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What You and Your Child Need to Know Before Starting Kindergarten



Ben, Cole and Evyn enjoy the books at Primrose School

WRITTEN BY JANA SOROSKI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUZI ISSA

The first thing most new parents do when they have a baby is gaze in awe at their beautiful bundle of joy. Soon this awe is transformed into thoughts of what the future holds for their precious baby. By the time a child begins walking, talking, and asking questions, many parents have already started thinking about early educational opportunities available to their child. But many parents are left wondering how soon is too soon to begin organized learning for a young child?

While the trend of Pre-K as a necessity for entering Kindergarten seems to be a fairly recent idea, sending a child to some type of preschool program is usually the norm rather than the exception. What are the differences between these two programs and how important is it to provide your child with early learning opportunities?

The Benefits of Preschool

“A preschool program enhances a child’s opportunities for social, emotional, physical and academic development,” explains Lou Ann McLaughlin, M.Ed., Owner of Primrose Schools of Cinco Ranch, Kelliwood, North Mason Creek, Copperfield, and Eldridge Parkway. “Often when we think about what children learn in preschool, things such as the teaching of colors, shapes and other



Gina and Alyssa learn to build great friendships

basic knowledge tidbits come to mind. To put a preschool program in proper perspective, one must go beyond that.”

Pre-K Versus Preschool

Steve Sandweiss, owner of A Child’s Reflection says their Pre-K program actually partners with Katy ISD’s PPCD early childhood program. Sandweiss says their teachers obtain an “in-depth knowledge of Katy ISD’s early childhood and kindergarten curriculum, and its programs and expectations.” Designed specifically with the Kindergartener in mind, this type of program may be a good fit for your future Katy kindergartener. But preschool programs are also good options for parents. Preschools are sometimes more play-based and may be less focused on academics and kindergarten readiness, but they do help tremendously with teaching children social skills and routines.



Ryley, Alyssa and Gina work on puzzles together.

Adjusting to Routines and Structure

A typical kindergartener in Katy will have to learn a lot about structure and routine. Things like waiting his turn, raising his hand or following simple instructions from the teacher can be even more beneficial than already knowing his ABCs and the 123s. According to McLaughlin, who has fifteen years of

experience in preschool education, a kindergarten classroom may be problematic for children who have had no daily routines or group experiences. She reinforces that a good preschool program provides a balance of structure and self direction, enhancing a young child’s skills and self-esteem.

Photos taken at Primrose School



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Developing Social Skills

“Even more important than the academic advantage the preschool provides, the development of social skills during the preschool and pre-kindergarten years is a crucial element of success in kindergarten,” agrees Sandweiss. “This is not only the peer-to-peer experience of learning to share and play in groups, but preschool provides an opportunity for children to gain respect for authority (teachers) and provides order (daily schedules and routines) that is expected from the first day of kindergarten,”

What to Look For?

So, if you have made the decision to enroll your child in a preschool program, what should you look for in a preschool? Sandweiss recommends looking for experienced, loving teachers that create an environment where the children want to attend school each day. While kids are learning, they also love to play, so he suggests parents find a balanced schedule with a lot of variety split between developing the basic skills necessary for kindergarten and center based play time. Overall, he says that it is wise to trust your first impressions as an accurate indicator of how the school is run. Parents seem to have unique instincts about the places they send their children, and preschool is certainly no exception.

So the question remains, while preschool has distinct benefits, is Pre-K a prerequisite for Kindergarten in Katy? The answer to



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PRE-K or PRESCHOOL... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

PRE-K

Usually associated with the K-12 school system and is clearly defined as a significant year or two of learning that provides three- and four-year-old children with the skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten.

PRESCHOOL

A broad, general term used to refer to a variety of early care and education programs including pre-k, childcare, nursery school, and even "mothers-day-out" programs which serve children of various ages on numerous possible schedules.

Source: NAEYC



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Madeline and Desiree share a hug

that question depends on you. As a parent, it is ultimately your decision whether you feel your child has the skills necessary to take that first small step into the Kindergarten classroom and a giant leap into their future. If not, or if you simply want to give them a chance to start developing those social skills prior to Kindergarten, a good Pre-K or preschool program may be for you. ★

Jana Soroski is a Katy area mother of five young children (one of whom is a kindergartener). She is married to Jason Soroski, a teacher at Morton Ranch High School.

10 Signs of a Great Preschool

Experts recommend looking for these signs of a good preschool program

- 1** Children spend most of their time playing and working with materials or other children. They do not wander aimlessly, and they are not expected to sit quietly for long periods of time.
- 2** Children have access to various activities throughout the day. Look for assorted building blocks and other construction materials, props for pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards, and puzzles. Children should not all be doing the same thing at the same time.
- 3** Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend all their time with the whole group.
- 4** The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.
- 5** Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. The natural world of plants and animals and meaningful activities like cooking, taking attendance, or serving snack provide the basis for learning activities.
- 6** Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Worksheets are used little if at all.
- 7** Children have an opportunity to play outside every day. Outdoor play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
- 8** Teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group story time.
- 9** Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children's different background and experiences mean that they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way.
- 10** Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel secure about sending their child to the program. Children are happy to attend; they do not cry regularly or complain of feeling sick.

