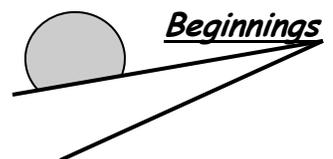


# Four Seasons In Arkansas

Beginnings 2008-2009 (3)  
Arkansas Department of Human Services  
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Little Rock, AR  
School of Human Environmental Sciences, 1 U of A, Fayetteville, AR



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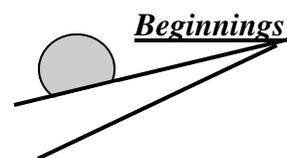
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## About the Benchmarks

Many of the activities in *Beginnings* address multiple benchmarks, which are not necessarily referenced. Check the *Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework Handbook for Three & Four Year Old Children (2004)*.



**Beginnings** is a publication of the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the School of Human Environmental Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

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### Activities in *Arkansas* for each season

To really enjoy the actual elements of a season, you must be outdoors.

#### Winter

- Wear boots and hats for outside walks. It can get really cold in this southern state, but a short walk will warm the soul.
- When it does snow, make snow sculptures!

#### Spring

- Arkansas is known for its beautiful flowers and blooming trees. Go on a color hunt. Purple-Japanese magnolia trees, white- dogwood, yellow-irises, and the list goes on and on.
- Spring is a great time for weather observation. Put a weather station outside. While the children are actually experiencing the weather, they can write, draw, or tell stories about it.

#### Summer

- Water play, water play, water play!
- Outdoor art- paint, draw, color, and create in the great outdoors

#### Fall

- Rake and jumping in leaves, of course! This is an Arkansas fall classic.
- Draw around the shadows of items that can be positioned on a flat surface. Do this in the morning and then check the shadow later in the day. Take pictures and compare from one season to another. Do the lengths of the shadows change from morning to afternoon and from season to season?

**These are fun activities for those rare days when the weather does not permit the children to go outside.**

### **Winter**

#### **Ice Skating Inside**

- Wax paper
- Large, carpeted area

Cut two pieces of wax paper for each child (one for each foot). Put on some music, and "ice skate" inside, using the wax paper squares under the children's shoes.

**Benchmark 4.9:** Freely participates in gross motor activities

### **Summer**

#### **Wash Day**

- Soapy water
- Sensory table
- Wash clothes
- Dishes

Let the children water play inside. They can pretend to wash dishes, clothes, babies.

**Benchmark 2.1:** Shows creativity and imagination in play with materials and props

### **Spring**

#### **Follow the Leader**

Invite a small group of children to play follow the leader. The teacher demonstrates, then allows a child to be the leader. The children move from one center to another- which ever center the leader chooses.

**Benchmark 1.19:** Works cooperatively with others on completing a task

### **Fall**

#### **Nature Rubbings**

Bring the leaves, bark, and other nature items inside to create rubbings in the art center. Create rubbings by placing the nature item down, then cover with paper, and rub the flat side of a crayon (peel off the paper) against the paper.

**Benchmark 2.12:** Preplans art project and then works with care

## Season Hunt

Cut a piece of string 4' long. Tie the ends together. Take outside and lay on a section of grass, sand, or rock. Give children magnifying glasses and clip boards with picture charts of nature items that might be found—grass, butterfly, ant, worm, spider, roly polly, lizard, turtle, frog, etc. Children can check off what they observe. Leave room on the paper for children to sketch.

Do this activity with each season!

What do you see in the winter?

What color is the grass in the summer?

Compare the observations for each season. You might make a themed chart. For example you could make a chart labeled "Our Grass." Ask the children. "What color is the grass today?" Record your findings, complete with date, at regular intervals. You can use a digital camera to record changes.

**Benchmark 3.21:** Uses words to describe the characteristics of objects (scientific process: applying)

# Language Arts

There are MANY MANY good books that will help children understand, and appreciate the different seasons of the year. However, here are two books that are Caldecott winners that may be of special interest.

**Caldecott winner (2009).** *The House in the Night* by Susan Marie Swanson. This book lists the simple things that are in a house at night. A key, a bed, a book, the moon. It is a good night book that gives the feeling that all's right with the world and that it is really a good night. The illustrations are scratchboard with watercolor. Check it out.

Extra Idea: Discuss with children things that they might have in their house at night. Are they different at different seasons?

Swanson, Susan Marie (2008). *The house in the night*. NY: Houghton Mifflin .

