

## COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

## 'All-day K' is pressure-packed

I was thinking about this all-day-kindergarten concept — “all-day K” — and thought that I should probably have something intelligent to weigh in with.

But all I could think of was the obvious big question: “garten” or “garden”? This, of course, is just the sort of meaty, yet whimsical, issue-oriented stuff that I like to get my lobes dirty with while avoiding real work.

Unfortunately, I was able to settle that item in short order (“garten,” which comes from the Middle High German for “garden”) and was about to despair of finding more work-avoidance options when I realized I could do some actual real research while having the pleasure of talking with my KG-ready nephew, Jacob, in Pennsylvania.

So I called the little nipper around suppertime to see what light he could shed on this important current issue.

**Me:** Sooooo, Jacob, what do you think of going to your school all day now?

**Jacob:** Dude! I can't talk very long cuz I'm pulling an all-nighter? Plus, Mommie's calling for dinner?

**Me:** Wait. An all-nighter? Kindergartners have homework?

**Jacob:** Are you kidding? I've got a major piece of paper due tomorrow for my Crayoning 101 class? Then I've gotta finish some alphabet work. I keep getting stuck at that “elemenopee” part?



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Special for The Republic

**Me:** I didn't realize kindergarten was so high pressure these days.

**Jacob:** Well, Uncle Jim, you pretty much have to take all the advanced placement stuff — you know, AP bunny-feeding and AP clapping-in-rhythm — if you expect to get ahead in first grade?

**Me:** Do you always talk as though you were asking a question?

**Jacob:** You want to hear about life in the kinder trenches or make Uncle Smartie remarks?

**Me:** Sorry. What else is happening at ol' Glenwood Elementary?

**Jacob:** Dude, I've got a “full bag of popcorn” all day what with regular school classes and then pre-club volleyball practice, pre-fencing and pre-altar boy lessons.

**Me:** There was a bunny in the classroom across the hall when I went to kindergarten, but my class never got to play with it.

**Jacob:** Focus, Uncle Jim! Deal with it. Let it go. That was, like, a hundred years ago?

**Me:** You're right. I never did forgive my teacher for not having a bunny in our class.

We did a lot of napping back in the day.

**Jacob:** Forget napping. OK, maybe a quick power nap after our juice and cookies. But that's about all your modern kindergartner has time for now. I've gotta say, between showing our teacher, Miss Lodge, how to use the computer and scouting colleges, there's not a lot of time for your old-school napping, shoelace tying and fit throwing.

**Me:** You're scouting colleges?

**Jacob:** Just kidding. Actually, Mommy does all that for me.

**Mommy:** (Interrupting from downstairs phone) All righty then, as much as we love hearing from you, Jim, don't you have some work to do? And little Jake still has to show us how to get the DVD player to work before dinner, so he really must be going.

■ Clearly, things have changed since my own backside warmed a blanket back at Glenwood Elementary in Erie, Pa. But I still don't have a bunny to feed.

See how early schooling experiences can shape your life a hundred years later?

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