



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 2026-2027 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.

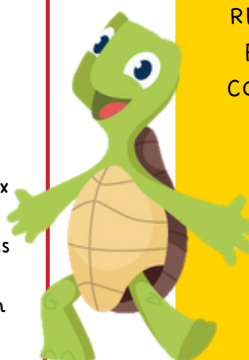
At this age, it's common for children to say, "I played," when asked about their day at school. While it may sound simple, there's so much learning happening during that playtime! To better understand the learning objectives behind these activities and how they support your child's development, feel 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.

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 an 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.



WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE?

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- Parents & Play
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- Creative Curriculum
- Important Links
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- Get to Know Our 4K Staff!
- October Play Calendar
- AASD Birth-Five Events

UPCOMING EVENTS:



PUMPKIN PALOOZA

SPONSORED BY BIRTH TO FIVE OUTREACH

July 17 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8TH
6:00-7:00 PM

SEE THE LAST PAGE OF THE NEWSLETTER
FOR MORE INFORMATION!

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.
FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT: (920) 832-6470 OR
SCAN THE QR CODE.



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 you're on the playground, playing at home, or simply taking a walk together, many of your everyday routines include opportunities for play.

We consider play to be any activity that is open-ended and enjoyable and often involves creating, imagining, or exploring. As you reflect on the many ways you've played with your child, even just this week, think about the role you played. Were you observing and responding to their questions? Dressing up or creating art? Getting down on the floor to build with blocks? Rolling a ball back and forth?

These are all wonderful ways to play with your child, and each provides opportunities to support their learning through imagination, role-playing, building vocabulary, problem-solving, and being active.

Here's a secret we're excited to share: Play is good for adults, too!

When parents take time to play, they can experience stronger social connections with their children and with other adults. Play can also support flexibility in problem-solving and contribute to greater overall happiness.

So, the next time your child asks you to play, remember: you're not just playing. You're learning, connecting, and growing together.

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 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 activity cards included in the bag to continue your time together playing. Each day, read the book with your child, giving them opportunities 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. Use them as an opportunity to learn, play, and connect with your child.



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 focused on project-based units of study across seven different areas throughout the school year. Using a model of study, or inquiry, young children learn not only academic concepts, but also the process of learning itself.

One of the reasons The Creative Curriculum® was chosen as our instructional material is its focus on purposeful play. The units of study provide experiences and materials that 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 ideas through hands-on experiences.

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



**APPLETON COMMUNITY
4K WEBSITE**

4K CALENDARS

FAMILY EDUCATION

**COMMUNITY
OPPORTUNITIES**

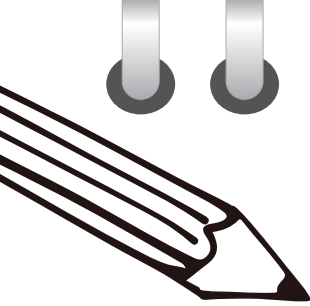
**4K OFFICE
CONTACT
INFORMATION &
IMPORTANT LINKS**



Jennifer Morkin, Principal
Stephani Strube, Dean of Students

Karissa Covington & Joan Kretz
Appleton Community 4K Administrative Assistants

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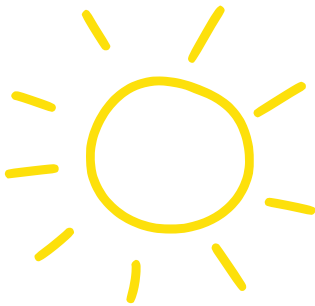
A TEACHER'S ROLE DURING PLAY

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 continuously observe and note 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 to build in experiences that encourage 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 through 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

FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE: BEGINNING OF YEAR REMINDERS

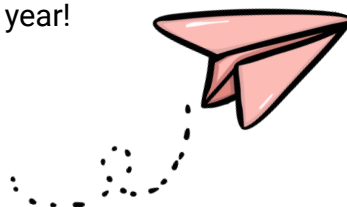
Hello and welcome to the 2026-2027 school year! We are excited to see your students back, and we look forward to working with them. In order to help ensure we have the most up-to-date information for those students with health conditions, please remember to fill out an updated health condition plan, which can be found [here](#). Please return these to your student's school office once completed.

Any medication that will be kept at school must have a new [medication administration form](#) completed each school year. Please note, if your student has a health plan that lists their medication and dosing, you do not need to also complete a medication administration form. All medications must come in their original packaging or pharmacy bottle with the student's name and dosing information. If your student is in middle or high school and you would like them to receive the stock medication (Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Benadryl, and TUMS), you will need to give [permission for them to receive these medications](#).

