WHAT'S NEW IN 2021?
VIRTUAL LEARNING UPDATE

PRINCIPAL PROFILES
MEET OUR NEWEST LEADERS!

PLAY
10 THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

LAUNCHING CAREERS
MENTAL WELLNESS

ROGERS RESULTS
ALUMNI PURSUITING DREAMS

ROGERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEWS // VOL. 14 // WINTER 2021
While many schools across the country last year had limited school attendance, Arkansas schools and RPS went a full year battling the challenges of Covid through great efforts from our staff and parents.

We are focused this year on transitioning to as much of a “normal” year as it can be with improvements made every day. Like all schools, we are working to close any learning gaps that students might have experienced through the Covid conditions last year.

The district has utilized some additional federal dollars this year to provide specific assistance to our students through extra tutoring during the day, credit recovery options and the hiring of special success coordinators to help students who need the extra assistance and guidance.

We continue to offer a virtual opportunity to our elementary and secondary students, although the great majority of our students have returned to our campuses.

In this edition, you will learn more about some of these efforts including an update on virtual learning and the work of our success coordinators. You will get to meet some of our new staff leaders as the district continues to attract the very best educators to our district. Finally, you can read about some recent honors for our schools and district as well as learn more about some guidance for parents that can help all students.

Thank you for your continued support of our district. We are focused on making this an excellent year for our students.

– Dr. Marlin Berry
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Forbes Names Rogers #1 Employer in Arkansas

Rogers Public Schools has been ranked No. 1 on the Forbes list of Best-In-State Employers 2021. This prestigious award is presented by Forbes and Statista Inc., the world-leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider.

America’s Best-In-State Employers 2021 were identified in an independent survey based on a sample of approximately 80,000 Americans working for companies with more than 500 employees in the United States.

Across 25 industry sectors, 1,329 employer brands were ranked among the top employers. The evaluation was based on direct and indirect recommendations from employees who were asked to rate their willingness to recommend their own employers to friends and family.

Employees were also asked to evaluate other employers in their respective industry and state that stood out either positively or negatively.

Based on the results of the study, Rogers Public Schools is honored to be recognized on the Forbes list of Best-In-State Employers 2021.

Dr. Marlin Berry, superintendent of the Rogers Public Schools, announced the award to staff members and thanked them for their work.

“We all knew this place is special thanks to the effort and care each of you put into your work every day,” Berry shared in his note to staff. “Now it’s official.”
Janie Darr Named Top Elementary in State

U.S. News released its K-12 rankings and one Rogers school rose to the very top. Janie Darr Elementary was selected as the No. 1 elementary school in the state based on its academic success. Many other Rogers schools were also among the top tier schools for the state.

AP Computer Science Pays

Rogers High School was one of the leading schools that received incentive rewards for top scores of 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Computer Science exam. RPS garnered more than $3,000 in rewards and its students over $13,000.

National Merit Semifinalists

Rogers High School seniors Dylan Bealey and James Hudgins were among the top 1 percent of students taking the PSAT and have been selected as National Merit Semifinalists. Their high achievement opens up not only national recognition but also the opportunity for additional scholarships.

Grace Hill Growth

Grace Hill Elementary has been selected by the Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as one of seven “Schools on the Move” for raising its student achievement by more than 5 percent.

Tennis Success

Rogers High School tennis team members Grace Lueders and Jenna Bohnert won the state doubles title for the third year in a row this year. The RHS girls’ team were also state runner-up champions. Congratulations!

STATE AND NATIONAL HONORS
Rogers Public Schools has been awarded $125,000 in special American Rescue Plan funding to provide extra opportunities for career preparation and technical training.

Rogers’ Launch career program will help high school students to personalize their learning and take courses and trainings based on their individual interests and career plans. “If students are interested in business, interior design, robotics, healthcare, welding or any number of careers, we can connect them with certifications and trainings that meet their schedule – whether it’s during school, after school or online,” said Dawn Stewart, district director of career and technical education. “This is a way to power up for your career while still in high school – for free or at very little cost!”

Rogers was awarded the grant by the state Division of Elementary and Secondary Education and Arkansas State University through the Arkansas Out of School Network program that oversees emergency relief funds from the American Rescue Plan specifically for after-school, summer and extended learning programs.

These Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER III) funds target helping students overcome the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with additional learning opportunities and support. Registration has opened at launchyourfuture.net and students can complete the online form on the Extended Learning Programs webpage. Training courses and programs aligning with nationally recognized Career Clusters and Pathways will be offered, including but not limited to in-demand positions such as Certified Nurse’s Assistant, EKG Technician, Medical Assistant, Retail Management, Electrician, Emergency Medical Responder and Welder.

Launch career programs will be offered in a variety of learning environments including on-site at district campuses, online courses, and at local industry and medical training facilities. Students will also have opportunities to attend post-secondary courses, training and certification programs offered by Northwest Arkansas Community College during the regular school year and summer months.

More information can be found at launchyourfuture.net or by contacting the program director, Dawn Stewart, at 479-636-3910.
Rogers Heritage High School 2015 grad Sven Larson has taken his broadcasting skills to the next level as Game Day production assistant for the Kansas City Chiefs. "I went to the University of Arkansas and graduated with a bachelors in Broadcast Journalism. If it weren't for people like Ms. Collins or Mrs. Daut, I definitely would not be where I'm at today. They motivated me to reach for a bigger college like the U of A even though I wasn't sure if I could afford it. They told me to apply for every scholarship out there and to just give it all a try. Mrs. Daut ended up giving me her own personal scholarship and I ended up being able to pay off more than half of my freshman year with all the scholarships I applied for."  #RogersResults

War Eagle alumna CJ Landram ('17) is currently studying abroad in Rome as part of her UA Honors College and Faye Jones School of Architecture studies. While there, she received a special proposal in front of the Trevi Fountain from another Rogers graduate, George Black.  #RogersResults

SHATTERING THE RECORDS
BROOKE MATTHEWS -- LEADING ON THE GREEN

Rogers High School alumna Brooke Matthews set the NCAA record for 54 holes with a 25 under par score in September. Ranked No. 1 in college golf by Golfweek this fall, Matthews is a senior on the University of Arkansas golf team and has earned numerous honors including First Team All-SEC in 2021. #RogersResults
In 2021, families need flexibility for a variety of reasons, and Rogers is ready with a virtual learning option.

When the pandemic caused parents to consider whether learning on campus was the best fit for their children in 2020, Rogers Public Schools was fortunate that it already had launched a virtual high school program in 2019 that was ready to meet the need for those who wanted to learn from home. That program was quickly able to scale up to accommodate more than 1,000 middle school and high school students.

At the elementary level, expert teachers, administrators and curriculum specialists adapted the Rogers elementary curriculum for the virtual learning environment with the same content, rigor and pacing used in the regular classroom for more than 1,000 students who wanted to learn from home during the pandemic.

Now, virtual learning is here to stay. This fall, Rogers Public Schools established a physical location at 605 W. Dyke Road for the Rogers Virtual Learning program. The former corporate office was renovated to provide a place where teachers had all of the resources and equipment for teaching online, and a place where students and families could access tutoring, meet with teachers, and pick up equipment and books.

The parking lot is generally near capacity with visiting parents and more than 25 staff members based there. All are local teachers who have opted to work with virtual students.

Program administrators Darla Tomasko and Kristy Brown have found the facility to be a tremendous benefit for both staff and families.

"I feel like we have more access to families and kids, and it promotes connections," said Brown, who oversees the elementary grades within the program. "There are more connections being made this year, and they need that."

Enrollment
Currently Rogers is serving 220 student elementary students and 278 secondary students, which is less than last year.

"There’s a niche for virtual education," said Tomasko, the director of alternative education programs for the Rogers School District. "I have some dedicated families."

Some families have discovered they prefer to have their children learn from home as a health precaution. Some want the flexibility to travel for extended periods, and others are helping their child pursue a special interest like competitive gymnastics.

Kayla Grace Ryan has been in the Rogers Virtual Learning program since its first year, drawn by its recognized quality and rigor.

"Once we learned years ago that Kayla Grace was serious about gymnastics, I began homeschooling her in 4th grade," her mother Katherine Ryan said. "However, once Rogers School District implemented a virtual learning program before her 8th grade year, we moved to that so that she can graduate from Rogers and also have the security of knowing that her course work is NCAA approved. Virtual school is not for everyone, but it has been a great fit for Kayla Grace."

With the flexibility of the program, the competitive gymnast has been able to balance her education and interests.

"I am a level 10 gymnast, and I train 32 hours a week," Kayla Grace Ryan said. "RVL allows me to get a quality education, train gymnastics, and still be active in my church youth group and have fun with friends."

