



Eichers' Kids' 4K Program



Here at Eichers we strive to find the balance between a well-rounded education, and a well-rounded approach to childhood. We believe that an excitement for learning and appropriate expectations will set our young students up for a lifetime love of learning. We encourage our children to ask questions, help them find the answer, and to have fun on that journey. A balance of learning activities and play is at the heart of any good preschool program, and ours is no exception.



Each year in our 4K is different because the students each year are different. Creating a classroom that allows each child to learn in the ways that make sense to them and explore their interests shapes the curriculum from year to year. As with the rest of our preschool classrooms, the 4K runs on a theme based curriculum. These themes offer interest, variety, and a cohesive element to all the planned activities for the week. Each theme correspond with a letter, which at the 4K level is much more of a focus than in the previous preschool rooms. Focusing on a letter each week with review weeks each month allows even part time students to have plenty of practice learning to recognize, sound out, and write each letter in its uppercase and lowercase form.

The schedule for the academic morning offers centers for the students to cycle through. Each center approaches a different aspect of learning; language or writing, science and nature, building, role playing or imaginative play, math, sensory, and art or creative expression. All of the centers are planned while keeping in mind the need to balance fine motor and large muscle activities as well as teacher directed and student lead activities.

There are endless examples of centers and the skills they reinforce. Writing and letter recognition practice may be done using chalk, dry erase markers, pencils, stencils, magnet boards, wood pieces, or even play dough. The wonder of science and nature and the gift of learning to ask questions may be presented as experiments, gardening, nature walks, books, or higher level thinking activities that spark curiosity and get the students questioning and problem solving. The further development of fine motor skills can be practiced through activities such as writing, cutting, tracing, and building with small objects. The sensory table is a wonderful tool in the classroom that is changed out often with new materials for the children to touch, feel, manipulate, and explore; some materials we use are sand, rice, pasta, beans, water, snow, and dirt! The dramatic play area can be one of the most important areas of an early childhood classroom; the children may look to an outside eye as though they are just "playing house", but they are learning so much about peer interaction, communication, problem solving, social roles, and creative expression. A student's ability to play cooperatively in the dramatic play area by the end of the year may say more about their growth than how well they write their name. Early math skills are introduced in the form of sorting, counting, graphing, and learning terms such as 'more' and 'less'. Art and creative expression are paramount in a child's development. We strive to offer a wide variety of materials and techniques to give each child a chance to explore and create. Some art activities are about mastering a skill, such as cutting, and may be more of a step-by-step process, while others are very open ended and can be taken in many different directions.

Our approach to center time is one that fosters individual interest. Each child is expected to complete each center, but they are allowed to take their time and move to the next one after they feel they have completed their task. This method gives the children the opportunity to spend time in the areas that interest them the most while still creating opportunity to master skills in each area.

Above and beyond center time, the preschool portion of the morning includes helper jobs such as setting the table, books and puzzles, outdoor play, and circle time. Circle time is a large group activity in which the class discusses the calendar, weather, and any special topic for the day. We place great importance on learning the regular use of manners and proper interactions with both peers and adults; respect is given and expected. Another large area of emphasis is self-help skills; the children are encouraged and, in time, expected to complete most or all of their tasks themselves. These self-help skills include bathroom tasks, dressing and undressing for outdoor play, getting shoes on, and clean up.



Our goals for each child exiting our 4K program and entering a district or private Kindergarten program are basic and most of the children will be able to exceed expectations upon completing 4K. Some of these goals are: identifying and writing all upper and lower case letters, recognizing all letter sounds, spell and write their first and last names, identify and write numbers 1-10, count to at least ten and understand a one to one correspondence up to ten, develop a pincer grip on their pencil, and basic large muscle coordination. The 4K teacher will either formally, or within the context of the classroom, evaluate each student to gauge their readiness for kindergarten. This is usually only something that comes up with summer birthday students; the decision whether or not to send a child who has a summer birthday is something we discuss on a case-by-case basis.

