

PRESCHOOL PRESS



A Publication of the Anchorage School District STeP Center and
the Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Department

February, 2006:
Volume 3, Issue 5

In This Issue . . .

In this issue of Preschool Press you will find articles for parents of preschool children on the following topics:

- * Looking Ahead: Readiness for Kindergarten
- * Continuum of Special Education Services
- * Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- * Communication Comes in Many Forms
- * Positive Parenting Tips
- * April Parent-Teacher Institute
- * Website of the Month
- * Parent Resources

About The Preschool Press

This publication is designed for preschool families in the Anchorage School District. It is mailed at the end of each month. Email subscriptions are also sent out so if you wish to receive this mailing, contact:

loutrel_barbara@asdk12.org
or call 742-3868.

Past Copies of the Preschool Press can be found on www.asdk12.org/dept/step

Looking Ahead: Readiness for Kindergarten

Many parents with a child in the Anchorage School District preschool program may have questions in the next few months as they prepare for their preschooler to enter Kindergarten. In the next few editions of Preschool Press we will be addressing parent issues regarding this transition process.

Question: I feel my child is not ready for kindergarten. Can my child stay in preschool for an extra year?

Answer: Preschool special education is a program for children ages 3-5 who are not yet eligible for kindergarten and who have disabilities requiring special education services. The preschool program offers activities, instruction and therapy designed to meet each child's goals and objectives on their IEP. Unless there is a unique special education reason that a child's educational program cannot be implemented in the elementary schools with special education and related services, then children who are 5 before September 1 enter the elementary education program. See next page for Special Education services that are available in the ASD.



Question: My child doesn't have the skills that other children do. Shouldn't he/she remain in preschool until those skills are acquired?

Answer: The elementary special education program provides special education services, speech/language therapy, occupational & physical therapy, audiology services, and assistance from teachers of the hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired. There are a lot of support services available to your child through special education and related services. Specific services your child needs will be specified in the IEP. Your child can continue to develop the skills s/he needs in kindergarten with these supports. Studies show that children benefit socially and academically from being with age appropriate peers.



ASD Services Available to Children with Disabilities

As you meet with your child's IEP team and discuss transitioning your child to Kindergarten you may have questions about services. The Anchorage School District (ASD) provides comprehensive educational services through the Special Education department to all children who experience disabilities and have additional needs beyond those which can generally be met by the regular classroom program. Special education services are provided in all ASD schools, including alternative schools, optional schools, charter schools and special school programs. Services are designed by an IEP team in the least restrictive environment, including the parent as a contributing member. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act '97 (IDEA) requires that a continuum of special education placements is available which includes: support in the regular classroom supervised by special education personnel, direct service by special education personnel in the regular classroom, pull-out time from the regular education classroom with service by special education personnel, self-contained special education classrooms, a special school, home or hospital instruction or instruction in an institution. Since all components of the continuum cannot be provided in every neighborhood school, the IEP teams make every effort to provide the appropriate services for a student in a setting as close to his/her normal classroom as possible. In addition to providing the necessary special education services, the IEP team may determine a need for related services. Related services may include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, specialized nursing services, audiology services and transportation.

Alaskan Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Honor, Support, Empower

Grandparents, would you like some time for yourselves while building in fun, educational activities for your grandchild(ren)? Get information on respite services offered through Volunteers of America, Alaska. They have information on mini-respite grants, Grandfamily Respite Camps and free activities.

**Grandfamilies Network &
Respite Project**
1675 C Street, Suite 201
Anchorage, AK 99501
888-522-9866



Communication Comes in Many Forms

You may notice that your preschooler has some difficulty with communication. In fact your child may not be using words at all to express him/herself. Communication comes in many forms: vocalizations, speech, pictures, gestures, eye gaze, facial expressions, sign language and even speech generating devices. The use of more than one type of communication methods by one person is called multimodal communication. Multimodal communication is natural; everyone uses a variety of communication methods all the time. People typically simultaneously use gestures, facial expressions and body postures in addition to speech. Encourage your child to use different means of communication and you will see their frustration decrease.

What is augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)?

