

Washburn's 4K Program Gets Ready for Another Year!

The first day of school is always nerve-racking, especially for first-time students! The Washburn School District offers a unique opportunity for children to ease into the start of their education journey by attending the Washburn 4K program. The program is designed to provide 4-year-olds with social and emotional opportunities to grow at their own developmental level and become acclimated to the school environment. Washburn 4K has been successfully transitioning young students for almost 20 years and is available through open enrollment to any child that is a part of a school district with a 4K program. It is a unique opportunity that teaches students mindfulness, inclusion, and offers a support system as they begin their education. Washburn Elementary principal Al Krause says the 4K program is a “critical tool for giving those kids a jumpstart in kindergarten.”

The 4K program integrates the Washburn School District's commitment to an environmental learning approach. Washburn's “green and healthy” standards give students the opportunity to learn experientially—by letting students get their hands dirty! 4K teacher Betsy Carrier regularly takes her students on trips to the “school forest,” an area in the woods that the school district has created, complete with a rustic log cabin and trails. Other class trips include the school garden, the school pond, and the Lost City, an outdoor learning environment. Going on these trips, leaving electricity and running water behind, is one of the many tools through which Washburn's 4K students grow into well-rounded community members and lifelong learners. Carrier describes this learning approach as a way to “[create] mindfulness in children” and help them understand their impact on the world around them.

This mindfulness is also fostered by inclusion of all students. Washburn School District invites students with special needs to enjoy learning alongside their peers and utilizes differentiation to cater to the needs of all students in the classroom. For instance, Washburn has worked hard to design a 4K environment in which speech therapy and physical therapy are integrated into everyday learning.

Washburn strives to create a welcoming and safe atmosphere for 4K students. The program develops students' social and relational skills, preparing them for the transition to kindergarten! According to Carrier, because of the social interactions students are introduced to in 4K, moving into kindergarten “really is a seamless transition.” The 4K students spend two days a week learning amongst their peers, interacting with older students, and setting up relationships that create a tightknit community. Staff also are dedicated to creating a welcoming atmosphere! For example, Carrier is a part of a Professional Learning Community alongside Washburn's kindergarten teachers, so the staff work closely as students transition into kindergarten. In addition to this, Carrier maintains an open door policy with her 4K families. “It takes a village to raise a child,” she says, and she wants families to feel welcome to come into the classroom and experience 4K alongside their children.

Families that are interested in learning more about the Washburn 4K program or enrolling are invited to participate in the district 4K Registration and Birth to 5 Developmental Screening March 15th from 4-6 PM at the Washburn Elementary School. On this evening we will also have a free dinner for families that attend the screening. This is a great opportunity to get to know the community and teachers that have worked so hard to make the 4K program a success for the Washburn School District! Contact Washburn

Elementary principal Al Krause at akrause@washburn.k12.wi.us for more information about this event.