An Unexpected Benefit
Both Tomasko and Brown have noted benefits from having teachers working with students ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade based at the same building. This proximity has provided special opportunities to share ideas and understand the learning progression from grade to grade.

"I think it’s so cool to have K-12 together," said Tomasko, who oversees the middle and high school students and staff. "They can see where the kids are going."

Staff also love that they can help the whole family and help parents with multiple children – even with ones whose ages span from the lower to upper grade levels.
The Whitings have two children in the program and they have seen Zoe and Zachery grow in personal commitment and self-direction.

“This program helped our children discover how great they are and therefore has built their confidence and led them to success,” Geraldine Whiting said. “Bottom line, they are motivated! Seeing my children being successful and happy is my husband’s and my greatest reward.”

A Typical Day for an Elementary Student
Teachers share the day’s lessons by 7 a.m. Students typically spend about three to four hours each day working on the lessons, but this can be done at flexible times to match the parents’ work schedule. Several times a week, students meet with their teacher and classmates virtually. Classroom teachers also have set office hours so parents and other family members who serve as learning coaches can check in with questions or concerns.

Besides the elementary core subjects, virtual students also have music, library media, art and physical education as well as comprehensive services such as gifted and talented, special education, and English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. They also have access to school counselors, social workers and free meals.

New for Grades 6-12 This Year
For the higher grades, Rogers now employs all local Rogers teachers and leverages extensive curriculum resources through a new provider, FlexPoint Education, this year. This change provided additional flexibility allowing their Rogers teachers to group assignments and set deadlines as well as meet with students or parents in person periodically.

Despite the physical distance from students, the Rogers Virtual teachers have gotten to know their students well.

“You see, while Kayla Grace is her name, everyone that knows her calls her by the nickname of KG,” Katherine Ryan shared. “KG loved that her (virtual) teacher immediately recognized that. All of her (RVL) teachers refer to her as KG, which just shows that they really do care and want to get to know her as a person.”

The Whitings have seen their children establish new routines and structure it each in their own way.

“Zachery has grown tremendously in personal confidence and in academic success,” his mother said. “He has created his own daily routine not only in school but in how he prepares himself to start his school day. He sets his alarm clock to get up, makes his bed, showers, has breakfast and dives into his daily schoolwork -- all without us telling him a word. He is confident and works very hard for his grades. Zoe, on the other hand, being a senior, structures herself differently. She sometimes goes to a café and works … or sometimes she stays at home, but either way she's very organized in her daily routine. In our opinion, this is just one step away from what they will both be experiencing in college.”

The 3 Key Ingredients
Brown finds there are three essential elements for younger students to thrive in the virtual learning program.

- A learning coach at home – this could be a parent or it could be an older sibling or an aunt that partners with the virtual teacher.
- A schedule – a consistent plan for when students work on assignments
- A designated spot for learning – somewhere that is not their bed.

“If they have those three things, they’ll be successful,” Brown said. For more information about Rogers Virtual Learning, visit rogersschools.net/virtual.
New Kids on the Block
Meet three distinguished educators who have recently taken leadership roles in Rogers.

**Jeff Wasem**  
ROGERS HERITAGE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

**Education:** BS in Education - John Brown Univ.; MA in Education - Univ. of Arkansas; District Level Licensure - Harding Univ.; pursuing EdD at Harding

**Previous Positions:** Asst. Principal - Lingle Middle School; Principal - Old High & Creekside MS

**Years in Education:** 21

**Greatest Influence:** Personally, my dad and mom. And, my wife is a rock star! Professionally, ALL teachers because they are superheroes as well as Roger Hill, Mike Poore, Debbie Jones, Lisa St. John, & Tiffany Ansel.

**One word that best describes you:** Reflective

**What drew you to education?** My dad was a Colonel in the U.S. Air Force. He worked in hospital administration. I had the opportunity to watch him lead and was humbled how he built a foundation of relationships with all people, and served them well.

**Advice for students:** Follow your passions and know your strengths.

**Our family moved all of the time - Illinois, Turkey, Sicily, Holland, Texas. I had some good experiences in school and some not so positive experiences. It is important to me that every student who comes to Heritage receives a high-quality education built on the foundation of relationship and academic achievement.

**Advice for students:** Find something you are passionate about and that you enjoy. Though money does open many doors, do something in life that makes you happy regardless of how much money you make.

**Visionary**

**One word that best describes you:** Creative

**Life motto:** Always be nice! People might not always remember the many times you treated them with respect, but the one time you treat someone poorly will never be forgotten. Be a hero and always choose to wear the white hat.

