

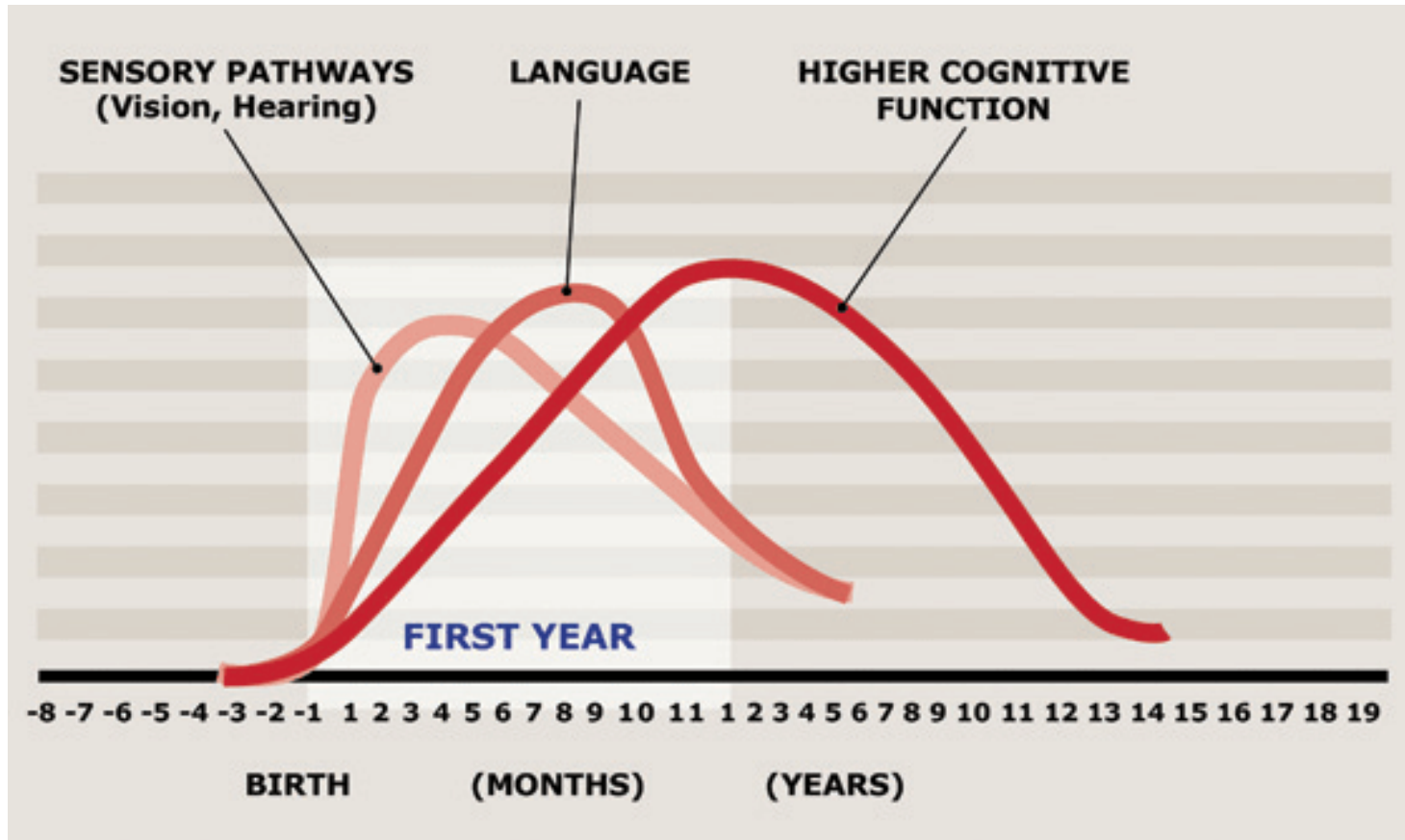


# Office of Early Childhood Update

presented by

Tonya Williams  
Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Elementary and  
Secondary Education

# Brain Development





# Importance of Brain Development and Reading to Young Children

- 90% of brain development happens in the first five years of life
- Studies have shown that reading one short book per day to young children can increase their vocabulary by 300,000 words and five books per day up to 1.3 million words by the time they start school.
- Helps children develop listening and language skills supporting overall cognitive development
- #10 Minutes Matter-Early Literacy



