



Arkansas Children's Week 2025

Planning Toolkit

Fall in Love with Reading

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 and planning webinars

These can be found under the **resources tab** on the **A-State Childhood Services website**, <https://www.astate.edu/a/childhood-services/links-and-resources/>

Our annual, statewide Arkansas Children's Week celebration occurs in April each year.

Arkansas Children's Week

April 5 - 11, 2025

Each year's celebration has a topic, guided by suggestions from the field. This year, our theme is **Fall in Love with Reading**. We're considering positive, purposeful ways to share books with children of all ages.

Big Ideas for 2025

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

▶ **Books serve many different and important purposes.**

They can....

- Invite us to play with the sounds of language
- Provide answers to our questions
- Share rich, imaginative stories
- Offer amazing artwork - right at our fingertips
- Help us learn about ourselves and others
- Stretch our concept knowledge
- Empower us to document and communicate our experiences

This year, we'll take a closer look at a wide range of books, considering when, where, and how we might use them with children.

▶ **The right book, shared at the right time and in the right way, helps children fall in love with reading!**

A child's feelings about books and reading are shaped by their interactions with family and educators. This year, we'll explore the adults' role in vibrant, positive storytimes and other book-related experiences.



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.

On the following pages, you'll find many possibilities for Arkansas Children's Week celebrations. These are just examples. You and your staff will also have ideas of your own.

Informal Guest Readers

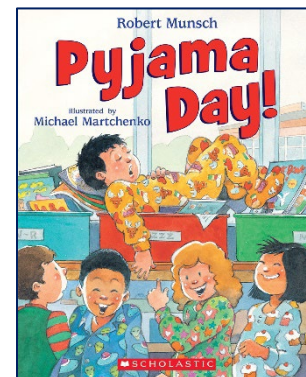
Guest readers are a classic tradition for many programs, but not all visitors feel comfortable reading books to large groups of children. Instead of making guest readers perform center stage, consider inviting them to join during indoor and outdoor playtimes. You can prepare for their visit with a special seat and a book basket stocked with some of your group's favorites. When each guest arrives, introduce them to the children and help them get settled. Children choose to flow in and out of the reading area to connect with the reader. Involving guests in informal reading is less stressful and more fun for everyone!

Older groups might even opt to strive for a new program record. Could each group of preschoolers meet 25 guest readers in a single week? Parents, older siblings, grandparents, community leaders, and others could sign up for one of five slots each day. With informal reading, it's fine for the slots to overlap. For example, you might have three different readers on the playground at the same time. Take lots of photos and consider a press release about the record number of guest readers supporting your young learners!

Classic Spirit Days with a Book-ish Twist

If spirit days are part of your usual Children's Week celebration, layer in a matching book for each day. Here are some examples.

- ▶ Pajama Day, paired with *Llama, Llama Red Pajama*, *Froggy's Sleepover*, or Robert Munsch's *Pyjama Day*
- ▶ Backwards Day, paired with *Silly Sally* or Ruth Krauss' *The Backward Day*
- ▶ Hat Day, paired with *The Cat in the Hat*, *Caps for Sale*, or Lita Judge's *Red Hat*





Book Swap

Take one, leave one. When we trade books, everyone ends up with something new! You might organize an educator book swap at a staff meeting or in your workroom, or you could create a book swap table for families. If you want to take this idea to the next level, consider creating or updating a Little Free Library for families and neighbors. You can find tips for getting started at <https://littlefreelibrary.org/>

Story Kit Lending Library

Story kits are another book-sharing option. Fill drawstring bags or lidded boxes with a book or two and a puppet, puzzle, or other simple extension activity. Here are three examples using classic picture books.

- *Where's Spot?* with a dog puppet that looks like Spot to hide and seek.
- *Harold and the Purple Crayon* with a pad of blank paper and an oversized purple crayon.
- *Corduroy* with a set of large lacing buttons.

Celebrating Reading at Home

Share information with families about the value of reading at home, such as the free printable flyers at www.readaloud.org.

Experts recommend that we begin reading to children at birth and continue well into the schoolage years. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends reading to children for at least 15 minutes each day. Reading together can happen before school, in restaurants and waiting rooms, at bedtime, or any time!

