

## Questions and Answers

Since Adventures in Learning has been made available on the Division website and in print, directors, teachers, caregivers, and others have raised a number of questions about the curriculum. Here are responses to some of those most frequently asked.

### ***Can using the Adventures in Learning curriculum help our center with ECERS so that we can attain Quality Approval Accreditation?***

Using the Adventures in Learning curriculum can help your center in specific Subscales and Items of the ECERS-R. As you review the topics of study, you will see that all of the subscales in ECERS are addressed with varying degrees of emphasis on specific items. Because Adventures in Learning is a curriculum filled with activities, you will find that there is a strong focus on the items in the Language-Reasoning and Activities Subscales.

### ***Has Adventures in Learning been approved for use in ABC classrooms?***

Yes, Adventures in Learning is an Arkansas Approved Comprehensive Early Childhood Curriculum. This means that it is approved for use in ABC classrooms as either the primary curriculum or as a supplement to another approved curriculum.

### ***How much does the curriculum cost?***

Adventures in Learning curriculum can be obtained at no cost from the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. The curriculum can be downloaded from the Division website or obtained in print from the Division.

While there is no cost for the curriculum, you will need to have available the featured books that support each topic of study. We suggest that you take an inventory of the books you already have that are listed as featured and additional books for each topic. From this inventory you will know which books you need to add to your collection. Consider these options for obtaining the additional books you need.

- Visit your local library to determine if some of the books are available for check out.
- Check out a set of featured books for a topic of study from the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. You may contact the Resource Center online (<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/rescent.htm>) or by phone (1-800-445-3316).
- Click on [Book List](#) for a list of vendors who have agreed to offer a package price for some of the featured books in Adventures in Learning.

- Use your Quality Accreditation grant for purchasing books for Adventures in Learning.

***Why are Benchmarks listed for the different activities in the curriculum?***

Benchmarks are the standards on which all learning activities should be based. Benchmarks tell us the purpose of the activity; why we are including this activity in our plans for children. Benchmarks are also a way to assess children’s development and learning as they are participating in the activities.

The Benchmarks included in Adventures in Learning support the five developmental learning strands contained in the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework: social/emotional development, creative/aesthetic learning, cognitive/intellectual learning, physical development, and language. The Framework also contains a Developmental Rating Scale which includes the Benchmarks.

For programs using the Work Sampling Developmental Guidelines, the term Performance Indicators is used instead of Benchmarks. The two terms align with each other and also connect to the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators. We suggest two resources to help you understand the alignment of the Benchmarks and Performance Indicators: Association of Measurements which shows the relationship of the Benchmarks to other measurements and LINK for Teachers – Kindergarten Readiness Indicator Checklist Instructional Link.

***Can Adventures in Learning help the children in my classroom get ready for kindergarten?***

As you review each topic of study, you will see that Benchmarks are listed for the different activities. These Benchmarks directly connect to the thirty-eight Kindergarten Readiness Indicators developed by the Arkansas Department of Education. These indicators identify the skills and knowledge that a child should have in order to be prepared for kindergarten. As you engage the children in the activities in Adventures in Learning, which are based on the Benchmarks, you are also including the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators.

We suggest that you review the publication, Getting Children Ready for Kindergarten, A Guide for Teachers and Caregivers of Preschool Children. This guide includes suggested activities and ideas for each of the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators. You will see that many of the activities are also found in Adventures in Learning.

***How did you choose the 40 topics of study?***

The child is the center of the Adventures in Learning curriculum. We chose topics of study that begin with what most children know and see every day and extend beyond what children already know. Here are some of the criteria we followed when selecting the forty topics of study:

- Is relevant to children’s experiences; it is part of their world
- Builds on what children already know and leads them beyond their everyday experiences
- Is appropriate for children from three to five
- Is of interest to children
- Allows children to explore the topic first hand
- Is respectful of cultural differences
- Involves families in meaningful ways
- Allows children to explore the topic through experiences in
  - Language and Literacy
  - Math
  - Science
  - Art
  - Dramatic Play
  - Construction
  - Physical education/movement education

***Why are holiday topics not included?***

Each preschool program is different. There are differences in the purpose and philosophy of programs and differences in the children and families they serve. For this reason, the developers of Adventures in Learning felt that the decision about holiday topics should be made by individual programs with input from families.

***If Adventures in Learning is the curriculum I choose for my classroom, will I be able to change the order of the topics of study?***

Adventures in Learning is a flexible curriculum that allows you to decide when to include the topics of study.