**Caldecott winner (1999).** *Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin. This is a book about a real boy, who loved the snow. He grew into a man who became renowned for photographing snowflakes. His images led to the realization that no two snowflakes are identical. It features woodcut illustrations by Mary Azarian. A companion book contains the actual photographs (*Snowflakes in Photographs* by W. A. Bentley.)

Extra Idea: When the snow falls, take a magnifying glass outside and take a closer look.

Martin, Jacqueline Briggs (1998). *Snowflake Bentley*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

# Language Arts

*Spring is Here* by Lois Lenski

This old favorite, originally published in 1945, has been reprinted. It is a rhyming, rollicking, picture book that celebrates all things spring. Ask your grandmother about it!

Extra Idea: Young children are beginning to appreciate sounds, and all things that rhyme. Even if they're nonsense. Try seeing what rhymes with seasonal words like "spring—bring" "hot-not", "summer-hummer".

Lenski, Lois (2005). *Spring is here*. NY: Random House Books for young readers.

# Language Arts

## Hide and Seek

Hide items related to a book or story on the playground. Read the book and then give clues to the children as they search for the items. Use the items to retell the story. The children may then want to hide the items and give clues to each other.

Here is a suggestion:

*Goodnight Gorilla*

By Peggy Rathman

Plastic animal characters

- Gorilla
- Elephant
- Giraffe
- Hyena
- Armadillo
- Lion
- Mouse

Hide the animal characters on the playground. Have a "bed" set up outside (basically a pillow and blanket). Read the story. As you say goodnight to each animal, have the children look for the animal on the playground. Once they find the animal they can put it in the bed.

**Benchmark 1.8:** Uses planning in approaching a task or activity

# Dramatic Play

The changing of the seasons is usually a time of celebration for adults. The new growth of spring renews hope and joy and energy. The hot, humid days of summer prompts us to slow our pace. enjoy picnics and water play. Fall comes in a colorful blaze of glory. There are leaves to rake, cool crisp days to enjoy. In winter barren landscapes emerge. Life slows down and people and animals enjoy cozy, warm places. However, for young children, each season is often viewed as a first. This makes it doubly exciting. Dramatic play activities can build on this new knowledge and help children make memories that will endure . . . at least until the next season rolls around.

Add seasonal items to the dress-up area.

Place some of the following into the dramatic play area. (Not necessarily all at the same time)

Spring—

- Light weight jackets,
- Baseball caps
- Binoculars and bird books
- Gardening gloves and hat
- Rubber boots, raincoats and umbrellas

Summer—

- Swim suits, sunglasses, and towels
- Sandals
- Beach umbrellas
- Picnic basket
- Ice cream dippers and dishes

Fall—

- Baskets with apples
- Football helmet, pads
- Leaves and rakes

Winter—

Pajamas and robes, house shoes/slippers

Mittens, scarves, gloves & caps

Basketball jerseys

# Dramatic Play

## Dramatic Play Through the Seasons

### Set the scene:

Setting up one special spot in the dramatic play area that fits the season will help "set the scene" as children create their own play scenarios. Try the following.

### Spring:

Bring in a real tree or large branch, preferably one with budding leaves and blooms. Add lightweight pots of blooming flowers and vegetables.

Add a variety of bird houses, bird feeders, bird books and binoculars. Of course, if possible; place items outside so that real birds can enjoy them.

### Summer:

Create an ice cream parlor. Include a small table and chairs with ice cream dippers and dishes, cash register and play money. Cones can be made from construction paper. Use balls of yarn for ice cream.

Add a small plastic swimming pool—fill with sand to create a sandy beach. Include swimming floats, beach umbrella, beach chair and picnic blanket. A real boat on the playground will encourage outdoor dramatic play.

### Fall:

Create a fall farmer's market with baskets of colorful leaves, pumpkins, corn stalks, and apples.

Include containers for items that are "sold".

### Winter:

Make a fake fireplace in one corner. Add some wood for a pretend fire. Warm comforters and cups for hot chocolate add a nice touch.

Large floor pillows and some winter books make it really comfortable.

