

# Active preschool starts fresh in new, bigger space

By **CHELA WALLACE**  
For Times Newspapers

**E**laine Bueffel first offered a mom-and-child movement class nearly 25 years ago for eight families. When she added an academic curriculum, the program quickly expanded and Young Learners Preschool was born.

When she started Young Learners, most children's first school experiences began when they stepped into the kindergarten classrooms.

"The trend has changed in the last 20 years or so; now, most middle- and upper-class families consider preschool the beginning piece of a child's education," says Bueffel.

With a background in physical education and dance, as well as early childhood development, Bueffel knew she wanted to keep movement an integral part of the preschool experience. Young Learners was one of the first programs in the area to have an indoor play area, she says.

"Motor development is such an important part of a child's overall development," says Bueffel. "And the reality is that for much of the school year, the weather in the Northwest is not conducive to being outdoors. We wanted the children to always have an opportunity to play as part of their classroom time."

Young Learners' emphasis on physical activity is more rel-

## On the move

To celebrate Young Learners Preschool's new space, the founders will host an open house Aug. 27 from 3 to 6 p.m. For more information, call 503-645-9292.

evant than ever given the recent dramatic rise in childhood obesity and parents' concern about sedentary activities such as computer and television.

"Gym time reinforces the idea that physical activity is part of everyday life," she says.

Learning through creative play and physical activity has always been at the heart of Young Learners' curriculum.

"Painting on an easel helps develop gross arm muscles; Play-Doh develops small muscle groups necessary for holding a pencil and writing; playing dress up feeds the imagination, while developing the ability to take turns and interact with other people in a group," says Bueffel.

The school has grown to 150 students and a staff of 15. Four years ago, it added half-day kindergarten, in response to parents' concern about class sizes (enrollment is limited to 15) and the need for a longer day for children accustomed to going to school.

"We've pretty much used up every corner of this space we can," says Bueffel.

That's why in June, Young Learners Preschool moved to 1800 N.W. 169th Place, Suite C-100 in the Twin Oaks Business Center off Cornell

Road, near Dania Furniture in Beaverton.

At 6,000-square-feet, the new facility is double the size of the former location. There will be six classrooms, lunch and conference rooms, an expanded reception area and, of course, a big indoor gym.

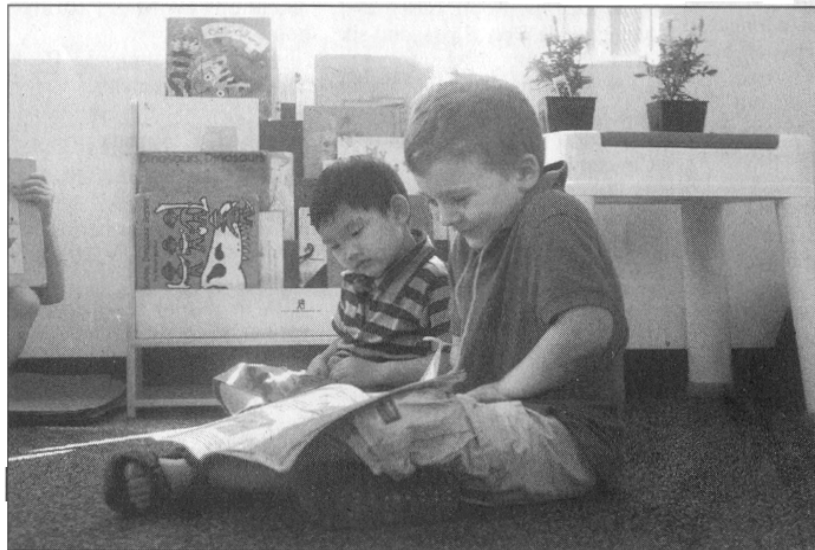
"The new building has a lot of natural light," says Bueffel. "One of the wonderful parts of this move, is I will once again be able to offer the two-year-old child/mom movement and play group. I feel like it's all come full circle and that I'm going back to my roots."

For Bueffel, the last 25 years were not meticulously planned out, and yet her school's success is a dream come true.

"I really enjoy kids; I have six of my own," says Bueffel. "This school is what I've always felt I was supposed to be doing. I love working with young children and young families."

Young Learners Preschool offers theme-based summer camps starting July 7. In addition, the school will hold an open house Aug. 27 from 3 to 6 p.m. For more information or to register for summer camps or enroll for the fall, call 503-645-9292 or visit [www.younglearners.net](http://www.younglearners.net).

Young Learners also offers Young Learners Dancin' School with ballet, creative and jazz dance taught by Kim Penny and Mo'Rhythm Dance for ballroom and hip hop dance taught by Maureen Halversen.



**EAGER READERS** — Kevin Sujit and Benjamin Silver read a book during the day at Young Learners Preschool in Beaverton. The school recently moved to a larger location.

**JONATHAN HOUSE** / The Times