

Preschool Life™

A free publication for parents of young children in the Madison area

www.PreschoolLife.com

Fall/Winter 2010

Story Time for Preschoolers

Rattle, shake, screech, roar—who's knockin' at my door?" Matthew tears through the house, a sheet over his head. "Boom, boom, in my room!" he yells. "A witch is flyin' on her broom!"

For the past month, Matthew has immersed himself in a world of Halloween books. Although he does not yet know how to read text, he spends time every day looking at books with spooky ghosts, goblins and skeletons. He recites lines he has memorized from the many times his parents have read them aloud. And he makes up his own, like the ones above. All this adds up to one thing: Matthew is becoming a reader.

Moving Toward School—and Reading

Preschoolers know a lot of things they didn't know as babies.

They don't read independently, but if they've been read to a lot, they know a thing or two about reading:

- They know books are read from front to back.
- Pictures should be right-side up.
- Reading is done from left to right.
- The language of books is different from spoken language.
- Words have different sounds in them.
- There are familiar and unfamiliar words.

All of these are emergent literacy skills—important building blocks toward the day when they'll read independently. How can you encourage further development of these skills? Just keep reading aloud.

Choosing lots of different books to read aloud will build your preschooler's vocabulary, and help your child learn about different topics and understand how stories are structured and what characters do in them. Your child also will learn that:

- Text is words written down.
- Letters in a specific order form a word.
- There are spaces between words.

Understanding these basic concepts will help when kids start formal reading instruction in school.

Continued on page 2



Inside this Issue

COMMUNITY PAGE:

Calendar of Events



Plus:

- Four-year-old kindergarten news
- Alternative phrases to "just a minute"
- Germs, toys & keeping kids healthy

Volume 3, Issue 1

From the Publisher...



Since the development of *Preschool Life*, I've used the terms "preschool" and "preschooler" loosely. For instance, the name of this newsletter is meant to be translated to: Life with

Children of Preschool Age. While this generally includes ages 2 to 6, some topics are relevant for those a little younger or older as well.

There are different terms that people use to describe early childhood education programs. I often differentiate types of daytime programs as "preschool" (a few hours per week) or "child-care" (part-time or full-time care for working parents). However, since many programs really offer both—preschool or "pre-k" curriculum in a childcare setting, some parents and providers will refer to their childcare as "preschool."

"Childcare" can also be a general term that has come to be used in place of "daycare" in recent years. Whichever term you identify with in your family, it will be important to differentiate my uses in the article "What's 4K All About" (p. 4). It contains some of the benefits, challenges, and concerns for various providers if 4K is introduced into their areas.

Four-year-old kindergarten is a complex and somewhat controversial topic. The information covered in this issue is intended to share some key points to help you understand what it means if a 4K program is introduced in your district, while acknowledging some of the challenges that preschools and childcare providers might face by participating, or not participating.

Whether school-related topics, life on the home front, or community listings you can use, each issue of *Preschool Life* is intended to offer a variety of topics of interest to parents with young children. If you're looking for more insights or tips about life with young children, be sure to browse past issues, available online at www.PreschoolLife.com. The website also has pages with listings of various resources, and is continuously updated with more links to articles and information for life with young kids.

Thank you to so many of you that have taken interest, given great feedback that has affirmed my efforts, joined my e-mail list, or become Facebook Friends. Hang with me, because there is more to come for you and your family to enjoy!

Cheerfully,

Kelly

Story Time...

Continued from front cover

When and How to Read

Many kids this age have moved beyond the small world of home to childcare or preschool. They may even be enrolled in lessons or classes. Read-aloud time can be a chance to slow down and spend time together.

Try to have set times to read together. Before bed works well, as do other "down" times in the day, like first thing in the morning or after meals. Your child will enjoy cuddling with you, hearing your voice, and feeling loved.

Kids between 3 and 5 years old are eager to show off what they know and love to be praised. Continue to choose some books with simple plots and repetitive text that your child can learn and retell. Encourage your child to "read" to you and praise the attempts.

Here are some additional tips:

- Yes, you should read that book for the millionth time—and try not to sound bored. Your child is mastering many skills with each re-reading.
- When you are looking at a new book, introduce it. Look at the cover and talk about what it might be about. Mention the author by name.
- Ask your child why a character may have taken a specific action.
- Ask what part of the story your child liked best and why.
- Talk about the parts of the story—how did it begin? What happened in the middle? What did your child think of the ending?
- Move your fingers under the words as you read to demonstrate the connection between what you are saying and the text.
- When you come to familiar or repetitive lines, let your child finish them. ("I do not like green eggs and....I do not like them, Sam....")
- Ask your child to point out letters or words he or she might recognize. You might also occasionally point to words and sound them out slowly while your child watches.

But even as you ask your child more complicated questions, your top goal should be to enjoy reading and have fun. Don't make reading a book like a test your child needs to pass. Look at the pictures, make up alternative words together, and be playful and relaxed.

Also, remember that reading comes to different kids at different times. Some kids fall in love with books earlier than others. So if your child is one who doesn't seem as interested right away, just keep reading and showing how wonderful it can be. •PSL

To read the complete article, including tips for *The Best Books for Busy Minds and Other Ways to Encourage Book Time*, visit http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/reading_preschool.html, or link to this article at www.PreschoolLife.com where you can also find a list of local toddler and preschooler story times in the Madison area.

© 1995-2010. The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth®. All rights reserved.



...reading comes to different kids at different times. Some kids fall in love with books earlier than others.... just keep reading and showing how wonderful it can be.



Just a Minute

What we're really trying to say

by Kelly Rush

How often do you find yourself asking your child to repeat what they said, even when you still won't understand it? One day, my two-year-old, who otherwise pronounces things extremely well, was asking for "Gooses Geeses," and apparently they were in the kitchen. Every time I tried to get her to more clearly state what she wanted, she was getting more upset and demanding "GOOSEES GEESES, MOMMYYYY!" When I saw her older sister walk by with a remnant of chocolate on her face after sneaking a leftover Hershey's Kiss she "found," it finally occurred to me what my youngest daughter was trying to say.

I've contemplated how frequently we respond to our children with words they know, but we use those words in a way they don't understand. How often do we tell our children, "Not now" or "Just a minute"? Young children have a difficult time understanding what this means, and it doesn't tell them when they will get what they're asking for.

I grew up hearing these words, what seemed like every time I asked a question. Without an explanation, it just meant I was to be quiet. So, out of sympathy, I try not to respond with "Just a minute" or "Not now" to my kids very often. While it's not easy to stop and give my full attention to my children's request when I'm in the middle of doing three things and thinking about ten more, ultimately it serves me well to pause and think of a response that is clear to them and allows me to finish what I'm doing. For instance:

- When I go upstairs to take a shower.
- After I clean up dinner.
- After you pick up all the books on the floor.
- After I change your sister's diaper.
- I heard you. Please give me a minute to think about it.

- Honey, please be patient with me. I'll finish (such and such) as fast as I can.
- The next time I get up.
- I will set the oven timer for 20 minutes, then I'll get (such and such) for you.

These are ways that I feel teach *mutual* respect. Kids deserve our attention and a response, but it's also important to teach them that parents don't instantly respond to every demand. It is also not healthy for them to think that they're so entitled that they can make us get up and move at every request.

The next time, "Just a minute," is at the tip of your tongue, ask yourself what is going on that you aren't willing or able to respond to their request that second,



and then verbalize it in a way that gives them a clear picture of when you will be available to them. After your children wait patiently, be sure to praise them for it.

Once I knew my daughter's request was for a Hershey's Kiss, my, "Not now," response was verbalized: "I'll save one for you, and you can have it if you stay at the table and eat your lunch today." •PSL



New Self™

Renewal Center

Make Life Balance

Permission Granted...

We know that in order to be our best for our family and others, we *must* care for ourselves. Well, here it is in writing: permission granted. Schedule something good for yourself from our wide variety of spa services and packages. There's even a fun, safe place for your kids to play while you take some much-needed time for yourself! Does it get any better than that?

YES! Enjoy a spa service before the end of 2010 and receive **FREE CHILDCARE** during your services.*




Café ■ Fitness ■ Spa Services ■ Childcare

Go www.newsselfrenewal.com/services.php for a complete list of spa services, then call 608.310.6775 to book your appointment today!

*Offer valid through December 31, 2010 for free childcare during spa services (3-hour maximum). Cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Please mention offer at time of booking.

What's 4K All About?

The operation & impact of four-year-old kindergarten

by Kelly Rush

Many school districts in Wisconsin currently offer a four-year-old kindergarten program (4K), or are slated to introduce one in the next couple years. If you have a child that will be eligible if or when your district offers a 4K program, what do you need to know? How do 4K programs affect the community as a whole?

This summer I had the opportunity to join the research committee looking into proposing a 4K in the Verona Area School District. Despite having young children myself, and the program already running in some area districts, I went into my first meeting with absolutely no idea how 4K programs worked, what they meant for children and the community, or how they affect the many preschool programs in Dane County.

Initial Misconceptions I Had Were Clarified

- 4K is not kindergarten curriculum; it is preschool instruction: it's *not* about getting children to read and write at age 4.
- 4K is not advocating for children to learn academics earlier. Most early childhood educators will agree that young children should be busy playing;

exploring; getting exposure to music and art; and learning to listen, share toys, cooperate, zip their coats, etc.

- 4K classes do not typically meet in elementary schools. Though operated by the school district, 4K is usually a community-based program, which means that districts contract with preschool centers and childcare facilities to house 4K and work collaboratively for everyone's benefit. While some districts may be able to conduct 4K classes in a school building, most districts would not have adequate space.
- 4K does not run the same hours as kindergarten; it's usually 2.5 to 3 hours, four or five days per week, running approximately the length of the school year.
- The financial burden of 4K does not rely entirely on local taxpayers. 4K is funded by the state from the same allotment used to appropriate all K-12 programming funds. The state reimburses school districts a certain amount of dollars per child, which can actually bring in extra revenue for the school district and potentially lighten the levy on property taxes some years.
- 4K is not always determined by referendum. In Verona's case, it will be decided by the school board after a proposal thoroughly researched by the committee, which is made up of a variety of educators (including kindergarten teachers and preschool directors), social workers, parents, and other experts involved with schools or family service agencies.

to children not having the opportunity for a preschool education.

- While being a no-cost preschool option positively impacts the low-income community, it also supports the gap of children from middle-income families affected by the economy or other stressful financial situations.
- While many children without a formal preschool education thrive in elementary school, some studies link preschool education to other success factors in life, including reading skills, earning potential later in life, as well as reduction of crime and other risky life choices.
- Even in situations where most children are fully prepared for the social and academic demands of elementary school, educators agree that all children benefit from a classroom where every kid is ready to learn.

4K Programs Vary by District

Although many 4K rules and regulations are set by the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, school districts lay down the policies regarding: the chosen curriculum; teacher-student ratio; transportation; teacher credentials; and the hiring of dedicated 4K staff such as principals, social workers, school liaisons, secretarial staff, or bus attendants.

4K Has Various Impacts on Preschools & Daycares

Participating in 4K can positively impact centers:

State funds designated for community-based 4K help by reimbursing sites for each district-enrolled 4K student.

- If a preschool or childcare center qualifies: is within the district, can work out the hours, and can properly equip their

Whether or Not It Directly Affects My Family, 4K Does Benefit Some Children

- 4K helps to fill the ever-present school-readiness gap that's mostly attributed



Learning Express Toys
...Always the perfect toy

Guarantee a Happy Birthday!

B-DAY Gift Registry
Easy as 1-2-3!

West Towne Mall • Madison, WI • (608) 833-3322

teachers (or obtain district-hired teachers, depending on the model chosen), they can become a contracted, publicly funded 4K site, helping to assure future stability and enrollment.

- Even in situations where a childcare center has fewer children due to tighter limits on class-sizes for contracted 4K sites, the state dollars funding the program often give the centers more reimbursement per child than they charge families. This will potentially make up for a loss in actual head-count and allow for a smaller teacher-student ratio. This reimbursement situation is complex and varies by district. Some centers feel they come out ahead with extra funds to make center improvements, while other centers are very concerned by the potential loss of enrollment.
- Becoming a 4K site gives community sites a lot of exposure, potentially helping to gain enrollment for other programs they offer, such as childcare for children who need programming before and/or after their 4K classes. (For example, working parents might choose a daycare that offers 4K in addition to childcare programs.) Other parents could be looking for consistency and the opportunity to keep siblings together, so they might enroll their children in a program for younger children at the same center, such as a part-time 2 or 3-year-old-class.

Not participating in 4K may pose challenges to preschool-only programs:

Whether due to choice, teacher credentials required by the district, or because enough 4K sites have already been selected within district boundaries, many part-time preschools and full-time childcare centers will not participate in 4K, but will continue to rely on their tuition-based programs from birth through pre-K.

Competing with free 4K will undoubtedly pose concerns for the prosperity of private, pre-K programs. However, many options may help sustain them:

- Many preschools will rely on parents still choosing their programs for what they have to offer: location; hours;

reputation; emphasis on religious education or non-traditional education methods; or extra offerings that might appeal to parents such as enrichment programs or extended care options.

- Preschools may see an enrollment increase in their three-year-old programs since many parents may choose to provide a transition experience for their child from home to 4K.

Concerns and considerations for full-time centers:

Childcare centers not contracting as a 4K site could see a drop in enrollment due to parents electing to save money by enrolling at a site that does offer 4K, thus saving childcare tuition on the hours their child is being taught by a 4K district teacher.

On the other hand, many childcare providers will continue to gain the loyalty of families they've served since birth, perhaps foremost because parents may be uneasy about pulling their children out of the caring environment they've been satisfied with. Just as some parents choose private elementary school over public education, many families will still pay full tuition for a private pre-K program by choice.

4K Is a Choice

The Madison area is full of wonderful preschool programming options. Early childhood educators have the same goal: to prepare children socially and emotionally for their elementary school experience. While district-operated 4K may

FUN for ALL AGES

Moms groups • Kids Parties • Great Gifts

Choose from more than 150 ready-made ceramic pieces.

Design & paint your piece; no studio fees with ceramic purchase.

Pick it up one week later after we glaze & fire it for you.

Walk-Ins Welcome!



6670 Odana Rd • Madison • 833-1393

www.studioyouonline.com

seem competitive with other private programs, the success of children and the positive community impact are shared goals. Parents are encouraged to make the choice that is best for their families.

If you have a child that is under four-years-old, be sure to research your options and talk with your preschool or childcare center as to where they stand. Also talk with parents that have experienced 4K in their district. If your district currently offers 4K, or is considering it in the near future, you'll want to learn how the program will operate to determine the feasibility for your family. •PSL

Note: This article has not been approved or endorsed by the Verona Area School District or the 4K Research Team. The content in this article is strictly for informational purposes to offer families with preschoolers an overview of some of the issues surrounding 4K.

For additional information, studies, and resources on this topic, visit the website of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction www.dpi.wi.gov and search "4K". You can also link to DPI and additional resources at: www.PreschoolLife.com/school.html.



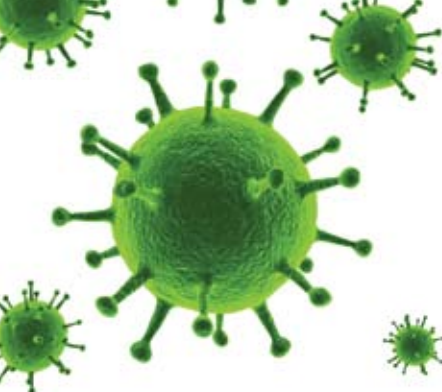
Kindermusik®
with Debbie

Come find out why more parents choose Kindermusik!

Birth thru age 7

608 • 274 • 6635
kindermusikwithdebbie.com

Call to visit a free class



Keeping Kids Healthy in a Germ-Filled World



by Dr. George A. Idarraga • Pediatrician
Meriter McKee • meriterkids.com

If we could see germs, we would see that they are present on surfaces, all over the place. They can live on our skin, on countertops, on door handles and even on our children's toys. Germs are usually left behind when someone who is infected touches a surface after they have contaminated their hand with secretions or body fluids (such as mucus, saliva, tears, etc.) that contain the illness-causing bacteria or virus. From there, it is simply a matter of someone else touching the contaminated object and the offending germ is passed on to make another person ill.

Most viruses can survive outside our bodies for a short time. For example, rhinovirus, the virus that causes the common cold, can survive up to one day on a doorknob, light switch or a child's toy. Influenza virus, which causes the flu (an illness that invades and infects the lungs), may be able to survive up to two days outside a host's body. It is thought that viruses can survive better on hard impermeable surfaces such as plastic, countertops and stainless steel, rather than on soft surfaces such as cloth or plush toys. Some viruses can survive for a surprisingly long time. In one study, rotavirus,

which causes a particularly severe form of diarrhea in young children, survived up to two months on a hard surface.

Bacteria are also able to survive outside the body. *Staph aureus* (which also causes MRSA) and *Strep pyogenes* (the cause of strep throat) have been shown to survive for months on dry surfaces. Knowing this, it is easy to imagine a scenario where a plastic toy becomes a means of transmitting infection to several unsuspecting children.

Children are especially susceptible to becoming ill because their immune systems are not yet mature. For example, they can be more than twice as likely to get the flu as an adult. Yet they are not as scrupulous about hand-washing and are not as aware about what they are touching. Younger children may mouth objects and get saliva on them. A certain amount of this is unavoidable. But, there are some simple measures parents can take that will greatly reduce the risk of illness and ensure that our little ones remain healthy.

Hand-washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infection. This has been proven and known for over 100 years. But what about all those surfaces

where bugs can hide? It is a good idea to periodically wash or wipe down toys, counter-tops, door knobs, light switches, and other "high touch" surfaces. If it is washable, a detergent may be used to clean it. Toys like Legos can be soaked about once a week in a mild bleach solution. If an object is not washable (you wouldn't want to get a light switch wet) a disinfecting wipe may be used. It's a good idea to add these measures as part of routine house cleaning so that they are done one or two times a week.

We live in a world full of micro-organisms. In fact, the overwhelming amount of living stuff (the biomass—everything that is alive) on our planet is one-celled organisms or smaller (bacteria and viruses). Most of these tiny creatures are harmless to us. We live side by side with them, and they do not make us sick. But, there are a small fraction of organisms that can get inside our bodies and cause all sorts of problems. By adopting these cleaning measures, we can lessen the impact of illness to our families. •PSL

Visit Meriter Pediatric's weekly e-House Call Blog for more practical parenting topics concerning your family's health and well-being <http://meriterpediatrics.blogspot.com/>.

Fitchburg's Indoor Playground



- We host **Parents Night Out** every Friday; providing a night of supervised, fun activities for children ages 5-12.
- Rent our 6,000 square foot facility for **BIRTHDAY PARTIES** just \$150 for 2 hours! Enjoy the use of multiple swing sets, climbing ropes, tumbling mats, table games and more!
- **Youngster's Open Gym** offered daily from 10am—noon, for preschoolers and pre-teens. \$5 per child, ages 1 & up. Check website for additional venues during the school year.

Legacy Academy Children's Activity Center
2881 Commerce Park Dr • Fitchburg • (608) 270-9977
www.LegacyAcademy.info

Unique and Educational
Toys, Games and Gifts

20% off Your First Purchase

Present coupon at time of purchase. Not valid on previous purchases and sale items. Cannot combine with other offers. Some restrictions may apply. Expires 3/31/11. Promo PRE2010.

WHOOPS!
A N D C O

555 S. Midvale Blvd • Madison, Wisconsin
608-236-4555 • www.WhoopsAndCo.com

Marriage Point

According to a UCLA study...

Low-stress couples don't divvy up the chores.

After spending four days with 32 families, it was found that both spouses were happier when both felt like they were working toward the same goal, regardless of who did more.

...Their attitude was more, "We do for our family," not, "I do this for you."

Source: *Redbook magazine*



They always leave a little taller.

The lessons your child learns at The Little Gym will fill you both with pride: How to reach higher. How to listen better. How to tackle challenges with confidence and a smile.

Call to schedule a free introductory class.
Learn more at TheLittleGym.com.

THE Little Gym
soar

Fitchburg · www.tlgfitchburgwi.com · 608.442.0608
Middleton · www.tlgmiddletownwi.com · 608.836.3028
Enroll for Winter/Spring Classes · Beginning November 15, 2010 · Don't miss out!
We want to be YOUR child's gym!


- parent/child classes
- preschool/ kindergarten gymnastics
- grade school gymnastics
- sports skills development
- karate
- dance
- cheerleading
- camp
- birthday parties
- parents' survival night

Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

- 27:** Downtown Holiday Open House
State Street & Capitol Square
- 12:** Holiday Fantasy in Lights Display
through January 2 • *Olin Park*

DECEMBER

- 4-31:** Holiday Express
Olbrich Gardens
 - 10-23:** A Wonderful Life
Overture Center
 - 18-26:** The Nutcracker
Overture Center
 - 31:** US Bank Eve • *Various Locations*
- 


JANUARY

- 22:** Kids Day with David Landau
High Noon Saloon
- 30:** Celebrate Youth • *Monona Terrace*

FEBRUARY

- 18-20:** Zor Shrine Circus
Alliant Energy Coliseum
 - 18-20:** Mad City Model Railroad Show
Alliant Energy Exhibition Hall
 - 19-20:** Kids Expo • *Alliant Energy Exhibition Hall*
 - 19-20:** Madison WinterFest
Capitol Square
- 

MARCH

- 12:** The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Overture Center
 - 13:** St. Patrick's Day Parade
Capitol Square
- 

Keep up with family-friendly happenings!

Visit www.PreschoolLife.com for event descriptions and other kids' activities and attractions.



Preschool Life, LLC
 PO Box 259968 • Madison, WI 53725-9968
 www.PreschoolLife.com
 Inquiries: feedback@PreschoolLife.com

Preschool Life is published quarterly by Preschool Life, LLC.

Over 6,000 copies of each issue are distributed in the immediate Madison area and bordering communities via over 70 preschool programs and childcare centers. Copies can also be picked up at more than 30 area businesses.

If you'd like to be on our mailing list for future issues, or to be part of our monthly email distribution, please go to www.PreschoolLife.com. You can download current and past issues of *Preschool Life* at the website, where you can also find additional tips and resources, or use our extensive directory of kid businesses—from classes to specialty stores—along with family-friendly happenings and more!

Advertising in this publication is limited and must fall within certain criteria. For more information, please visit www.PreschoolLife.com/advertising-info, or call 9 am to 3 pm at (608) 288-8494.

Copyright © 2010 Preschool Life, LLC. All rights reserved.

Reproduction of any content of this publication is prohibited without permission from the publisher.



Go to the www.PreschoolLife.com home page for a link to our Facebook page. Become a fan and enjoy postings about community events, resource links, random encouragement and other tips.



Tasty Apple Dip

- 8 oz. Reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
- ½ c. Packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp Vanilla extract

Mix well and store in refrigerator up to 2 weeks. Serve with apple slices.

Variations:

- Top with chopped pecans
- Mix in 1 tsp cinnamon for a fall flavor



Say please. Say thank you. Say aaaaah.

MEET THE NEW MERITER PEDIATRICS.

Getting regular physicals when you're young sets the tone for a lifetime of good health. So we're making it easy to start off right by offering same day appointments and extended hours at our pediatric clinics. We're currently accepting new patients at our Meriter McKee and Middleton locations and the newly opened pediatric department at Meriter West Washington. So give us a call. We'll take care of checking those tonsils so you can concentrate on teaching table manners.

Now taking patients. Same day appointments.
 Pediatric Clinics | 608.417.8388

MERITERKIDS.com
 Grow Well.

 Physicians Plus
 Serving patients of Physicians Plus
 and most insurance plans