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**Molly Brock**  
OLD WIRE ROAD ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

**Education:** BS in Education & MA in Teaching - University of Arkansas; ESOL Endorsement - Arkansas Tech; Ed Leadership - Harding University

**Previous Positions:** Classroom Teacher & ESOL Instructional Facilitator at Parson Hills Elementary; Assistant Principal at Lee Elementary in Springdale

**Years in Education:** 21

**What drew you to education as a career?** Growing up I loved school and the teachers I had throughout my education in Rogers. Several teachers made learning personalized, which made me excited about learning and the process of learning. I wanted to be just like the great educators that taught me and be someone in this world that would make a difference in the lives of kids and our community.

**Greatest Influence:** My mother was the greatest person that I adored and admired. After my dad passed away when I was only 1 year old, my mom worked hard to raise six children on her own. The hard work and dedication that she showed made me want to be the best person I could be in everything I do.

**One word that best describes you:** Visionary

**Life motto:** Be courageous, be kind, work hard, believe in yourself, take care of your family, and be thankful for what God blesses you with.

**What might someone be surprised to know about you?** I love soccer! I played soccer on an adult soccer team until I was 40 years old. I have also coached soccer.

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**Tim Smithey**  
DIRECTOR OF GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

**Education:** AA-Arkansas State University; BA-Harding University; MA-Harding University

**Previous Positions:** Director of Gifted Programs; Coordinator of Economic Education; G/T Facilitator; Social Studies Teacher; College Level Instructor

**Years in Education:** 28.5

**Greatest Influences:** 1. My grandmother Dixie. This woman was a genius and was such a joy to be around. She quizzed me all the time and taught me so much about her life and those experiences. She was an amazing writer and storyteller. 2. Mrs. Swartz, my third grade teacher who happened to be from Rhodesia in Africa. From her, I learned that people who we perceive as different are really more like us than we might think. 3. Coach Stewart, my junior high social studies teacher that was also an actor.

4. Mr. Neu was a first year teacher when I was a senior and taught World History. [He paired me with an 8th grade accelerated student] and we were challenged every day by “think-outside-the-box.” This was where I first experienced differentiation. From that point, I knew I wanted to teach. (And Mr. Neu went into gifted education.)

**Advice for students:** Find something you are passionate about and that you enjoy. Though money does open many doors, do something in life that makes you happy regardless of how much money you make.

**One word that best describes you:** Creative

**Life motto:** Always be nice! People might not always remember the many times you treated them with respect, but the one time you treat someone poorly will never be forgotten. Be a hero and always choose to wear the white hat.
Emerging from the pandemic, many students have endured the loss of family members, a disruption in learning and a drop in motivation. To help students overcome these difficulties, Rogers Public Schools has invested some of its emergency school funding in hiring seven student success coordinators dedicated to students in need.

“We know that there has been a gap in a lot of our students’ learning,” Assistant Superintendent Jim Davis said. “There has been a gap in their participation and attendance at school because of circumstances they could not have controlled. So the why behind this position is to help solve these problems so that students are transitioned back to their school and they have a better chance of being successful.”

The student success coordinators at each Rogers high school and middle school help struggling students not only belong, but learn and ultimately succeed.

“The student success coordinator is in direct alignment to our mission,” Davis said. This unique position is a proactive way to build relationships with students so they have an advocate on their campus.

Jason Oller, the student success coordinator for Kirksey Middle School, said he looks forward to helping students who have additional obstacles. He wants to partner with students so they have a sense of belonging and a person they can turn to for help. The Rogers School District believes this investment will pay lifelong dividends.

“When we have mentors in our lives, it can change us forever,” said Margaret Perry, the student success coordinator at Elmwood Middle School. “I am hoping I can have that impact on students.”

Student success coordinators will have the time and flexibility to focus on individual students so they can support their academic, behavioral and social emotional needs.

“I think with Covid and everything that we’ve been through in the last year and a half, we all need an extra friend and extra ally to help us find our smile,” said Christian Saavedra, the Rogers Heritage High School coordinator.

Student success coordinators help identify a student’s need and develop a success plan to guide the student on a path to graduation. The coordinator is someone that helps them both envision their future as well as someone that helps them day to day.

“When they can’t find anyone else on their side, I’m going to be that person that gets them through that day or that hour or that class or through life at that moment,” said Jeff Barker, the student success coordinator at Lingle Middle School.