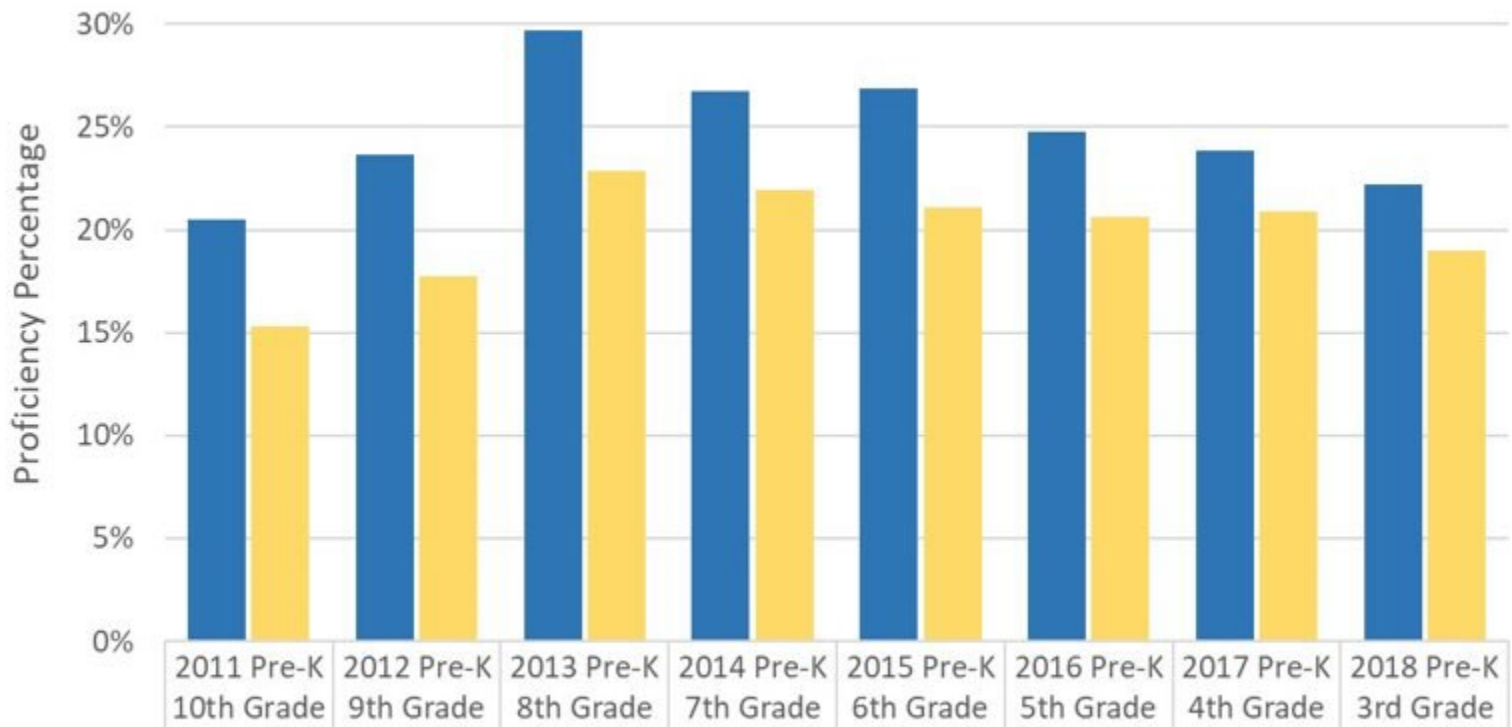
## Early Learning Impact: 1st Year

| KG Year | PreK_Summary                  | Students | Literacy | Math  | Reading |
|---------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|---------|
| 2006    | Arkansas Better Chance        | 1,210    | 52.57    | 57.99 | 48.91   |
| 2006    | Head Start                    | 1,386    | 52.23    | 56.33 | 46.92   |
| 2006    | Federal Child Care Assistance | 339      | 44.69    | 51.81 | 40.39   |
| 2007    | Arkansas Better Chance        | 2,215    | 52.27    | 56.75 | 48.92   |
| 2007    | Head Start                    | 1,261    | 50.92    | 55.60 | 46.41   |
| 2007    | Federal Child Care Assistance | 384      | 47.64    | 50.12 | 44.39   |

# Arkansas Better Chance Longitudinal Tracking



On-Time Proficiency on 2022 Aspire Literacy (ELA) By Pre-K Year



|                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ■ ABC            | 20.5% | 23.6% | 29.7% | 26.7% | 26.8% | 24.8% | 23.8% | 22.2% |
| ■ No Known Pre-K | 15.3% | 17.8% | 22.9% | 22.0% | 21.1% | 20.6% | 20.9% | 19.0% |



# Early Childhood Education=Economic Development

- Quality child care and early childhood education supports children and working parents
- Child care and early childhood education are synonymous



