

Bridge to Kindergarten Program seeks applicants

Thursday, April 23, 2009

Applications are now being accepted for the seventh annual summer Bridge to Kindergarten Program.

This free program is geared toward closing the achievement gap in school success. Studies show that children who start school demonstrating a lower skill level than their peers are apt to never catch up to those students who enter school with the necessary tools for success. This three-week program will be held at all six Amador County elementary schools from June 15 through July 2, Monday through Thursday from 8 to 11 a.m.

All children who plan to enter kindergarten in the fall may apply, but priority is given to students with little or no preschool experience. Bridge is aimed at allowing these students the opportunity to become accustomed to the rhythm, routine and academic expectations of kindergarten prior to the start of the school year.

By the second week of last year's program, teacher Kathy Mauzy was impressed with the students. "I am so proud of these little guys and girls. It is absolutely amazing how far they have already come."

Mike, Linda and Evelyn Laney feel that the program is exactly what they needed last summer to help them with their relocation to Amador from Orange County. Due to the move, 4-year-old Evelyn had to be pulled out of her preschool.

"The three weeks that Evelyn spent in the program helped to bridge the academic gap that resulted from her having to leave preschool and helped both Evelyn and my wife meet new friends," Mike said.

Bridge is a "crash course" of sorts for the families involved. These young learners and their parents become familiar with the ins and outs of daily school life and are able to quickly learn the various school readiness skills in fun and interactive ways.

The curriculum is based on the Bridge to Kindergarten calendar that was compiled by Amador County teachers, administrators, parents and early childhood educators. Nine skill areas are outlined and deemed critical for children's readiness to enter school and their overall continued success throughout their formal education. These fundamental skills fall under the following categories: reading, health and safety, social skills, music and art, numbers, motor skills, writing, colors and shapes and life skills.

A typical day in one of the bridge classrooms might entail participating in morning learning circle, a Zoophonics lesson, making ABC or "My Bridge Books" to take home, planting seeds, and an art project that incorporates cutting, tracing, drawing and/or painting. Each class also schedules time to get outside each day, to conduct experiments in water tables, search through sand boxes, or develop large motor skills through various sports and physical activities.

Cheri Garamendi, First 5 Amador's school readiness coordinator, wants to remind families with young children that right now is the best time to start preparing your child for kindergarten. The mission of First 5 Amador is to promote, support and enhance the optimal development of Amador County's children from 0 to 5 years of age. First 5 offers many free programs to help ensure that all children and families have access to the services and tools that they need, from birth through the first five years of life. To receive an application for the Bridge Program or to find out more about all of the programs that First 5 Amador has to offer as well as upcoming events throughout the county, call 257-1092 or visit www.first5amador.com.



Jackson Elementary students Chet Castoe, Erik Jones and Keilawnee Landerger practice writing their names.

Photo by: [Courtesy to the Ledger Dispatch](#)