Per Wisconsin law, students are required to be fully immunized or have a signed [waiver](#) on file. To see the current state requirements, please see this [letter](#) from the Department of Health Services. If your child has not yet received the appropriate immunizations, please schedule an appointment with your health care provider or the City of Appleton Health Department/ Outagamie County Health Department. Additional information about vaccination requirements can be found [here](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to your school nurse.

Lastly, every day your student attends school matters! If a student misses 10 days per year for the lifetime of their school career, that adds up to 140 days... almost a full school year. Research and experience teach us that students with poor attendance are at greater risk for school difficulty. Making up missed schoolwork is very helpful, but missed classroom instruction cannot be made up. If you have concerns about getting your student to school or have questions about when to keep your student home, please reach out to their school to discuss.

Thank you, and make it a great year!
AASD Nurses



WELCOME BACK!

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.

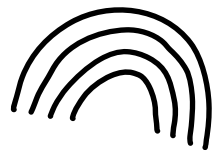


Frequent absences even as young as 4K, can be a sign that a student is:

- 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 student'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.



EXCUSED ABSENCE:

Any absence that is verified by a parent/guardian via call, email, or the Parent Portal.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE:

Any absence that is not verified by a parent/guardian via, call, email, or the Parent Portal.



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

Today's Play	Play is essential for laying the foundation for academic success in early childhood. It helps develop the skills needed for children to learn to read and write for success in math and science. Additionally, play fosters behaviors that aid in learning across all school subjects.
The Chart	This chart illustrates the skills that children acquire through play and how these skills contribute to their development. It does not imply that our students are prepared to be taught reading and writing at this stage. Rather, it indicates that through play, they are picking up many essential skills that will lead to success in school.

Today's Play

(examples of play)