Find a way to invite families to tell about their child's favorite books during Arkansas Children's Week and throughout the month of April. Families might record books they read at home on die-cut paper flowers to add to a "Reading and Growing" garden-themed bulletin board. Or, you might invite families to record short book-talk videos where they show a beloved book and explain why it is a family favorite. These could be shared through secure (private) social media.



StoryWalk

A StoryWalk is a story-sharing event that takes place along a hallway, 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. Since the Arkansas Children's Week StoryWalk idea was introduced in 2020, it has become a tradition for many programs and communities. Find more tips for a successful StoryWalk at <https://letsmovelibraries.org/storywalk/>

Meet Us at the Park

Plan a traditional picnic in the park with a twist. Create a reading area by setting up clusters of quilts and lawn chairs or draping colorful cloths over picnic tables in a gazebo. Place baskets of favorite picture books throughout this area. Families can play, enjoy something good to eat, and spend some time reading together.



Celebrating All Kinds of Books

Focus on a different kind of books each day of the week. Here's one possible outline.

- Monday, focus on concept books that highlight colors, letters, and numbers. Read *Mouse Paint* and mix colorful finger paints. Or, read *Chick Chicka Boom Boom* and search for magnetic alphabet letters that have been hidden on your playground.
- Tuesday, focus on factual, informational books. Go for nature walks. Or, invite guest(s) to bring farm animals, a big truck, or some other real thing for your children to discover. Read factual books that match.
- Wednesday, focus on rhyming books. Eat green eggs and ham and enjoy your favorite activities inspired by Dr. Seuss. *Jamberry* or *Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site* could also take center stage on rhyming book day!
- Thursday, focus on classic storybooks. Mother Goose or another character might come to visit, and children can dress as favorite story characters. You could also decorate bookmarks or tote bags for library books.
- Friday, focus on child-created stories and books. Tell stories and make scrapbooks to highlight your adventures throughout the week.

Book Drive

Invite families to donate new or gently used books for children in shelters or foster homes.

Meet the Librarian

Take a field trip to a library or invite a children's librarian to visit your program. Share library card applications with families. You might also opt to share enrollment information for the Arkansas Imagination Library. <https://arkansasimaginationlibrary.org/>

Book-Inspired Art Display

Create individualized artwork in the style of favorite children's books or illustrators. For example, you might make bright paper collages like Lois Ehlert, glitter glue creations inspired by *Just Add Glitter*, or torn paper and scribble designs inspired by *Beautiful Oops*. Display your work in your program halls or lobby, or partner with a library or bank for a community display.

Storybook-Themed Carnival Night

Each room/group can bring a favorite picture book to life with decorations and games. It's a great chance to get creative! Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- ▶ *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* toss
- ▶ *Make Way for Ducklings* duck pond game or rubber duck races
- ▶ *Giraffes Can't Dance*-a-thon

A comfy read-aloud area featuring all of the books can be part of the carnival, too.

Act It Out

With family permission, video record small groups of children as they act out nursery rhymes, fairy tales, or other familiar stories. Puppet shows are fun, too! Share your videos with families via secure (private) social media.

Reader's Theater

Partner with a local theater or storytelling group to share a child-friendly production for families. You might arrange a field trip or family day at the theater, or a traveling group might come to you.

Author or Illustrator Visit

Do you know anyone who has created a book? Invite them to visit to come talk about how books are created and published.

Springtime Stories

Celebrate all the wonderful, outdoorsy things that April has to offer by pairing books with special firsthand experiences. Here are a few possibilities.

- ▶ Books about flowers, such as *The Tiny Seed*, paired with planting and gardening experiences.
- ▶ Books about wind, such as *The Wind Blew* with kites, windsocks, and pinwheels.
- ▶ Books about mud, such as *The Piggy in the Puddle* with mud play, and/or books about rain with sprinkler or rainy day play.
- ▶ Books about birds, such as *Mama Built a Little Nest*, with birdfeeder making.
- ▶ Books about frogs, ducks, or butterflies, with real-life experiences to match.

Program Parade

Invite children to decorate t-shirts, make hats, or dress as their favorite storybook characters. 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, waving or playing rhythm instruments. School-agers might lead the parade on bicycles and kick-powered scooters.

Record 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. Don't forget to invite your local television news station to attend your parade!



Celebrating Educators

Many programs view Arkansas Children's Week as an opportunity to celebrate program staff. Here are some ways that programs have recognized and thanked staff for their role in children's learning.