The goals for this special initiative will be to:
- increase on-time credits,
- increase attendance rates,
- increase graduation rates,
- decrease drop-out rates and
- decrease discipline referrals.

“We want the parents to understand we are in partnership so your child is successful,” Davis said. “If we can help improve our attendance, we can reduce our failure rate, increase our graduation rate, and reduce the drop-out rate, it’s a huge success.”
As children grow, parents may wonder if their child’s behavior is typical for their age or if these changes may be signs that their child is struggling and needs help. Ozark Guidance explored this topic in one of its recent information webinars for parents, Child Development: Changes vs. Red Flags. Luke Jackson, a mental health professional and outreach specialist, tackled the topic to raise awareness of typical child and adolescent development, some of the common challenging behaviors and signs of mental illness as well as to share support available. We’ll recap a few of the highlights here, but to view the webinar in its entirety, scan the QR code on the right with your phone’s camera to open the link.

As children develop, they undergo many physical changes that you can see in height and puberty, but they also are growing mentally and socially. They move from needing constant care as young children to increasing independence incrementally year by year. Their brains are also under construction. Their limbic system, the emotional part of their brain, is developing and very active while the prefrontal cortex (the executive, decision-making portion of their brain) is still under construction and not fully “online”.

While parents may wonder what happened to their sweet little sidekick, Jackson notes that it is typical for teenagers to have difficulty controlling their impulses, to react emotionally under stress, and to crave belonging in their peer group.

“We may not take into consideration this part of their development,” Jackson noted. “We, as parents, may sometimes get surprised at our teenagers reacting emotionally or having a hard time calming down — whereas it could just be a part of typical development for them to have an emotional roller coaster with us at times.”

All children will experience being sad, anxious, irritable or aggressive at times. It’s also common that they may find it difficult to pay attention, sit still or get along with others at times. So how do parents know when their child’s behavior is typical or developmentally appropriate and when they may need help?

Jackson shared a few common mental illnesses as a starting point, so parents might understand their characteristics and if their child may need help from a trained professional.

**Common Concerns**

**ADHD**

While children typically have shorter attention spans ranging from 6-15 minutes for a three year old to 20-50 minutes for a 10 year old, a child with ADHD will have a persistent pattern of having difficulty staying focused, seeming not to listen, having problems finishing tasks, difficulty following instructions and often losing things. From 4-12 percent of school-age children will experience this pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity or impulsivity. This can involve moving around constantly and acting without thinking.

“The key things are the problems are very persistent and have lasted a little while and these things are causing issues at home, at school, with peers and it’s impacting your child’s ability to get along with their peers,” Jackson said.

Jackson advised parents seeing a pattern to pay attention, sit still or get along with others at times.

**Anxiety**

All kids can feel nervous at times but it is usually a temporary feeling of their hearts beating faster or their breathing quickening. This is a natural response to stress. But after the stressful event or the situation ends, the nervousness should subside mostly. Other children may experience anxiety, which is more long-lasting and a severe form of nervousness that interferes with daily tasks at home and in school as well as socially. This extreme nervousness can persist most days. Its symptoms can range from headaches, irritability, shaking and chest tightness to stomachaches.

He recommended parents observe, start conversations and try to begin figuring out whether this is a mental health challenge or a typical part of their child’s development.

**Depression**

Parents may also wonder about their child’s moodiness. All children will experience some sadness that is a natural reaction to emotional upset or pain. But usually, this feeling will be temporary and fade over time. They are still able to experience some spurts of happiness. But for those experiencing depression, their sad or irritable mood will last most of the time for two or more weeks. They may show fatigue or little interest or pleasure in their usual activities. They may have trouble sleeping, eating or concentrating.

“Depression isn’t just about sadness, depression can be about anger or irritability, especially with our teenagers,” Jackson said. “So if they’re consistently irritable or angry each day about many, many things all of a sudden, this would be a red flag to check in with them.”
Grief

Some children may have lost loved ones and are still experiencing grief. Jackson encouraged parents to talk with their children in an honest and straightforward way, to validate their emotions and to share their own feelings.

Red flag signs that your child may need extra help include:

• Symptoms of chronic depression, sleeping difficulties, and low self-esteem;
• Failing classes or lack of interest in school activities;
• Deterioration of their relationships with friends and family;
• Risk-taking behaviors – using drugs or alcohol, fighting or sexual experimentation;
• Denying pain while acting overly strong or mature.