	Helps preschool-age children learn	Leads to school success
Block Area - Building with blocks - Playing with cars - Using magnet tiles - Using animals, counters, and people to enhance play - Putting blocks away onto labeled shelves	- They learn about spatial relationships by evaluating distance, space, and size. - They improve their visual memory by remembering what they see. - They are learning to achieve self-selected goals. - They learn self-motivation by completing their projects at the moment or finishing them at another time. - They learn to match, classify, and sort by shape and size. - They are improving their small muscle control.	- Understanding spatial relationships helps students succeed in math and science. - Visual memory is needed to learn to read. - Independent completion of tasks is essential for success in all school subjects. - Matching, classifying, and sorting are skills for different types of learning, especially math and science. - Small muscles are needed for writing.
Dramatic Play - Imitating adult roles - Dressing up - Playing restaurant or grocery store with peers or adults	- They are improving their vocabulary. - They are developing their ability to think about how others act, think, and feel. - They are learning about their emotions and how to control them. - They expand their imagination by using symbols to represent something else - for example, a block can become a firetruck. - They are learning how to work together to overcome problems. - They are developing an understanding of social expectations and the attitudes of others. - They are developing the ability to anticipate how to act in real-life situations.	- Understanding how others feel and their own emotions helps students receive feedback on their work. - Playing grocery stores help expose students to mathematics skills such as adding, subtracting, and counting on. - Learning to use symbols is necessary to learn how to read and write. - Language skills are fundamental to all learning in school. - Problem-solving skills help children learning across all school subjects. - Children become better at figuring out what is expected of them, academically and socially.
Table Toys - Doing puzzles - Stringing beads - Using play dough	- They are improving their fine motor skills. - They are learning to distinguish between the background and the picture. - They are enhancing their hand-eye coordination.	- Hand-eye coordination is essential for writing. - Stringing beads expose students to math skills such as patterns. - The ability to differentiate between the background and the picture helps with recognizing letters and learning to read.
Writing/Art Area - Mixing colors - Drawing picture of a sun ...art - Using scissors - Using multiple writing utensils: markers, crayons, pens, pencil, etc.	- They are learning to use pictures or symbols to represent thoughts. - They are improving their fine motor skills. - They are developing an understanding of cause and effect - They are learning directionality - writing from left to right. - They are learning to make choices, try ideas, plan, and experiment.	- Learning cause and effect is the foundation for science education and can be applied to real-life experiences. - Children need to understand that letters and words are symbols to learn how to read and write. - Understanding directionality gives students the background they need to make sense of reading and writing. - Students making their own choices become independent learners who can try to develop their ideas in all school subjects.
Sensory Table - Water play: washing dishes, washing babies, and pouring and dumping - Sand play (wet and dry): Building with sand and finding objects in sand - Experiences different textures: flour, shaving cream, microwaved soap	- They are observing objects that float and sink. - They are learning about the conservation of volume. - They are learning to hypothesize and experiment. - They are discovering that combining things can create new and different things. - They are observing firsthand the change that water makes to sand.	- Conservation of volume is important for science concept. - Making observations, hypothesizing and experimenting are all important parts of scientific experiments.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	 Scan here for more information about Birth-Five Outreach			¹ <u>Learning Through Play</u> at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30 <i>Happy Helpers</i> (Registration required)	² Start a busy morning with a few deep breaths and stretches with your child. Reach up high, touch your toes and twist*.	³ National Play Outside Day! Visit a <u>playground*</u> .
⁴ National Fire Protection Week! Create a plan with your family in case of a fire*. Know an exit plan and remember to practice!	⁵ National Do Something Nice Day! Help your child do something nice like draw a picture for someone! 	⁶ <u>Play With Purpose</u> at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30 <i>The Power of Play</i> (Registration required)	⁷ Practice using scissors. Go outside to cut the grass*. This help builds finger strength.	⁸ <u>Learning Through Play</u> at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30 <i>Monster Mischief</i> (Registration required) <u>Pumpkin Palooza*</u> 6:00 - 7:00 pm	⁹ Sing a simple "Leaves are falling" song with your child or listen to this song*... 	¹⁰ Practice counting throughout the day. Count stairs you climb, grapes you eat, books you read*.
¹¹ Rake up a big pile of leaves! Let your child jump in them and throw them into the air*. 	¹² Waiting in line? Try singing a song or counting your jumps.	¹³ <u>Play With Purpose</u> at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30 <i>Simple Routines Smoother Days</i> (Registration required)	¹⁴ National Dessert Day! Enjoy a sweet treat with your child. Talk about what it taste like.	¹⁵ <u>Learning Through Play</u> at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30 <i>Spiders, Spiders Everywhere!</i> (Registration required)	¹⁶ National Sports Day! Take turns throwing or kicking a ball to your child* 	¹⁷ Make a Fall tree. Trace your child's hand and arm on paper for the trunk. Let them fingerprint the leaves.*
¹⁸ Find a pumpkin patch to visit. <u>Here's a list*</u> 	¹⁹ Find a quiet and comfy spot to read your child's favorite book with them*. Point and label things on the pages.	²⁰ <u>Play With Purpose</u> at CELC from 9-10 & 10:30-11:30 <i>I Love Books!</i> (Registration required)	²¹ National Apple Day! Cut an apple in half. See the star? Eat the apple for snack*.	²² Collect a few leaves from outside. Glue them to paper and draw faces on them*.	²³ Place your child in front of a mirror*. Make an emotions face and have your child copy it and label the emotion.	²⁴ National Food Day! Give your child a variety of different foods to try.
²⁵ Make Fall scented playdough. Here is the <u>recipe</u> .	²⁶ National Pumpkin Day! Carve the pumpkin and let your child play in the pulp and seeds.	²⁷ Try a new pumpkin snack: Pumpkin donut, pumpkin cookie, pumpkin cake, pumpkin bread, etc.	²⁸ Using two or more cups, hide a toy under one cup and see if your child can find it*.	²⁹ National Cat Day! Pretend to be a cat or sing 'Old MacDonald' with a cat on the farm. 	³⁰ Move like leaves. Slowly fall to the ground, spin around or blow in the wind.	³¹ Grab a book. Let your child turn the pages and 'read' the story.

GET TO KNOW OUR 4K STAFF!

Want to learn a little more about the people who help make your child's 4K experience special?

[Check out our Staff Favorites!](#)

Find your 4K site and your child's teacher to learn more about their favorite things—from snacks and drinks to hobbies and more. It's a fun way to get to know your child's teacher beyond the classroom!

[A big HELLO from our 4K Staff across 13 4K locations! Ask your student if they can find their 4K teacher in this video!](#)



INVITES YOU TO...

PUMPKIN PALOOZA!

FREE & OPEN TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AGES BIRTH TO FIVE. SIBLINGS WELCOME!

JOIN US FOR PUMPKIN & FALL-THEMED GAMES, CRAFTS, STORIES, AND MORE!

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8TH
6 PM - 7 PM
COMMUNITY EARLY LEARNING CENTER

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS NEEDED FOR REGISTRATION:
Parent/Caregiver name, Child's name/birth date, phone number, address & email address

PLEASE CONTACT DANIELLE TZAKAIS AT (920) 832-6470 #1 OR tzakaisdaniell@aasd.k12.wi.us

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR THIS EVENT BY OCTOBER 5TH