Make hot cocoa for a treat after playground play on a cold day...yummy

**Benchmark 2.2:** Participates in dramatic play themes that become more involved and complex

# POEMS AND FINGERPLAYS

Each season has its own special vocabulary. In the spring we hear words like fresh, new, green, blooming, and nests; summer- hot, warm, sultry, shady, swimming, melting; fall-crisp, brisk, falling, leaves, mulch; and winter words are snow, fog, ice, sleet, cold. You can think of many more. Each season has its own special feelings. Spring is energy, summer is slow, fall is fantastic, winter is cozy. Children learn new words and feelings as they are exposed to different seasons. Here are some "seasonal" poems and fingerplays.

## Spring is Coming

Spring is coming, spring is coming.  
How do you think I know?  
I saw the green grass growing,  
I know it must be so!

Spring is coming, spring is coming,  
How do you think I know?  
I heard a robin singing,  
I know it must be so!  
(continue with I felt a warm wind blowing  
I smelled a blooming flower)

## Extra Idea:

Tell children you are going to take a spring walk. Ask them to predict what signs of spring they expect to see. Take the walk, look for signs and write down what children see. When you return, compare the predictions with what you actually saw. Discuss. Remember to focus on questions that start with "how" or "what if..." These open-ended questions encourage children to problem solve.

**Benchmark 3.20:** Uses senses to learn about the characteristics of the environment and to collect data (scientific process: observing)

# POEMS and FINGERPLAYS

## Two Little Blackbirds

Two little blackbirds, (Hold up fingers)  
Sitting on a hill (place fingers on shoulders)  
One named Jack (one hand)  
One named Jill (other hand)  
Fly away Jack (place one hand behind back)  
Fly away Jill (place other hand behind back)  
Come back Jack (bring hand back)  
Come back Jill (bring hand back).

## Who Has Seen the Wind?

Who has seen the wind?  
Neither I nor you.  
But when the leaves hang trembling  
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?  
Neither you nor I.  
But when the trees bow down their heads,  
The wind is passing by.

Christina G. Rossetti

# POEMS AND FINGERPLAYS

## Easy Seasons

Spring's all buttercups and breezy,  
Summer's hot and bumblebees-y.  
Autumn's bright with colored trees-y.  
Winter's snowy, sniffly, sneezy.

Alan Benjamin

I love summer!

In the summer when the days are hot,  
I know to find a shady spot,  
And hardly move a single bit,  
And sit, and sit, and sit and sit.

Mary Ann Hoberman

# MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

## A Song for All Seasons

Snowflakes are falling; won't you try to catch one  
Snowflakes are falling; won't you try to catch one  
Snowflakes are falling; won't you try to catch one  
Catch one if you can.

Change up the words. Replace "snowflakes" with "fall leaves," "cherry blossoms," or "bubbles."

**Benchmark 2.5:** Enjoys singing games, dramatizing songs and moving to music



# Math and Science

The perfect place to experience math, science as they relate to the seasons is in the sandbox. Imagine your sandbox in each season. In the spring the cherry blossoms are sprinkled on the sand, like little polka dots. In the summer the sand is dry. In the fall the leaves nearly take over the sand play, and in the winter you just incorporate the snow. Here are some ways to explore the sandbox with each season.

## *Fall*

### **Leaf Sorter**

You will need:

Sandbox

Stick

Lots of fallen leaves

Divide the sandbox into 4 equal squares. Each square will be the "sorting bin" for a certain type of leaf. All the red leaves in one square. All the brown in one square. Multicolor leaves will go in another square. The children can find and sort out the leaves. After all the leaves are sorted, bag them up, and start digging in the sand.

**Benchmark 3.10:** Classifies objects by physical features such as shape or color

# Math and Science

## *Summer*

### **Water play**

You will need:

Water

Water

Water

And a sandbox

The sand gets so dry in the summer. All you need to do is add water, and have fun! Measure how much water you add. Weigh sand before adding and after adding the water. Which is heavier? Let a water hose trickle into sand box moving is more sanitary and gives children the opportunity to control the amount of water.

**Benchmark 3.25:** Applies information or experience to a new context (scientific process: applying)

## *Winter*

### **The Sand Experiment**

You will need:

2 containers (shallow bowls)

Water

Sand

Place sand and water in one container . In another container, just water. Place outside in the elements. Does one container freeze faster than the other?

Bring them in. Does one container thaw faster than the other?

Extension: What happens if we add water to the sandbox? Does the sandbox freeze? Investigate, explore, document, and learn! Remember to let the children make the discoveries rather than you pointing them out.

