

What is the Difference between a Junior Kindergarten Class and a 4 Year-Old Class?

Four year-old classes are focused on children becoming independently ready to start school by the time they reach 5 years. Teachers spend much of their time working with social and emotional readiness and less time in the academic arena. However, the 4 year teachers include all of the same academic goals and objectives as the JK with the exception of the following:

In Junior Kindergarten you will see:

Longer Large Group Times

4 year-old children are highly active and group times are kept at about 20 minutes duration

5 year-olds are typically able to be more still and self contained. Group times may be 30 minutes long

More Reading and Writing Readiness Experiences

4 year-old classes devote time to reading, writing, phonemic awareness activities daily, but some young children are less inclined to spend time in the centers for those activities. Four year-old children are not required to complete daily reading and writing tasks.

JK will devote time daily to phonemic awareness, guided reading and singing as well as writing tasks. As the year progresses, daily “must do” literacy activities will begin.

Use of Contracts

In Junior Kindergarten, children use contracts in graph form to record their intention in selecting centers. They practice math, reading and writing skills as they plan their day.

More Math Experiences

In JK children begin recognizing and writing numerals. Other readiness math activities like sorting and combining sets of objects will be seen in both 4 and 5 year-old classes. In an additional JK year, they will gain more skills in patterning, one-to-one correspondence and counting. Extra time devoted to these activities gives children an edge when learning addition and subtraction.

Small Groups

In JK teachers work with children in small groups for more teacher directed learning work to review skills, teach new concepts and practice “academic” concepts.

Work on Recognition of Sight Words and Classroom Print

For children that are intensely interested in reading and writing, the JK class takes advantage of this by increasing print in the environment and encouraging children to read, write and explore print.

The same print-rich opportunities are also available for 4 year-olds. But they are not required to participate. Reading and writing remain choices during free choice time in the 4 year-old classes. Children who are becoming interested are encouraged and supported in their exploration of the written word.

Use of Writing Folders the Last Half of the Year With Daily Writing

Beginning in January, JK children will practice writing on a daily basis, keeping work samples in writing folders and presenting those samples to families at the end of each week.

Use of Black and White Marble Notebooks

In the spring JK children do writing activities at home and record their activities in a marble notebook to present to the teacher.