Start with the Basics

In most instances if parents are seeing some red flags but aren’t sure if they might be developmentally appropriate behaviors, Jackson advised starting with the Mayo Clinic’s top three physical health recommendations and making sure these basic needs are being met:

• Fuel your body by eating a healthy, well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water;
• Aim for plenty of sleep (Teens need 9 hours, adults 7-8);
• Exercise every day;

He also recommends making a daily habit of checking in on your children. Asking them the highs and the lows, the best and worst parts of their day. This habit helps both build family relationships and helps parents know what is happening in your child’s life.

Jackson recommended staying informed by reading some helpful books as well as following some useful social media accounts. Also, know that your child has a school counselor who is available to help with student or parent questions and concerns.

If your child’s ability to function at home, school or with friends is impaired, seek professional help with a local therapist.

Suicide and the need for action

Some of the important warning signs Jackson advised parents to look for include big changes in behavior such as withdrawing from friends and family, anger, hopelessness, sleeping more or less, drinking or drug use, overwhelming pain or talking about suicide.

Jackson shared the MindWise suicide prevention organization’s advice that parents and friends learn to ACT if someone is showing concerning signs. Everyone should be prepared to ACT – or Acknowledge, Care and Tell - to help themselves or a friend in crisis.

Acknowledge any concerns they may have about their own emotions or a friend’s reactions

Care: Show them how much you care by listening and taking their concerns seriously.

Tell: Make yourself available as a safe person they can tell about big problems.

The National Institute of Mental Health advises that you should seek help if your child’s behavior continues for a few weeks or longer, if it causes distress for your child or family, or if it interferes with your child’s ability to function at school, at home or with friends. Most importantly, the experts stress that if your child’s behavior is unsafe or if they want to hurt themselves or others, seek help immediately.

Jackson also advised everyone, especially teenagers, to keep crisis numbers in their phone for themselves or a friend who may need it including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or the Crisis Text Line (Text ACT to 741741).

Resources and support are always available through your local health care providers, school counselors, therapists and national hotlines. Children and parents are never alone as they deal with these challenges. “We are here for you and your child,” said Sharon Langston, the director of counseling for Rogers Public Schools. “Please do not hesitate to reach out.”

We are here for you and your child. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

— Sharon Langston
Director of Counseling

red flags

Grief

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We’ve added one last thing to your school supplies. (Don’t worry, it’s free.)

Download the official Rogers Public Schools - AR app today for access to your school’s notifications, calendars, and much more!
1. Playing is learning.
Children are born learning. Every action and interaction is a lesson. Whether children are 6 or 16, they all benefit from play.

2. Play benefits your child’s development.
Socially – it helps children develop relationships, teaches communication and experience trust. Emotionally – it allows children to express their feelings and relieves stress. Intellectually – it promotes curiosity and challenges them to develop problem-solving skills.

3. Play comes in many forms.
**Solitary play**
Babies spend a good deal of time in solitary play. Simple toys like balls or a mobile provide endless entertainment. Preschoolers use time alone to create what only they can imagine. School age children may use playtime alone to develop ideas and make up their own stories.

**Parallel play**
Around age 2 to 3, toddlers begin to enjoy being around other children. They may play side by side and not actually interact with each other. Children at this age are usually not ready to share.

**Group play**
Children are ready to share ideas and toys at about kindergarten age. Group play helps children develop self-control, empathy and problem-solving skills.

4. Children should guide their own play.
By choosing their own method of play, children experience a sense of freedom. They develop decision-making skills and self-confidence.

5. Set a special time every day to play.
Playing with your children is a relationship building experience. It shows them they are important and their ideas matter to you.

6. Play promotes creativity.
Use simple toys like blocks to spark your child’s imagination. A block can be a truck, but a truck will usually still be a truck. Let children make their own toys with recycled materials.

7. Just have fun.
When you play with your child, give him or her your full attention.

8. Play is healthy.
Play relieves stress and the physical activity helps prevent obesity.

We all need fresh air and exercise. Outdoor play requires children to use their large muscles. It helps develop muscle coordination, balance and strength.

10. Play teaches through experience.
Measuring and pouring sand helps children learn about weights and measurements. They absorb what they learn through play.

Source: Arkansas Better Beginnings
Spring 2022
Registration OPENING SOON

SPRING SPORTS
Youth Baseball
Youth Soccer
Youth Softball
Adult Softball
Adult Soccer

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