

# Daily News

## NEWS

### SK preschool offers STEM education for early learners

By Britney Fletcher-West Port Orchard Independent • January 28, 2025 1:30 am



Jaymi Orser courtesy photos For younger children fine motor skills and hands-on play are emphasized at Orser’s Acres of Fun preschool . As they get older the lessons evolve to include more academic concepts such as hypothesis, scientific reasoning and basic problem-solving.

Orser’s Acres of Fun preschool isn’t just about play for kids ages 2 1/2 to 5—like many other schools in recent years its focus is changing to STEM.

Jaymi Orser, the owner and founder, has been teaching preschool for 22 years. The South Kitsap High School graduate established the preschool in 2022 because she felt that there was a need for one that prioritized academics without influences such as religious teachings.

as raised in Port Orchard, and I wanted to offer something to the community that would help children grow

academically and personally,” Orser said.

Although Orser admits that STEM wasn’t always a central focus of the preschool’s curriculum, she credits one enthusiastic student for inspiring the change.

“Last year, we had a kid named Grayson who was absolutely obsessed with science,” Orser said. “He would ask to do science projects all the time, and that’s when I realized that I needed to make STEM a bigger part of what we’re doing here.”

Starting this year, every Thursday is dedicated to STEM. One week it’s science, another for technology, another for engineering and then finally math.

“We take whatever theme we’re working with for the month—whether it’s a holiday or a special event—and tie it into our STEM activities,” Orser said. “It keeps the lessons fresh and exciting for the kids.”

Each day is filled with a mix of activities, including music, literacy and recess. “We want them to be as prepared as possible for kindergarten—ideally even overly prepared,” Orser said. “Our goal is for them to walk out of here ready to learn and engage, and to be good human beings.”

For younger children, fine motor skills and hands-on play are emphasized. As the students grow older, the lessons evolve to include more academic concepts such as hypothesis, scientific reasoning and basic problem-solving.

“We want the 2½-year-olds to focus on using their hands and developing their motor skills, so we design activities that allow them to build and explore,” Orser said. “As they get older, we introduce the academic aspects of STEM and let them begin asking ‘why’ and ‘how.’”

A recent science activity involved creating “exploding snowmen” using vinegar and baking soda. The children built the snowmen by folding baking soda into a paper towel, drawing faces on them, and then adding vinegar to cause a chemical reaction. The children watched with awe as the snowmen fizzed and exploded.

“It’s just incredible to see the excitement in their faces when they realize what’s happening,” Orser said. “They don’t always fully understand the science behind it, but they know that something fun is going on, and that sparks their curiosity.”

For the older preschoolers, lessons become more complex. In a recent engineering project, students worked in teams to build igloos out of pretzels and marshmallows. The lesson was designed to teach them about structure and stability while encouraging teamwork and problem-solving.

“They had to figure out how to make their igloos strong enough to stand,” Orser said. “And when I told them that igloos aren’t made from marshmallows, they said, ‘Yeah, but we need a foundation, and pretzels are a good substitute.’”

Orser said students failing can help them learn. “One of the things we really focus on is teaching them that it’s OK to fail,” Orser said. “We let them see that sometimes experiments don’t go as planned, and that’s a part of learning. They need to understand that they can always try again and figure out how to make it work.”