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

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Cinco's BRAVO Show Choir Pays Tribute to Stephen Sondheim

Cinco Ranch High School's BRAVO Show Choir celebrated the music and lyrics of Broadway legend, Stephen Sondheim, with a tribute concert titled *The Sondheim of Music*. The show-stopping performances spanned four decades of Sondheim's career and entertained audiences with favorites like *Comedy Tonight*, *Send in the Clowns*, *Children Will Listen*, and other Sondheim classics. The BRAVO Show Choir is under the direction of Dorothy Wilson and Eric West.



Mayde Creek HS Yearbook Receives Gold Medal

The 2007 Mayde Creek High School Yearbook, led by advisor Shetye Cypher, placed as a Gold medalist in a national competition run by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. According to the judges, "The cover, endsheets and theme are sharp, classic, and yet fresh." Pictured - Row 1: Kristen Snowdon; Row 2: Josephine Saldana, Tyiesha Brown, Hannah Vanover; Row 3: Rebecca Burkhalter, Business Manager/Student Life Editor Katie Kornahrens, Elizabeth Keilberg, Sponsor Shetye Cypher; Row 4: Lisa Trevino, Sports Editor Stephanie Reed, Eden Schreiber, Kayla Welty, Emily Pitter, Editor in Chief Aijah Clarke.

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Pancakes with Papa

Fielder Elementary had a free Pancake dinner where the principals and Fielder dads showed off their cooking skills. After a delicious dinner, there was a short PTA meeting. Pictured: Assistant Principle Justin Vercher with kindergartner Jack Taylor.



Morton Ranch Seniors Dress Up for "50s Day"

Morton Ranch High School seniors Austin Throop, Haydee Euceda, and Brandon Alvarez get into the spirit of Homecoming Week by dressing up for 50s day.



Fishing for Phonics at Crech Elementary

Crech Elementary's 1st Grade hosted a Fishing for Phonics night. Pictured fishing: Ali Russell.



Field Trip Fun!

Crech Elementary First Graders had a blast on their field trip to the Oil Ranch. About 150 children attended. Pictured: Mrs. Knott's First Grade Class and student teacher, Mrs. Watson.

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Author Visits Pattison Elementary

Pattison Elementary students Tanner Wise (Aha), Jessica Horgan (Oh Dear), and Tristan Mahler (Boo Hiss) act out parts in *The Gold Miner's Daughter* with author, Jackie Mims Hopkins.



West Memorial JH Student has School Spirit

Dalton, a sixth grader at West Memorial Junior High, had the time of his life at the school's football game. He not only got to hang out with all of the cheerleaders and encourage the crowd with cheers, but he was also a part of the football team when the players high-fived him and let him know they were glad to have him as one of their very own winning jags!

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Seven Lakes Wins Best 4A Colorguard

The Seven Lakes High School Color Guard was recently named “Best 4A Colorguard” at the Alief Marching Contest and received a Division 1 at the Katy ISD Marching Contest. Along with the SLHS Band, the colorguard also advanced to the UIL State Marching Contest in San Antonio where they competed on November 6th. The SLHS guard is directed by Scott Ehman and assisted by Laura Bohuslav and Kayce Melody.



Pattison's Singing Stars

Second graders were the “stars of their body” in a program at Pattison Elementary. Singing stars are l-r: Meghann Schneider, Madison Crofton, and Emily Meservey, all 2nd graders.

Mayde Creek's Little Shop of Horrors

Mayde Creek High School Choral Department presented *Little Shop of Horrors* in the MCHS Performing Arts Center. Shown in the photograph are, left to right, Zach Bryant, Alex Lathrom, Rebecca Graves, and Johnathan Luna.

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Poncho and Charlie of Katy say get out of the dog house and into your dream house!

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 Photo by Christine Photography



Cinco Ranch Volleyball Sweeps Tournament

The CRHS Junior Varsity Volleyball Team participated in the Spring Branch Volleyball Tournament. CRHS JV Team swept the tournament and returned home in first place. Pictured bottom: Madison Hopkins, Kaleigh Harvey, Olivia Clymer, Amy Pelton, Molly Reynolds, Stephanie Hufnagel. Top: Brittany Campbell, Ashley Meyer, Katie Steed, Jordan Hutar, Rachel Fairbanks, Meredith Whitman and Coach Kayley Poenitzsch.

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Pie in the Eye!

Exley Elementary 3rd graders, Hunter Nessen and Michael Sporkin, gave each other a Pie in the Eye on Family Fun Night!



Dr. BookLove Visits Pattison Elementary Library

Dr. BookLove visits with kindergartners at Pattison Elementary and diagnoses the sickness of this book - Torn Cover. Librarian Alice Cardner uses this character to teach students how to properly care for books.



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KATY'S TOP MODEL

Annamary Johnson prepares for the runway

Memorial Parkway Elementary School Teacher Struts Her Stuff at Jones New York Fashion Show

Annamary Johnson, a history teacher at Memorial Parkway Elementary was recently selected to represent Katy during Jones New York's Shop for Education Week. The non-profit arm of the nationally-recognized clothier - JNY in the Classroom - teamed up with Macy's in hosting "Teacher Runway Shows" throughout the country. Johnson is one of nine Houston-area teachers who strutted down the catwalk and modeled the latest fall looks from Jones New York.

Beauty and Brains

Johnson was selected as a model for the event in part because of her status as a Fund for Teachers grant winner. Fund for Teachers (FFT) is a Houston-based non-profit whose mission is to enrich the lives of school teachers and students throughout the U.S. by providing outstanding teach-



Annamary struts her stuff

ers with recognition and opportunities to pursue independent studies over the summer. FFT is a beneficiary of the funds donated through the JNY in the Classroom initiative.

For her FFT Grant, Johnson joined three other teachers from Memorial Parkway Elementary on a tour of the U.S. East Coast, making stops in New York, Philadelphia, Jamestown and other cities of historical importance. The three other teachers were Heather Schuren, Debra Lang, and Erika Meneghetti. Together, the group collected information, photos and artifacts to help bring U.S. History to life for their young students here in Katy, Texas.

A Tribute to Teachers

"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." ~Henry Brooks Adams

"The best teachers teach from the heart, not from the book." ~Author Unknown

"A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in the pupils." ~Ever Garrison

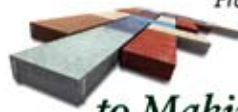
"A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others." ~Author Unknown

"Good teachers are costly, but bad teachers cost more." ~Bob Talbert

"The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher." ~Elbert Hubbard

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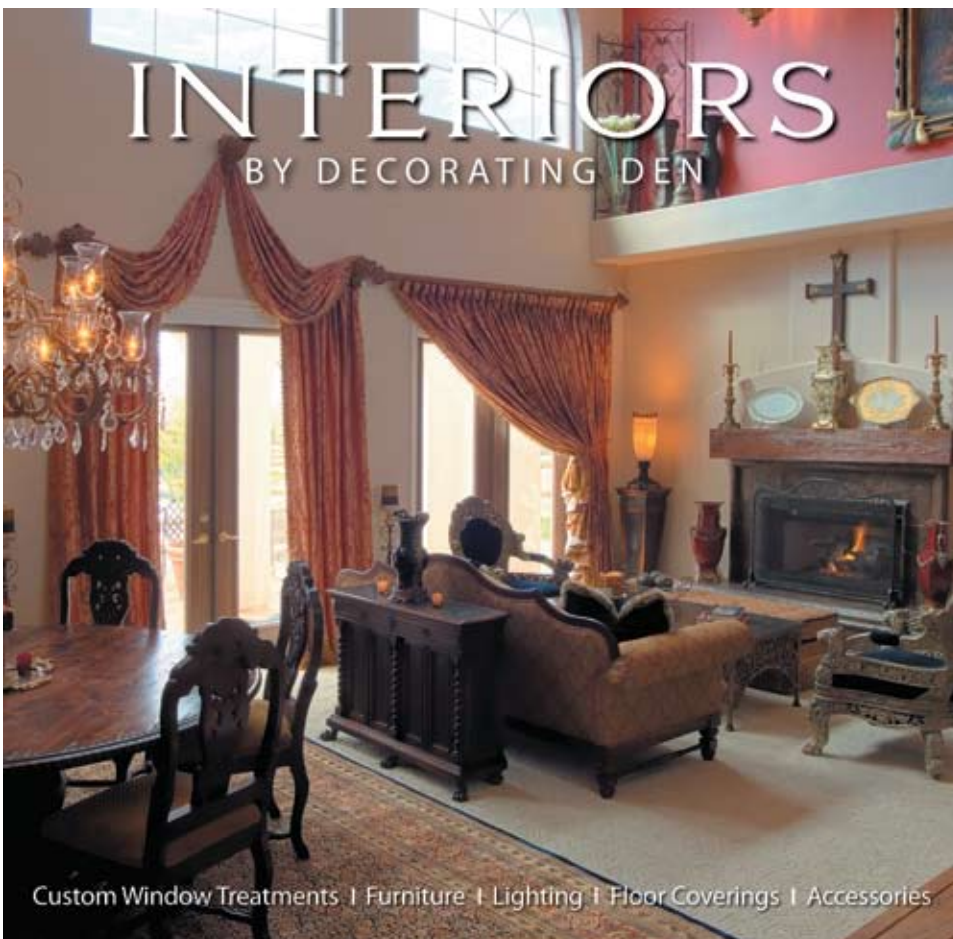


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