samantha Moury, Paraprofessional
CDA Preschool Credential

Bundles of Joy



Megan Koller,
Bruin Head Teacher
Baby Boy,
January 10, 2022
"Lucian James" 8lb 4oz



Charlotte Skunda,
Rowan Assistant Teacher
Grandson,
January 23, 2022
"Xander" 6lb 3oz