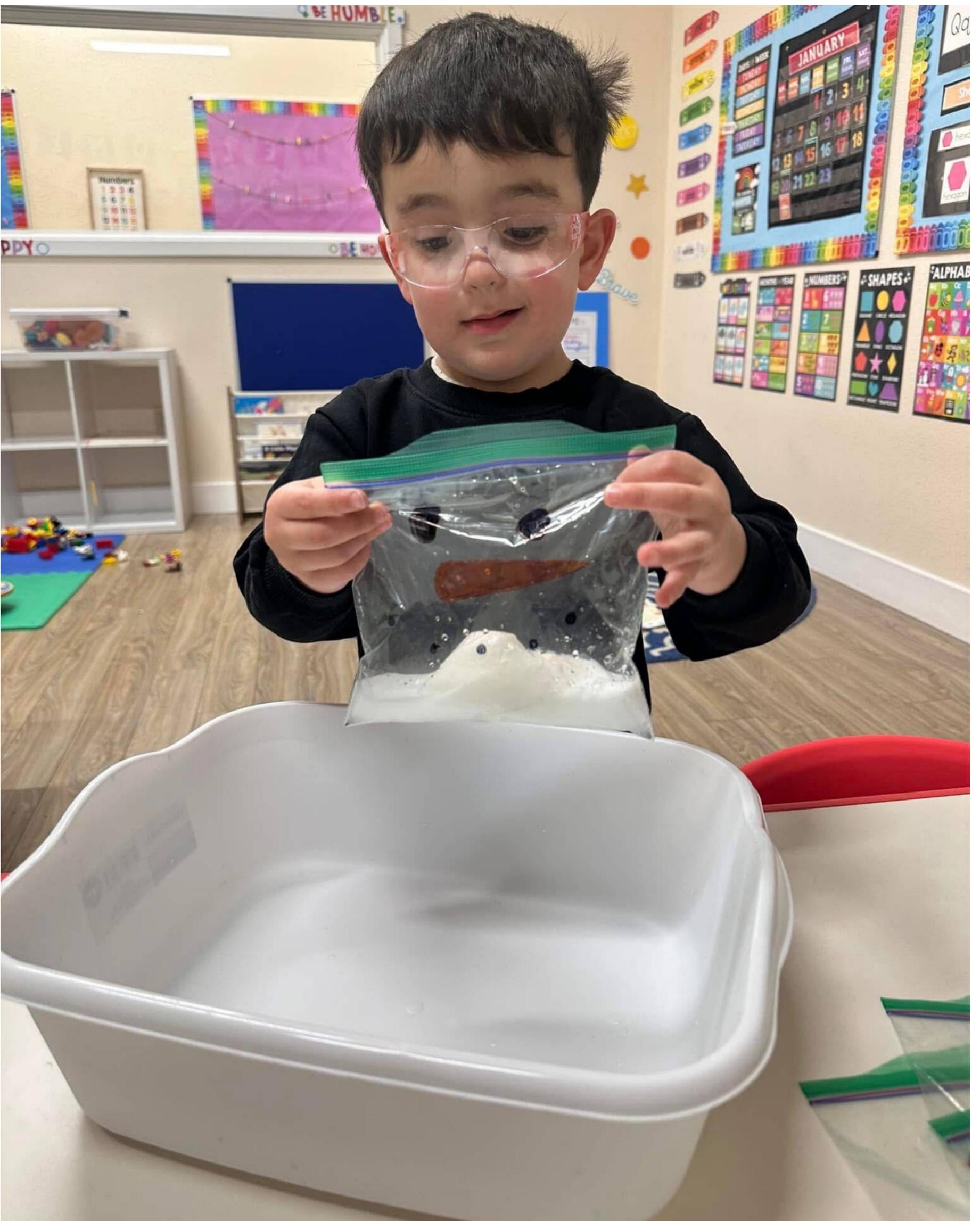
Orser emphasizes the importance of children being able to explain their thought processes and collaborate with others. “One of my biggest priorities is that when parents ask their kids what they learned that day, the kids can tell them,” Orser said. “I want them to be able to have a conversation with their parents about what they did, especially when it comes to STEM activities.”

The preschool communicates regularly with parents through newsletters, private Facebook groups, and monthly project updates. Each month, students work on a family project that is displayed at the school, encouraging parents to actively participate in their child’s learning. “We really try to over-communicate so that parents are always in the loop about what’s going on,” Orser said.

Looking to the future, Orser plans to expand the preschool’s STEM offerings, including a coding camp that will focus on introducing basic technology concepts in a fun, hands-on way. Additionally, Orser is planning to introduce a science fair next year, where preschoolers can showcase their STEM projects. “We’re always looking for new ways to engage the kids and expand their learning,” Orser said. “The goal is to continue to grow and evolve.”



The science experiment “How do Penguins Stay Dry?” included making a drawing of a penguin with crayons and then spraying water on it. The wax from the crayons repelled the water which mimicked how oil on penguins’ feathers keeps them dry.



A recent science activity involved creating “exploding snowmen” using vinegar and baking soda to create a chemical reaction.

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