

The photo at right is a cute representation of a kindergarten teacher's rules for her classroom. She has labeled it "Kindergarten Expectations!" And for kindergarten children, these *are* reasonable expectations. But for you, the early childhood teacher and caregiver, this list is your "Curriculum At A Glance." This list outlines everything we should be teaching our children in the preschool years from birth through age four.

As I've spoken with kindergarten teachers over the years and asked the question, "What do you want children to know before they come to your classroom for their kindergarten school year?" Most of the answers were the same but best summed up by my friend Judy, "Oh, honey, let them shake hands with letter recognition and phonics. Let them get their hands dirty when they experience math and science. But let them really know how to stay on task for ten minutes at a time, how to be a part of a group and get along with others, and how to follow two to three step directions."

So let's flip our thinking on what early childhood education really is. The ABC's & 1-2-3's are the filler. The list below is the real "meat" of preschool education.

- 1) *Kindergarten: We will arrive rested and ready to learn every day.* Preschool Key Component: School is important. This is not just a place for you to wait while your parents are at work. We are glad you are here and we have much to do today!
- 2) *Kindergarten: We will follow directions the first time they are given.* Preschool Key Component: Provide daily activities that build focus and lengthen attention span. Teach socially acceptable ways of expressing emotions in an atmosphere of love and acceptance for mistakes.
- 3) *Kindergarten: We will treat others with kindness and compassion.* Preschool Key Component: Regular, respectful and supportive interaction with teachers and peers. Children learn to accept others for who they are as they also experience respect, acceptance and unconditional love.
- 4) *Kindergarten: We will keep our hands, feet and bodies to ourselves.* Preschool Key Component: Teach children to problem-solve, to speak up for themselves and to use their words to appropriately express feelings of anger and frustration through role playing and parroting. When they choose the unacceptable way to solve a problem, give them the words they need to use.
- 5) *Kindergarten: We will use good manners such as, "Please," "Thank you," "Yes, ma'am," and "No ma'am".* Preschool Key Component: Gently remind children to use their polite words as they interact not only with adults during the day, *but also with the other children* and by the time they reach kindergarten it will be a part of who they are.
- 6) *Kindergarten: We will use inside voices and walking feet when we are in the building.* Preschool Key Component: Oh, *surely*, they will get this by kindergarten. We say it gently and with a smile (though sometimes through gritted teeth) 1,000 times a day!
- 7) *Kindergarten: We will share. We will take turns. We will apologize.* Preschool Key Component: Balance between individual and group activities. Our children will do this when they are in kindergarten, not because we forced them to when they were younger, but because we allowed them time to themselves to distress and helped them to figure out for themselves that this is the right way to treat one another. That treating one another this way feels good and gives both the giver and the receiver a sense of being cared for and a sense of security.
- 8) *Kindergarten: We will have FUN!* Preschool: Key Components: Self-directed, hands-on learning activities; and a balance between active movement and quiet activities. By allowing children to actively explore their environment, do things for themselves, to experience lessons through hands-on activities and to do their own creative work, and by providing the necessary equipment and props to stimulate their thinking and support their play, we teach children that they can do anything they put their minds to. Learning is active and exciting. And school really is FUN.

