

Early Learning Subcommittee

May 12, 2025



Legislative Update

Three bills were passed in the 2025 legislative session that will have a direct impact on early childhood in Arkansas:

- **Act 504**: Streamlines eligibility in ABC to one set of criteria and allows programs to serve children birth-5.
- **Act 865**: Requires Departments of Health and Education to create a statewide anaphylaxis plan for childcare facilities.
- **Act 587**: Allows early childhood professionals in non-public school and licensed early childhood programs to participate in AR Teacher Retirement

OEC Monthly Report

- April

[2025 OEC Monthly Reports.xlsx](#)



Minimum Licensing Rules Update

- Added Registered Family Child Care Homes to Licensed Center/Family Child Care (in state law)
- Reviewed to ensure all state and federal requirements were addressed (emergency plans, Act 865 (Elijah's Law) and federal Child Care Development Plan
- Updated ratios based on feedback
- Currently with ADE legal staff for review



Proposed Licensing Ratios

• Birth-18 months	1:5
• 18-30 months	1:8
• 30-36 months	1:12
• 36-60 months	1:15
• 60 months up to first grade	1:20
• Second grade and over	1:23



Quality Rating and Improvement System

Better Beginnings (Arkansas Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System) ratings will begin to incorporate CLASS® (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) scores in adherence to the LEARNS Act, which calls for an accountability system that provides a rating “indicative of child outcomes”. To do so, ADE will follow , the following timeline:



Year	Key Focus	Description
Year 1 2024-25	CLASS® Pilot Year	Conduct 500 CLASS® observations statewide to test and refine implementation.
Year 2 2025-26	Transition Year	Expand practice CLASS® observations statewide (with no impact on Better Beginnings ratings).
Year 3 2026-27	Full Implementation Year	Conduct CLASS® observations to inform Better Beginnings ratings.
Year 4 Fall 2027	Finalized Better Beginnings Updates	Complete rollout with fully updated Better Beginnings ratings.

CLASS Pilot Learning Year: 2024-2025

In the 2024-2025 school year, counties in Cohort 1 and 2 of Local Leads across the state participated in the CLASS® pilot, where certified Arkansas observers used the tool to collect practice ratings on adult-child interactions.

- ADE set a goal to conduct 500 observations by the end of this school year, concluding on May 30th.
- With 477 observations completed as of April 30th, ADE is on track to meet the CLASS® observation goal for the pilot year.



Active Observers	Total Observations	Pre-K Observations	Toddler Observations	Infant Observations
59	477	335	89	53

CLASS Pilot Transition Year: 2025-2026

To achieve the LEARNS vision for quality, 2025-2026 must be a QRIS transition year, in which the state collects all necessary information to prepare sites for the updated rating system.

- **During the transition year, CLASS® ratings will inform providers on the quality of their site.** During this transition year, classrooms statewide will receive CLASS® observations, helping to build the infrastructure for statewide data collection.
- CLASS® observation scores gathered during the transition year will be reported to providers but not count toward Better Beginnings ratings.



Full Implementation Year: 2026-2027

In the full implementation year, CLASS observations will be used to rate publicly-funded site in Arkansas.

- **CLASS[®] scores**, will be central to the quality ratings
- **Information related to quality may** be shared publicly but not factored into the quality rating, such as:
 - Curriculum being taught
 - Teacher/child ratio
 - Assessments used
 - National recognition (NAEYC, NAFCC)

During the full implementation year, CLASS[®] scores will be the basis for Better Beginnings ratings.



2025-2026 ABC Program Changes

- Quitman converted 45 home visiting slots to 17 center based due to low enrollment.
- Southside HIPPIY relinquished their program. We converted the 50 home visiting slots to 18 center based.
- Alma School District declined 20 slots.
- Little Donna's declined 5 slots.
- Bright Beginnings Family Home declined 2 slots.

New Requests

- Dequeen Mena-25 Infant/Toddler slots for the following counties: Howard, Montgomery, Polk and Sevier
- Searcy School District-20 preschool slots

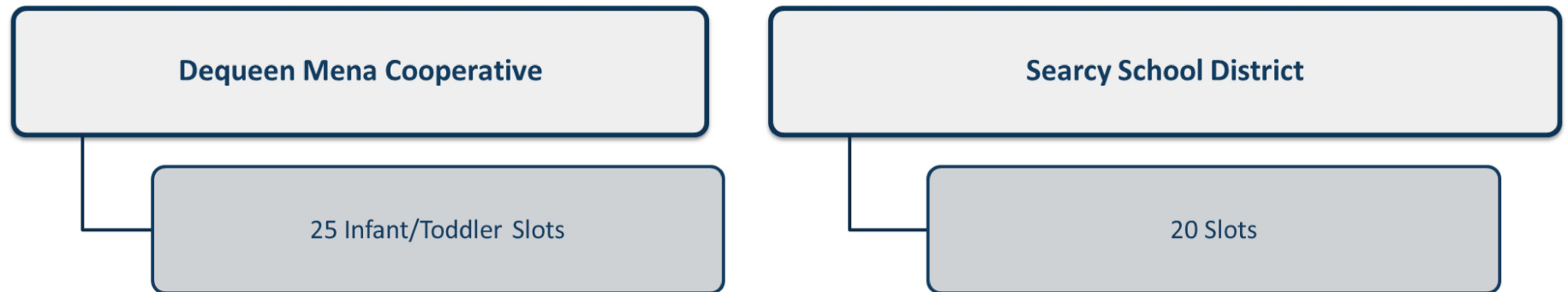
2025-2026 ABC Program Reallocation

ABC Childrens Academy & Dev. Center, Inc.	10 Additional Slots
Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative CB	25 Additional Slots
Benton School District	70 New Slots
Crossett School District	20 Additional Slots
Dawson Education Cooperative	20 Additional Slots
Dequeen Mena Education Cooperative	25 Additional Slots
Ermer's Learning Academy	10 Additional Slots
Farmington Public Schools	10 Additional Slots
Fayetteville School District	20 Additional Slots
Friendship Community Care	13 Additional Slots
Hector School District	10 Additional Slots
Little Rock School District	40 Additional Slots
Magnolia School District	20 Additional Slots
Monticello School District	20 Additional Slots
Northeast AR Education Coop	12 Additional Slots
Pine Bluff School District	20 Additional Slots
Searcy School District	20 Additional Slots

2025-2026 ABC Reallocation	
Agencies Receiving Additional Slots	16
School Districts	8
Community Agencies (Coop, Private)	8
New ABC Agencies	1
Total Amount Agency Slot Increase	295

2025-2026 New ABC Programs

For the 2025-2026 program year, two programs received an increase in slots utilizing the previous data of serving counties less than 40% with requests in the Coordinated Funding Request through Local Leads.



Summer Services

To prevent loss of learning and support school readiness during the summer months, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) proposes the use of the remaining Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) funds to provide summer services for families needing extended services beyond the school year.

Remaining ABC Budget: \$852,411.90

82 ABC Programs

Preschool: 2,515

Toddlers: 263

Infants: 88