- ▶ Acknowledgement and a round of applause at your ACW family event
- ▶ Arkansas Children's Week t-shirts, tote bags, or aprons
- ▶ Decorations on each classroom door, or an entranceway banner expressing appreciation for staff
- ▶ Breakfast pastries or a luncheon in the staff break area, or restaurant gift cards to give staff a night off from cooking
- ▶ Break room makeover to give educators a special, spa-inspired space to recharge.
- ▶ Small appreciation gifts for the ways they support and encourage children each day. Here are some possibilities.
 - A coffee or tea “pick-me-up” in appreciation of the positive energy they bring
 - A tube of good-smelling hand cream in appreciation of the hands-on ways they engage with children each day
 - A bouquet of flowers representing the ways they help each child bloom and grow
 - A copy of *Mrs. Spitzer's Garden* or Eric Carle's *Thank You, Teacher* with individualized notes from administrators and families tucked inside.



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 (Fall in Love with Reading) and the power of positive early experiences to shape children's feelings about books and reading. Arkansas Children's Week can also offer an opportunity to highlight the importance of high-quality early learning 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](https://www.instagram.com/astate.childhood.services).

You can subscribe to our weekly digital newsletter by emailing chs@AState.edu.

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

Stage 1 - Getting Started

- ▶ 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, lunch meetings, or something else? You don't need exact meeting dates yet, but you 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.

Stage 2 – Collaboration

- ▶ 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 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 sources.
- ▶ 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. Offering events at various times of day may boost attendance. You might offer an event at drop-off one day and an evening event another day.
- ▶ 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 down your event(s) into tasks that can be managed by different team members. Examples include but are not limited to, those listed below.
 - 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 group 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 process.
- ▶ Share information about Arkansas Children's Week plans with all program staff.
"Save the Date!"

- ▶ Begin collecting orders for Arkansas Children's Week t-shirts, if desired.
 - The 2025 Arkansas Children's Week t-shirt is heather gray with a three-color logo. **Click [here](#) or go to <https://bit.ly/ACW25Logo> 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.



T-shirt Day is Thursday, April 10, 2025.

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

Stage 3 - Coordination

- ▶ Register for—and plan to participate in—an Arkansas Children's Week 2025 workshop. The workshop will be available in March in communities around the state! You can view the workshop schedule at <https://bit.ly/ACW25workshops>.
- ▶ 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 materials for projects, 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. Children’s Week events are positive, community-interest stories for your local newspaper and/or television news station.

Sample media invitation for local news outlets

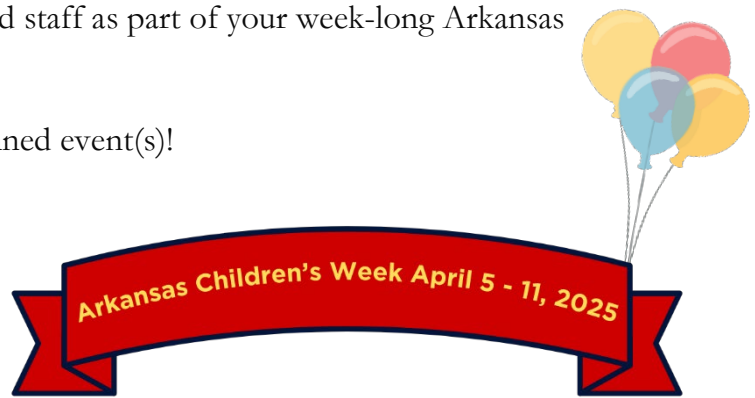
[Name(s) of your Program/Affiliate/Organization(s)] is celebrating Arkansas Children’s Week, April 5 - 11, 2025! This is an opportunity to show what [your city] is doing to help young children here in our community.

[Describe your event, highlighting any opportunities the news outlet might video or 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 early childhood education. 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].

Stage 4 - Final Preparation

- ▶ 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 role on the day of your event(s).
- ▶ Share specific event plans with all program staff and answer any questions about when events will occur and how they will flow. What do classroom staff need to know to have a successful experience?
- ▶ 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)!



Stage 5 - Reflection and Conclusion (after your events)

- ▶ Have a get-together 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 2025 stories! You can share your experience with us by emailing chs@AState.edu.



During Arkansas Children's Week and throughout the year, you and your program help children **fall in love with reading**. Thank you for all you do!



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION