



Learning Through Play, Every Student, Every Day

WELCOME TO 4-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN!

We've had an amazing start to the school year! It's been so much fun watching our 4K students settle into their new routines, make new friends, and dive into learning with excitement and curiosity. This is the second edition of the Appleton Community 4K newsletter for the 2024-2025 school year. We hope you find this newsletter packed with important information about our school, as well as practical tips and guidance that can help you in supporting your child's development during this exciting year.

We are proud to work alongside our partners to create enriching early learning experiences for our 4K students. With the support of multiple sites across the Appleton community, we strive to offer a strong foundation for your child's educational journey.

Our school motto is Appleton Community 4K, building lifelong learners through collaborative partnerships and play-based learning. This first newsletter is dedicated to providing you with more information about our play-based learning model.

At this age, it's common for children to say, "I played," when asked about their day at school. While it may sound simple, there's so much learning happening during that playtime! To better understand the learning objectives behind these activities and how they support your child's development, feel free to reach out to your child's teacher. They'll be happy to explain the goals being met through play.

Be sure to also review the weekly newsletter provided by your child's 4K teacher, as it will include specific updates and details related to their classroom. As we move through our school year together, we look forward to sharing and celebrating the many new skills your children learn in their 4K experiences.

WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE?

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DID YOU KNOW? * PLAY DEVELOPS BRAINS!

From research we know that approximately 90% of our brain's development for learning, working, and social engagement occurs between the ages of Birth to Five. Research is pointing to new understandings of early brain development through creative play. As children explore and experiment during play, as well as use their imaginations they are learning language, math, science, social and emotional play skills, and so much more.

Why play? When children are actively engaged in play, the prefrontal cortex of the brain develops understanding of how the world works and how we interact with it, building connections, and neuropathways. These connections across information centers in the brain build the foundation for learning, working, and interacting that are essential for positive outcomes as children grow through school into successful adults.



Upcoming Events

- Learning Through Play Playgroups sponsored by Birth to Five Outreach: join on Thursdays each month from 9:30-10:30 AM. Registration is required, see below for more information.
- Play with Purpose: join on Tuesdays each month from 9:00-10:00 AM or 10:30-11:30 AM. Registration is required, see below for more information.

For more information OR to register for any of these events, please contact:

(920)832-6470



THE LITERACY CORNER

Appleton Area School District's (AASD) elementary English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum is based on Wisconsin's Common Core State Standards. This month's Literacy Corner will focus on how parents can support their child's reading through reading aloud at home.

Read Aloud

Research shows that reading aloud is the single most important thing you can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning. When parents read aloud they encourage a love of reading, promote language development, build early literacy skills and develop a lasting bond with their children.



"THE MORE THAT YOU READ, THE MORE THINGS YOU WILL KNOW. THE MORE THAT YOU LEARN, THE MORE PLACES YOU'LL GO."

-DR. SEUSS



Parent tips: . . .

Mem Fox's Ten Read Aloud Commandments

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes every single day reading aloud.
2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.
3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.
4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.
5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same 'tune' for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.
6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.
8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.
9. Never ever teach reading, or get tense around books.
10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.



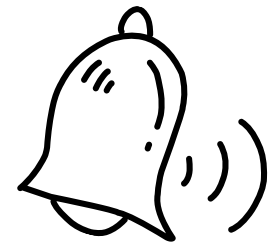
PARENTS.. YOU CAN PLAY TOO!



As your child's first teacher, you've been playing with your child for years. Whether on the playground, in your house or just taking a walk, many of your daily routines include play. We consider play any activity that is open-ended and enjoyable and often includes creating, imagining or exploring. As you reflect on the many times (just this week) you have played with your child, consider your role as you played. Were you observing and responding to questions, were you dressing up or creating art, were you on the floor building with blocks, or rolling a ball? These are all wonderful ways to play with your child, and allow you the opportunity to support their learning through imagination, role-playing, building vocabulary, and being active.

Here is a secret we are eager to share... Play is good for adults too! Parents who take the time to play, experience stronger social ties not only with their children but other adults, increased flexibility in problem-solving, and greater overall happiness.

FAMILY ACTIVITY BAGS



Each month your child will bring home a Family Activity Bag. In this Family Activity Bag, you will find a book that is loved by children and adults alike. You will also find several activities that are designed to extend your child's interest in the theme and support the skills we are working on in 4K.

Please read the book aloud with your child first, and then ask your child to use the pictures in the book to tell you about the story. After reading together, select one or two of the activities from the multiple activity cards included in the bag to continue your time together playing. Each day, read the book with your child giving them more opportunity at the end to talk about what they heard and learned. You can keep the activity bag for 4 days.

Research over the past few decades has shown that when parents are involved in their child's school experiences, children experience stronger math and reading achievement, increased motivation and self-esteem, and better school attendance. Remember that this Family Activity Bag is meant to provide you with fun activities to extend your child's learning. There is no right or wrong way to complete the activities, so just have fun together!



THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM ®

In June 2020, the AASD Board of Education approved a revised 4K Curriculum and recommended the purchase of The Creative Curriculum® as supporting 4K instructional materials. The Creative Curriculum® includes teaching guides that create environments and activities that focus on project-based units of study in 7 different areas across the school year. Using a model of study, or inquiry, young children learn not only academic concepts but the process of learning itself.

One of the reasons The Creative Curriculum® was chosen for our instructional materials is the focus on purposeful play. The units of study provide experiences and materials to engage children in investigations. We know that children learn best when they are engaged in intentional play experiences; where they are exploring, investigating, and discovering new interests and new ideas—all within experiences children can explore firsthand.

The implementation of the Creative Curriculum supports consistent learning experiences across all 4K classrooms, enabling students to learn through child-directed units of inquiry in high-quality play environments. In doing so, students will experience 4K instruction that addresses the whole child, the wide developmental range that is typical of this age group, and their individualized interests and supports.



4K OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION



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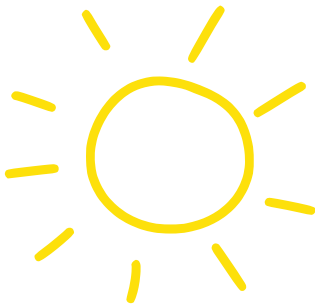


A TEACHER'S ROLE DURING PLAY

While children are exploring and developing through play, their teachers have an important role in supporting their learning. Before your child even enters the classroom, their teacher has intentionally selected books, toys, and materials that will lead your child's play in the targeted learning objectives. While your child is playing, their teacher will join them to facilitate their learning, expanding and extending the play activities to incorporate the areas of the 4K curriculum such as language, math, science, and movement.

Our 4K teacher's role is to recognize the level children are playing at and extend their learning through questioning, observing, responding, and introducing next-level activities in their play. For example, if a child is building a castle, a teacher may ask them how visitors will enter the castle (language). They may encourage a child to invite classmates to a party at the castle (social development). Perhaps they will ask how people will see from the castle and encourage children to add windows (experimentation with math and geometry).

Our castle is just one example of how your child's teacher will support them in exploring and learning new skills as they play. To ensure play is productive and leads to new learning, teachers are continuously observing and noting each child's progress. This allows them to plan for materials and activities that are just right for each child's level of development and build in materials that lead children to reach the next step in their exploration and learning. You will learn more about your child's development, play, and progress four times this year, twice at parent-teacher conferences and twice in a written progress report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF APPLETON COMMUNITY 4K

We believe that a successful and effective four-year-old kindergarten program:

- Recognizes early relationships between the individuals in a child's world matter.
- Is universal, yet optional, and provides choices for children and their families.
- Is inclusive of all children, recognizing and supporting diversity and individual stages of child development.
- Prepares the whole child.
- Uses knowledge of child growth and development as the foundation for educational experiences.
- Is engaged with and supported by the community.
- Supports parents as the child's primary teacher.
- Views a child as a part of a family.
- Takes place in high-quality environments.
- Fosters each child's love of learning.





Health Services * P.O. Box 2019, Appleton, WI 54911 * 920-852-5344

Each September, our country celebrates National Family Meals Month - a nationwide event to encourage families to enjoy more meals together. The Journal of American Medical Association notes that family meal time is linked to:

- Lower rates of obesity and eating disorders
- Lower rates of substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and depression
- Higher self-esteem and academic performance

Did you know that many grocery stores have recipes from meals, to snacks, to drinks and allows you to easily add all of the required items to your shopping cart from one screen? Check out some of them here: [Meijer Recipe Box](#), [Hy-Vee Recipes and Ideas](#), [Walmart Recipe Ideas](#) and [Festival Recipes Page](#). Festival also has [free virtual cooking videos](#) to check out as well. They have several "kids in the kitchen" videos to get your student involved!

If you are struggling with access to food, please visit the [Wisconsin Food Support Resources page](#). There is a lot of great information about FoodShare (Wisconsin's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP), food banks, food pantries, etc. [211Wisconsin](#) connects you with thousands of nonprofit and government services in your area. If you want personal assistance call the three-digit number 211 or 877-947-2211. A friendly voice to talk with you 24/7/365. Please see this [search](#) with many agencies supporting the Appleton area.

Looking for ways to get your student to open up at dinner or ways to make mealtime more fun? [The Family Dinner Project](#) shares a lot of ideas for games and activities to incorporate into cooking and dinner. They also share a lot of conversation-starter ideas [here](#).

Schedules are busy and sitting down as a family can seem daunting. To help make family meals more successful, here are some tips and tricks from The Family Dinner Project:

Make the Commitment: The most important thing in our busy world is to make the intentional choice to have dinner together. Some tips:

- **Turn off technology:** Cell phones, work, email, TV.
- **Schedule it:** Like you schedule the other appointments in your life, put dinner in your calendar. Instead of Skyping to dinner, go home to dinner and Skype back to work.
- **Be flexible and easy on yourself:** If you have a soccer game, bring a picnic. If schedules don't match, stretch dinner out: Veggies and dip while cooking, dinner with one parent, and dessert with other parent after work.
- **Keep other meals in mind:** If dinner isn't possible, have family breakfast or late-night snack.

Make it Simple: The last thing you want is more stress.

- **Pre-make meals:** Cook a big batch of soup or a double batch of a casserole over the weekend, and freeze it to make weekday dinners easier.
- **Choose meals that are fast to assemble:** Meals can be thrown together quickly with help from store-bought ingredients, like pre-cut veggies or pre-made pizza dough.
- **Have everyone pitch in:** Getting everyone involved makes dinner easier/faster, not to mention more of a fun event. Encourage kid participation with simple dishes – crepes, tacos, or even a pot of chicken rice soup, which kids can add their favorite toppings to, like chopped carrots or peppers, roasted garlic, or sliced cheese. Dishes with bright colors also encourage participation.

Make it Fun: The more fun/special parents make meals, the more likely that kids will clamor to keep having them.

- Create meals based on favorite books, like Green Eggs and Ham or Quidditch stew from Harry Potter.
- Have indoor picnics.
- Let your teens pick the music.
- Let kids choose the ingredients for Family Iron Chef.
- Engage kids in great conversation, which is always fun.
- Play games at the table, like tell two truths and a tall tale, and have everyone else at the table guess which is which.
- Play with your food: Have kids arrange salad into a face on a plate, or make shapes out of pizza dough.

Make it Matter: The table is one of the only places left where families consistently have conversations together.

- Tell stories about earlier times in your lives.
- Ask open-ended questions so kids can talk.
- Use real-world events to talk to your kids about topics that are important to your family. A fun example is our recent Conversation of the Week about "[Snackman](#)."
- Tell stories about grandparents and other relatives – about romance, work, and overcoming adversity.
- Make plans and dream together.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

**EMBRACE
THE
EVERY
DAY!**

DID YOU KNOW?



Students who are chronically absent in 4K through 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.



By 6th grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk of dropping out of school.

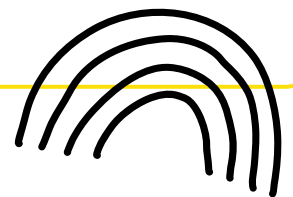


Frequent absences even as young as 4K, can be a sign that a student is:

- Losing interest in school
- Struggling with school-work
- Dealing with a bully
- Facing some other difficulty

HERE ARE A FEW PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP SUPPORT REGULAR ATTENDANCE:

- Make sure your student keeps a regular bedtime and establishes a morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your student goes to school every day unless they do not feel well.
- Avoid scheduling vacations when school is in session. Families are encouraged to take vacations during the eight weeks of summer vacation, two weeks near the holidays, or over spring break.
- Try to schedule regular doctor and dentist appointments at the beginning or end of the day or days students are off of school so that your student will only miss a portion of the day.
- Talk to teachers and counselors for advice if your student feels anxious about going to school.
- Develop backup plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your student to school.
- Monitor your student's attendance through Infinite Campus to keep track of absences. If an absence is marked unexcused, please contact the school as soon as possible.
- Reach out for help if you are experiencing tough times (e.g. transportation, unstable housing, loss of a job, health problems) that make it difficult to get your child to school. We are here to help! Other parents, your child's teacher, principal, social worker, school nurse, after-school providers, or community agencies can help you problem solve or connect you to a needed resource.



Today's Play . . . Tomorrow's Success!

Today's play in early childhood is the best foundation for success in school. Play develops many skills that are necessary for children to learn to read and write for success in math and science. Play also develops behaviors that help children learn all school subjects. This chart shows the **skill that children are learning** as they play and the ways that these skills help children develop into better students. *This does not mean that preschoolers are ready to be taught to read and write.* It means that they are learning many of the things that will **lead to success in elementary school** by spending their time playing today.

Today's play

(examples of play)

When children build with blocks, buildings, houses, cars, etc...

Helps preschool-age children learn

They are learning spatial relationships – learning to judge distance, space and size.

They are improving their visual memory – remembering what they see.

They are learning to achieve a self-selected goal – completing their own projects.

Leads to elementary school success

Understanding spatial relationships helps children to succeed in math and science.

Visual memory is needed for learning to read.

Independent completion of tasks is very important for success in all school subjects.

When children put blocks away onto labeled shelves...

They are learning to match, classify, and sort by shape and size.

Matching, classifying and sorting are important underlying skills for many types of learning, especially math and science.

When children play with small interlocking blocks...

They are improving their small muscle control – picking up and moving objects.

Good small muscle control is needed for learning to write.

When children work a puzzle...

They learn to stick to a job and complete it, and feel good about completing it.

Children who are persistent learners do better in all school subjects.

They are learning to make figure-ground discriminations – noticing the difference between the background and the picture.

Children need to make these type of distinctions to learn to recognize letters and to learn to read.

When children string beads...

They are improving their eye-hand coordination – their ability to use their eyes and hands together.

Eye-hand coordination is needed for learning to write.

When children mix two colors of paint to make another color

They are developing an understanding of cause and effect.

The foundation for science education is real-life experience with cause and effect.

When children draw a picture of the sun...

They are learning to use pictures or symbols to represent their ideas.

Understanding that letters and words are symbols, and practice with using symbols is needed for children to learn to read and write.

When children pretend to write with markers and crayons...

They are learning directionality – the way that adults write across the page from left to right in English.

Understanding the directionality used in English gives children the background they need to make sense of reading and writing.

When children choose whatever they wish to do with art materials...

They are learning to make choices, to try out ideas, to plan and experiment.

Children who are independent learners and who can try out their own ideas are better learners in all school subjects.

When children play fireperson or adult roles...

They are developing perspective-taking skills – the ability to think about the way others act, think and feel, and develop empathy and feelings for others.

Children with perspective-taking skills understand that their teacher sees their work differently than they do. This skill is needed for children to make use of the feedback about their work from their teacher.

They are learning to use symbols to represent something else – a block can become a fire truck.

Learning to use symbols is what learning to read and write is all about.

When children play restaurant together or play grocery store together...

They are improving their language skills.

Language skills underlie all learning in school.

They are learning how to work together to overcome problems.

Problem-solving skills help children to learn in every school subject.

They are developing an understanding of social expectations and the attitude of others, and they develop the ability to anticipate how to act in real-life situations.

Children become better at figuring out what is expected of them, academically and socially.

When children play in water...

They are learning conservation of volume – that no matter what size or shape the container is, a specific amount of water will not change.

Conservation of volume is an important science concept.

They test, experiment and guess what will happen.

This is the same process scientists use in research.

When children play in wet and dry sand...

They observe first-hand the changes that water makes to sand, learning that combining things together can create new and different things.

Observing changes when things are combined is just like many types of scientific experiments.

October Play Ideas Calendar Preschoolers



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 Scan here for more information about Birth-Five Outreach	1 Are you registered for our playgroups on Tuesdays & Thursdays? Call TODAY!! 920-832-6470 #1	2 Play With Purpose at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30: <i>Music in Motion</i> (Registration required)	3 Learning Through Play at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30: <i>Bats and Spiders!</i> (Registration required)	4 National Taco Day! Make taco treats with your child! Read/listen to: Dragons Love Tacos	5 National "Do Something Nice Day!" Read/listen to: BE KIND!	
6 Make a sticky fall tree with contact paper and some paper leaves	7 Make a fall sensory bin. Add leaves, small gourds, acorns or small pumpkins	8 Play With Purpose at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30: <i>The Power of Play</i> (Registration required)	9 Have a dance party with your child! Play some music and dance; encourage child to take the lead	10 LTP at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30: <i>Glad Monster, Sad Monster</i> (Registration required) and attend <i>CELC 10 Year Celebration</i> 4:30-6pm (Registration required)	11 Fill a large container with water; find items that sink or float	12 Make fall scented playdough 
13 Search around the house to find things that are orange	14 Make a meal together; encourage child to scoop, pour and mix	15 Play With Purpose at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30: <i>I've Got Personality</i> (Registration required)	16 National Sports Day! Practice bouncing, rolling, kicking, or catching a ball with your child	17 Learning Through Play at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30: <i>10 Black Dots</i> (Registration required)	18 Sorting Activity: Find some items to sort with your child like socks, blocks, or food	19 Make edible puffy paint pumpkins using whip cream and orange food coloring
20 Collect leaves outside and do leaf rubbings with crayons and paper!	21 National Apple Day! Cut up different kinds of apples or make different applesauces. Which one is your favorite?	22 National Color Day! Let your child choose their favorite color to wear and paint a colorful picture!	23 Build an obstacle course for your child to crawl, climb, or walk through. Let them take the lead!	24 National FOOD Day! Make some of your child's favorite foods together to enjoy!	25 Make a Fall Alphabet Tree with your child!	26 National Pumpkin Day! Cut a pumpkin and pull out the seeds for a fun sensory experience!
27 Bake the pumpkin seeds from your carved pumpkins for a fun snack!	28 Go to the library and choose some fall books to read like: Hello Fall	29 National Cat Day! Read/listen to: If You Give a Cat a Cupcake	30 National Candy Corn Day! Make Candy Corn Craft 	31 National Caramel Apple Day! Enjoy caramel apples, make Caramel Apple Bites		See back side of calendar for activity details 

Jr. Explorers

What:

- 90-minute drop off program
- Children will engage in learner-directed and guided play activities

Who:

- 3- 4 year olds who are toilet independent
- Members and non-members are invited!

When:

Sessions start in August

Tuesdays/Thursdays or Wednesdays/Fridays

- Drop Off: 8:30 - 8:45am
- Pick-Up: 10:00am



Program Goals

- 1. Build confidence** through child-directed, play-based learning
- 2. Build communication and collaboration skills** through the Plan. Play. Share. method
- 3. Build emotional awareness** through sharing their experiences

Learn more and register here:

or visit our website





YOU'RE INVITED!

CELC 10 YEAR CELEBRATION

CELEBRATING...

TEN YEARS OF BRIGHT BEGINNINGS
AND ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES



**THURSDAY, OCTOBER
10TH**

**CARNIVAL & PICNIC
4:30-6 PM**

**CEREMONY
6:00-6:30 PM**



RSVP HERE

Join us outside for a **FREE** picnic, children's games, bouncy house, live music with **RANDY PETERSON & FUN!**

Join us in the CELC gym for a special ceremony celebrating the last 10 years!