**Benchmark 3.22:** Makes comparisons (scientific process: comparing)

# Math and Science

## *Spring*

### Use the Elements

All you need is your sandbox and your playground. Let the children use the elements of springtime to create in the sandbox. Fallen sticks, flowers, clover, green grass, vines, even rain water. They will come up with beautiful, natural sand sculptures.

# Food and Nutrition

Eating with the seasons can be quite enjoyable and yummy! Fresh picked fruits and vegetables seem to always taste better. Classroom/ school gardens create a learning atmosphere for children and teachers alike. All developmental domains can be addressed, and all 5 senses can be explored in a small garden on the play ground. Even if a garden isn't in your curriculum at the moment, incorporating local fresh food in your meals can be rewarding. Here are some recipes for all seasons.

## *Spring*

### Orange Minty

5-6 sprigs of fresh mint (only use the leaves)

3 cups of water (for boiling mint)

1/3 cup sugar

2 cups orange juice

1/2 cup lemon juice

Water and ice

Boil 3 cups of water. Remove water from heat. Add mint to water and let it set for 15 minutes. Add sugar to the water. Stir until it is dissolved. Pour both orange and lemon juice in a half-gallon pitcher. Add the mint and sugar mixture. Add ice and water to fill the pitcher.

Simply in Season Children's Cookbook

Author: Mark Beach, Julie Kauffman

2006, Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA

# FOOD AND NUTRITION

## *Summer*

### Corny Cornbread

2 cups cornmeal  
 1/4 cup honey  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon baking soda  
 3 eggs  
 2 cups milk, yogurt, or combination  
 2 cups corn



Children Shucking Corn

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Combine cornmeal, honey, salt, and baking soda in a large mixing bowl. Crack and beat the eggs, then add to the mixing bowl. Add milk and corn to bowl. Stir all ingredients together. Pour into a 3-quart casserole dish. Bake 40 minutes. (Remember: honey is not for infants!)

### **Shucking Corn**

Provide numerous ears of corn for the children to shuck. Guide the children into discovering the joys of shucking corn....and eating it!

You will need:

Newspaper- if activity is inside  
 Discard bowl  
 Bowl for ears of corn

Extension: Take a field trip to pick the corn from a garden. Buy it from the farmers' market.

**Benchmark 1.7:** Demonstrates willingness to try new things

# Food and Nutrition

## *Fall*

### Squash Mash

2-3 large butternut squash

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon

Salt to taste

Pierce squash a few times and microwave 1-2 minutes. Cut the squash in half and remove the seeds. Peel and chop the squash into large chunks. Boil until soft. Drain when finished. Combine the rest of the ingredients with the squash, and mash with a potato masher. Great for baby's first food!



### Other fall crops:

Broccoli

Pumpkin

Squash

Pear

Cranberries



# Food AND Nutrition

## *Winter*

4 cups sweet potatoes  
1 1/2 cups onion  
2 cloves garlic  
2 teaspoons dried oregano  
1 1/2 teaspoons each of dried basil, chili powder  
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin  
Salt and pepper to taste  
8 tortillas  
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese  
1 cup cooked black beans

Peel and cut sweet potatoes in large chunks. Boil in a large saucepan until soft. Drain and mash. Set aside. Chop onions and garlic finely. Sauté until translucent. Add spices and cook a little longer. Stir in the sweet potatoes and heat through. Spread sweet potato filling on half of each tortilla. Spoon black beans on top and sprinkle with cheese. Fold tortilla in half. Place tortilla on oiled baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven 15-20 minutes. Serve with sour cream and salsa.

# Creative Arts

Spring Creative Art—

Wind Socks—

Spring winds will make these small “wind socks” great fun.

You will need:

Lightweight paper cups

Streamers - crepe paper (12")

School glue

Hole punch

Yarn for handle

Punch six holes 1/4 " from top of cup.

Attach streamers by tying or gluing.

Tie on yarn to form a handle.

Note: An alternative would be to make paper bag wind socks.

See illustration below.

**Benchmark 1.8:** Uses planning in approaching a task or activity

# Creative Arts

## Wind Chimes

This idea requires quite a bit of adult help. It could turn into a project for small groups. Children can help locate and select objects to hang and helping with tying them to a tree branch.

You will need:

A branch from a tree

Wire or yarn

An assortment of utensils or metal objects  
(aluminum pie plate, old forks, spoons, spatulas)

Select the branch and items to hang.

Choose the color of yarn for each item.

Tie around branch.