# Strong Foundation

- Arkansas has received recognition for Arkansas Better Chance state funded pre-k program by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for:
  - quality standards (8/10),
  - ranked 6th in the nation for the number of 3 year olds served,
  - 22nd for 4 year olds, and
  - 12th for all reported spending.
- WalletHub has recognized Arkansas for the past 2 years as number 1 in the nation in early childhood systems across 12 metrics



# Early Learning in LEARNS

- Creates the Office of Early Childhood
  - Transition of staff and funding
  - Website
  - Rules
- Early Learning Work Group
  - Kindergarten Readiness Definition
  - Local Leads/Unified Early Childhood System
  - Uniform Accountability System utilizing CLASS-Classroom Assessment Scoring System
    - 2024-'25 School Year will be the Pilot Year



# Local Leads Deliverables



Under the LEARNS Act, local early childhood leads are required to **establish a comprehensive, locally supported plan** for providing early childhood programs and services within the community.

According to [LEARNS](#), the early childhood plans require local leads to:

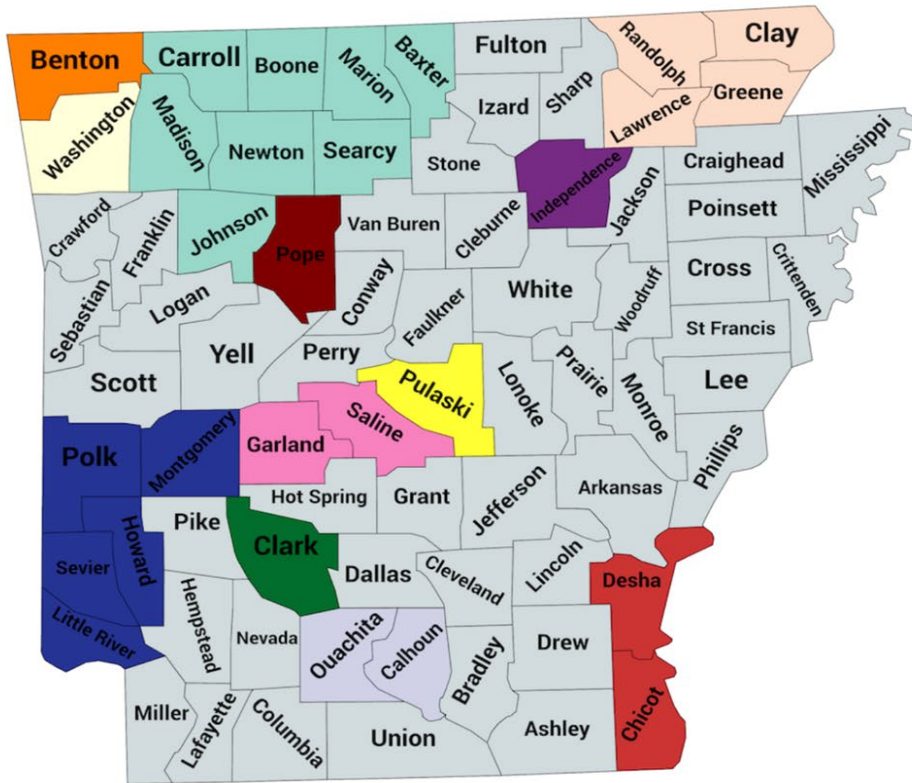
- Conduct a needs assessment
- Conduct an unduplicated count of children served through public funds
- Establish a local collaborative governing structure
- Identify shared resources that can support access to and quality of early childhood programs
- Coordinate enrollment processes for families

In the pilot year, the first cohort of local leads will be responsible for:

- Convening early childhood providers
- Conducting an unduplicated child count
- Establishing an early childhood plan, informed by a needs assessment
- Sharing information with families on their early childhood options



# Geographic Reach of Cohort 1



## Cohort 1

- Arkansas State University, Child Care Aware
- Child Care Aware of Northwest Arkansas
- City of Little Rock
- Dawson Education Cooperative
- DeQueen Mena Education Service Cooperative
- IMPACT Independence County Foundation's Excel by Eight Collaborative
- National Park College, Child Care Aware of West Central Arkansas
- Northeast Arkansas Education Cooperative
- Ozarks Unlimited Resources Education Service Cooperative
- Russellville School District
- South Central Service Cooperative
- Springdale School District





# Quick Wins

- Background Checks
  - One check for school district/co-op employees who previously had to run two (time and money savings)
- Common application/data system
  - Working with ADE/IT on new system for eligibility/provider billing and payments for federal Child Care assistance and Arkansas Better Chance