***Do we have to use all of the topics of study?***

You do not have to use all of the topics of study. Consider choosing topics that are most relevant to your children’s experiences and that are of most interest to them. When deciding which topics to use, you may also want to consider the books and other materials that you have available for individual topics.

***Each year we study about what is happening at our local county fair. Can this fit with Adventures in Learning?***

Studying about a local event such as a county fair is a good fit with Adventures in Learning. Such a topic of study meets many of the criteria we used when we selected the topics we did. The topic will definitely be relevant to your children’s experiences and be of interest to them. If you take a field trip to the county fair, children will be able to explore the topic first hand. Children’s families can definitely be involved in the topic.

Consider either developing your own topic of study about the county fair or incorporating your ideas and activities into a topic such as Animals on the Farm from Adventures in Learning.

***How long should one topic of study last?***

We have provided planning grids that show one week for each topic, except for Animals on the Farm and Birds, which have two planning grids. However, a topic of study should last as long as there is interest from the children. You might decide to spend eight days or two weeks on some topics and only spend three days on other topics. The interest of the children is the key to how long a topic of study should last.

***Must I use the plan sheet you have included for each topic of study?***

The plan sheet is included as a guide that can be used as is or can be adapted or replaced. If your program has a plan sheet that you are required to use, or if you have a plan sheet that better fits your needs, then use that one instead. The key is to have a plan sheet and to follow it so that you have a structure for your day.

***The children in my classroom attend only three mornings a week. Will Adventures in Learning work for me?***

Adventures in Learning can work for programs that meet less than five full days per week. You have the freedom to choose the topics of study and the activities within each topic that best meet the goals of your program as well as the interests of the children in your classroom.

***What if I already have a curriculum? Will Adventures in Learning be of any benefit to me?***

While Adventures in Learning is a comprehensive curriculum, it can also be used to supplement a curriculum you already have in place.

***Why do you have big ideas for each topic of study?***

Big ideas give a focus for a topic of study and for the activities that are included. Each activity included in a topic supports one or more of the big ideas.

***How did you choose the activities that are included in each topic of study?***

Here are some of the criteria we used when selecting activities for the topics:

- Relates to one or more of the big ideas for the topic of study
- Supports one or more developmental benchmarks or performance indicators
- Provides hands on experiences and active involvement of children

- Is open-ended, allowing children at different levels of development to be successful
- Can be adapted for children with special needs
- Allows children to **investigate** and/or **construct** and/or **dramatize**.

*Some preschool teachers in our area use worksheets each day. Why does Adventures in Learning not include worksheets?*

Children from three to five learn through hands-on experiences with concrete materials and through interactions with adults and other children. In a classroom where a teacher or caregiver understands children and how they learn, you will see children actively engaged with materials such as blocks and other construction materials, books and other language materials, dramatic play themes and props, creative art, sand and water with tools for measuring, and tools and items from nature for simple science activities. You will see children playing and working together. You will see adults who talk with children about what they are doing, ask questions and make comments and suggestions to extend children’s learning. **You will not see worksheets.**

*Parents want their children in my classroom to learn the letters of the alphabet. Does Adventures in Learning include activities for this?*

As you review the activities in Adventures in Learning you will see that children have many opportunities to become familiar with the letters of the alphabet. For example, in the introductory and concluding activity for each topic of study, the teacher lists on a chart what children know and have learned about the topic and reads it with the children. Children “read” with the teacher finger plays, nursery rhymes, poems and songs on charts. Together the teacher and children write group stories, lists and notes. Children’s name cards are used for many activities, including the recognition of letters in their name.

We suggest that as you become familiar with the curriculum, you look for activities that list the following Benchmarks that support children’s learning of the letters of the alphabet:

- 3.5 Understands that print conveys a message**
- 3.6 Demonstrates an interest in using writing for a purpose**
- 3.7 Identifies letters and signs in the environment**
- 3.8 Uses known letters or approximation of letters to represent written language**
- 3.9 Identifies some letters and makes some letter-sound matches**

*What can I say to my administrator who questions the time children spend playing in learning centers? He thinks they aren’t learning anything.*

Begin by examining your own beliefs about the value of play in your classroom. Do you agree with nationally recognized early childhood educators that children learn

through play and the skills and knowledge gained through play are wide ranging? If your answer is “No!”, then seek out professional development opportunities and materials that can help you understand the value of play for children and incorporate play into your daily schedule.