Hang in a tree and wait for a windy day.

Listen.

**Benchmark 2.8:** Identifies the source of a variety of sounds

# Creative Arts

## SUMMER ART

### Sun Fun

You will need:

Paper—white or colored

Yellow tempera

Straws

Discuss the sun. How does it makes you feel? What color is it?

Place a blob of yellow paint in middle of paper to represent the sun.

Let child use straw to blow paint in different directions to create sun rays.

### Bubble Painting

Move art outside. Blow big bubbles and watch them drift away. Then try blowing bubbles onto paper.

You will need:

Plastic bowls for each color or paint

Tempera

Dish soap

Straws

Paper

Add paint, dish soap and water to bowls.

Use straw to blow bubbles until they rise above the rim of the bowl.

Place paper on top of bubbles to make a print.

Move to another color. Repeat procedure and use same paper to add another print.

Continue until children lose interest or the desired amount of color is added to paper. You may need to add more tempera to get a more vivid print.

Note:

The goal is to enjoy the experience, not produce a product.

**Benchmark 2.11:** Creates drawing and painting that gradually become more detailed and realistic

# OUTDOOR PLAY

## **A Tree for All Seasons**

Bring in a large tree branch. Place it in a large sturdy container with sand. If you want it to be especially sturdy, fill the container with plaster of Paris, following the package instructions. In the fall, make or collect colored leaves to hang on the branches. In the winter, hang mittens, scarves, or snow flakes. In the spring hang flowers and other seasonal items. Be sure you chose realistic items for the seasons from this area. And always make sure the tree and all items on it are safe for the age of the children that will be in contact with it.

**Benchmark 3.19:** Shows interest in exploring the environment

# OUTDOOR PLAY

## **Fly a Kite**

The simplest kind of kite is a string rope tied to a plastic grocery bag. Limit the number to 2 or 3 at a time and trade off. This gives the teacher the opportunity to observe the bags closely for the sake of safety. Remember plastic bags are choking hazards. Recycle after the activity.

**Benchmark 3.17:** Shows understanding of different relationships of objects in space (spatial relations)

## **For the birds**

Make a bird's nesting ball to hang on a tree in the spring. Form the nesting ball, by putting pieces of yarn, cotton ribbon or string in netting cut from an vegetable bag. Tie and hang near a tree. Watch the birds pick at the contents. Talk about how and where the birds build their nests. See if you can find a nesting project to observe, draw and write about.

**Benchmark 3.24:** Finds more than one solution to a problem

## INFANT AND TODDLER PAGE

Seasons at a Child's Pace  
By Kim Kearney

Infants and toddlers can not help but notice the changing seasons. They learn about the world around them and how it affects their lives through their experiences. How many layers of clothes do they have on today, or how different does the wind sound blowing through the leaves on a tree. Much of the time our job is to help children use the words to express what they already notice and help them build on their interests. The Zero-to-Three website has ideas for each season to help teachers build children's awareness for each season. Here is an example:

### *Winter*

#### **Talk together:**

- For your baby: Use the word "cold" when the two of you touch cold water, snow, ice, open the refrigerator, or go outside on a cold day. Babies learn to speak when others speak to them. Repetition helps children learn, as does changing your tone of voice for the word you are wanting to emphasize. "Feel the *cold* water. Oooh, that is *cold*; isn't it? *Cold, cold* water."
- For your toddler: Talk about what "cold" feels like. Use other words for cold -freezing, icy, or chilly. You can start to discuss seasons.

#### **Read together:**

Try some "freezing" winter books. Good choices are *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats or *Snowball* by Lois Ehlert.

#### **Play together:**

- For your baby: Let your baby (6 months and up) enjoy ice play. Put a few wet ice cubes on her high chair to touch and play with. How does she respond to this cold, wet stuff?
- For your preschooler: Talk about how water turns into ice when it freezes. Then play "freeze." When you say freeze, everyone has to stop moving.

**Look For New Issues of *Beginnings* on the Division of Child Care's Website!**

**Here is the direct link:**

<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/services/printedmats/beginnings.html>

**Or find it this way:**

1. Begin at the Division of Child Care's Home Page:  
<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/>
2. Click on *Services* at the top of the page.
3. Then Click on *Printed Material* on the right hand side of the page.
4. On the next page choose *Beginnings!*

Some previous issues are already on this page. Soon there will be many more back issues to discover. Have fun!