AAC is any device, system or method that improves the ability of a child with a communication impairment to communicate effectively. Although AAC is often used to refer to formal communication devices and systems such as sign language, communication boards or speech generating devices, it can include less sophisticated means of communication such as facial expressions, non-speech vocalizations, idiosyncratic gestures, etc. AAC is used when a child does not develop communication in the normal fashion, or experiences a significant delay in its development. AAC is not merely a substitute for how the child is currently communicating. It is used to augment that communication, replacing only elements that are unintelligible, socially unacceptable, or harmful to the child or others. Ideally, an AAC system includes more than one mode of communication, with the child using whichever is the most efficient given the persons, setting and activity at hand. Very often one of the modes of communication in an AAC program is natural speech.

This information was taken from the YAACK (AAC Connecting Young Kids) website: <http://aac.unl.edu:16080/yaack/>

Positive Parenting Tip of the Month . . .

Avoid Problems-Think Ahead

Keep routines and Structure: Mealtime, bedtime, getting ready for school and often transitioning from one activity to another with children can sometimes be difficult. Offer some choices so your child feels like s/he has some control. For example, "It's time for bed. Would you like to put on your pajamas first or brush your teeth?" If communication is difficult for your child, you can use objects or pictures to represent what you want him/her to do. For instance showing a storybook could represent getting a bedtime story, which may motivate your child to get ready for bed. After a while your child will learn the routine and may not need the prompting. Children like to predict their day and have comfort in knowing what will happen.

Prepare for routine changes: Special events, visits from friends or relatives, trips, etc. can change the daily routine. Changes in routine are stressful for everyone. This is especially true for young children. Preschoolers often struggle with the concept of time. While families may tell their children about upcoming events, young children have difficulty visualizing these events and understanding how this will impact their lives. A simple strategy that families can use to help alleviate some of this stress is through the use of a calendar. All you will need is a wall calendar and some stickers. Hang the calendar at your child's eye level. Use stickers to help label routine and/or special events. If your child attends preschool, bus stickers work great to mark school days. Other stickers could be used to mark out special events. Some families choose to label their child's calendar a month in advance. Then the child can mark off each day as it passes. This approach allows parents to talk about upcoming events while being able to point that out on the calendar as well. Other families may choose to add a new sticker each day. You will want to pick the approach that is most convenient for your family's schedule. Using simple tricks such as this will help your child to organize their world, and reduce some of the fear of the unknown future.

Accident Proof your house: Just as you would lock up and put away dangerous items, lock up or put away fragile or precious items. It avoids getting angry over a child's natural curiosity to play with the objects. Also, find a space in a higher kitchen cupboard to store potential "mess makers" such as markers, crayons, paints, food coloring, etc. Pull them out when you can adequately supervise their use.

Going out to eat, going to an appointment, or going anywhere that you will need your child to be occupied: Keep a special box/bag of "traveling" toys, games, treats, crayons, books, etc. to take out when your child gets restless. Once and a while, add new surprises to the bag.



This information was taken from: Positive Parenting: Tips on Discipline (Children's Trust Fund) and from Derry Ruyle, ASD preschool teacher,

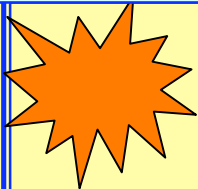
The March Parent-Teacher Institute is Cancelled

**The Next Parent-Teacher Institute
April 29, 2006
at Wendler Middle School 8:30-1pm
"Looking Forward: Academic Success for All Kids"**

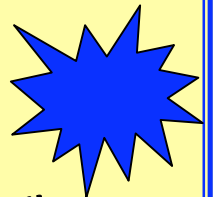
Parent Teacher Institutes (PTI) are a disability outreach and informational series of workshops for everyone - parents, teachers, students, caregivers, etc. Learn about all kinds of disability issues, join discussion groups and earn credit for certification programs, salary advancement or for training requirements.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR TODAY AND PLAN TO JOIN US FOR THE APRIL
PARENT TEACHER INSTITUTE!**

Call 742-3874 to register for free childcare



Website of the Month: www.allkindsofminds.org



For parents, educators and clinicians this website focuses on understanding differences in learning. Check out the Online Parent Toolkit and much much more.

Anchorage Parenting Resources:

The Alaska Parent Line: 1-800-643-KIDS

Childcare Connection (Parenting Classes): 563-1966 or 1-800-278-3723

Catholic Social Services (Parent Support Groups/Home Visits): 276-5590

Alaska Regional Hospital: (Parenting Classes): 264-1773

Alaska Native Medical Center (Parenting Classes): 729-2689

Providence Alaska Medical Center (Parenting Classes): 261-3011

Parent's Anonymous (Parent Support Groups): 337-7678