If your answer is “Yes!” then consider inviting your administrator to your classroom while children are engaged in play in the various learning centers. Call his or her attention to some of the things children are learning as they play in each center. Review the following for ideas to share with the administrator.

As children play, they are thinking, problem solving and developing cognitive skills. For example, in the block center a child is thinking, problem solving and developing math skills as she decides how many and what shape blocks she will need to build a tower. In the science/discovery center, children are exploring the differences in rocks and sand and weighing them to decide which is the heaviest.

As children make choices and negotiate with their peers in a play situation, they gain confidence in themselves as learners and develop social problem solving skills.

Through play, children are expanding their language and literacy skills. Observe a child in the library area looking at a book while another is retelling a story to a peer. Listen as children use language to act out various roles in the dramatic play area. Observe children using writing tools in the writing center.

Creativity is encouraged in the art center as children make choices and explore and experiment with art media. Cognitive skills are developed as children learn about colors, space, and lines and circles.

We are living in a rapidly changing world and we cannot know what lies ahead for our children. To be successful in the unknown future, children will need to be creative, to think and problem solve, to like to learn new things, and to relate to people they encounter. Children need lots of time to play in learning centers so they can meet these challenges of the future.

***Why do you suggest reading a book to the children more than one time?***

Each time a story is read with the children there is a different focus. Use the listed suggestions and questions to stimulate different discussion and learning. Include discussion based on children’s reaction to the story. Keep in mind that children learn through repetition and enjoy hearing a story over and over. Consider presenting the story using felt or magnetic figures on a story board so that children see and hear it in a different format.

***Where can I get a list of all of the books I will need for the curriculum?***

Click on the [Overview](#) of Adventures in Learning for a list of all of the featured books by topic of study.

***What if I can't find one of the featured books?***

Use some of the books listed in the Additional Books section of each topic of study. You may also check out a set of featured books for a topic of study from the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. You may contact the Resource Center online (<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/rescent.htm>) or by phone (1-800-445-3316).

***If I use Adventures in Learning with my three year olds, will I need to get a new curriculum for them when they are four so they won't be bored?***

Two things we know about children, what we know about the curriculum and about teachers and caregivers will help us answer this question. The first thing we know about children is that they like to repeat activities such as songs, finger plays and games. They like to have stories told and read to them again and again.

The second thing we know about children is that they change in their ability to understand and process information. They build on what they know. So ideas and activities presented to three year olds will be understood at a different level than the same ideas and activities presented to four year olds.

A review of the topics of study in Adventures in Learning shows that there are a large number and variety of activities. This means that you have many activities from which to choose. As you look at the activities, keep your children in mind and select those activities that you think are most appropriate for the children in your classroom.

Finally, we know that teachers are collectors of materials and activities. We suggest that you collect those materials and activities that will enhance the topics of study, thus giving you more activities from which to choose.. As you consider each new activity, refer to the criteria listed earlier to determine if the activity is appropriate for children. Remember to add the Benchmark(s) that the activity supports

***Can Adventures in Learning be adapted for two year olds?***

Adventures in Learning is designed specifically for children from three to five years of age with the activities based on the early childhood Benchmarks for that age group. Two year olds are at a different stage in their development and need activities that are planned for them rather than activities that have been pushed down from an older age group.

In the Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care, Benchmarks are listed for two year olds (Toddlers). Within the next two years, a curriculum titled Adventures for Toddlers will be developed. The curriculum will be based on the Benchmarks for toddlers and will be available on the Division website and in print. In the meantime, review the toddler Benchmarks and suggested strategies and activities and look for specific activities that support the Benchmarks.

***Can Adventures in Learning be used in a classroom that includes children with special needs?***

Some of the activities in Adventures in Learning may be appropriate for children with special needs while others will need to be adapted for individual children. We suggest that you contact the Educational Cooperatives in your area for assistance in planning for children in your classroom who have been identified as having special needs. We also recommend a resource book, *The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom*, by Patti Gould and Joyce Sullivan, published by Gryphon House (1999). This book is an excellent resource manual on how to adapt classrooms and activities for children with special needs.

***I am a new teacher. How can I find out more about how to do some of the activities that are included in Adventures in Learning?***

On both the Division website and in the printed materials is a Tips and Techniques section that we feel will be beneficial to you. The section is divided into four major categories:

- Learning Environment
- Program of Activities
- Assessment
- Families

We also suggest that you take advantage of professional development opportunities in your area that provide information on curriculum planning and implementation.