

Student Services
Richardson Independent School District
400 S. Greenville Ave.
Richardson, Texas 75081

R STUDENT SERVICES DIVISION



*Early Childhood
ABCs and
1-2-3s*

RICHARDSON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Welcome to the World of Kindergarten

Today's kindergarten experience is not the same as it was even a few years ago. Expectations are higher and children are required to do more work, and work successfully both independently and in groups.

The purpose of this is information to help you offer balance and some tools to promote your child's success in kindergarten. These are merely suggestions to help you assist your child in finding his or her place in the new world of school. The Richardson Independent School District policy and procedure manual defines behavioral expectations and consequences for specific behaviors.

All Work and No Play

All work and no play makes a child dislike school. It's very important to let children be children. It is vital that they have plenty of unstructured time. School is the structured part of their day. Certainly learning can be fun at school, but today's schools push for achievement. Wise parents make the home a more relaxed setting.

It's important that parents encourage children to use their imaginations and to be creative – not to produce a certain product or to learn a certain skill – but simply to enjoy childhood. Once childhood is gone it will never return. So enjoy the "downtime" of home, to play and spend time with your child.

Read often to your child. Make reading a part of his daily activity. Read him a book and then let him tell you the story in



his own words, simply by looking at the pictures. This helps your child use many skills he will need in school, as well as building your relationship with him.

Children often see the amount of time adults spend with them as a measure of how much they are valued. You don't have to teach something for this to be a positive, learning time. Children receive many hours of "instruction" each day at school, so **try to spend time each day building a relationship with them.**

Play with your children, listen and ask questions about what they are doing. Most of all spend time simply being with them. Play for children is their work, so join in the fun! They will only be small once, so don't miss this opportunity to build a relationship and to share your love of learning.

Social and People Skills

Instead of teaching academics, help your child succeed by practicing skills that help him get along with other students and their teachers. Professionals call these "people or social skills." Even a child who is gifted in learning academics can have problems with people or social skills. So place your focus on helping your child learn to get along with others and to work well with adults and other students.

The Importance of Paying Attention

Home is the perfect place to practice paying attention. Daycare centers are not responsible for teaching this, yet it is a skill children must have. **Teach your child to make eye contact when an adult is speaking with him.** It's vital to success in school.

TV, video games and other singular focused activities don't often provide the "pay attention" skills students need. Adult contact on a regular basis is needed to help children learn these skills. Ask them about their day and how it is going. Listen and affirm them for sharing feelings. Ask open-ended questions such as, "What did you like about school today?" instead of questions that can be answered with a yes or no.

Family game time can help a child to learn how to stay on task. Use a timer to help the child learn to take turns within a specific time frame.

Make a game of sitting still

Your child needs to be able to work for 3-5 minutes at a time, as one would do in a kindergarten class. Make it really fun by offering your praise for a job well done.

Since staying on task is a challenge for some children, reward doing the task at hand effectively without requiring them to sit perfectly still.

Reward him for staying on task

Card matching games, where the child flips over cards and then matches up different shapes or colors, can help children realize they must stay focused on the task at hand. Compliment them for finishing a game before moving on to a new one. Cooperation should be given priority over competition.

Children shouldn't always be required to finish everything they start, but they should be responsible for putting away the items they play with. Adults should do their part too. Make "clean up" a game by trying to pick up items in a certain amount of time. Make it fun for everyone.

A Place for Everything

Having a place that is labeled for items and where they are to be returned after use can help your child understand the "cubby concept" of school. Most kindergarten children have a "cubby" or space where they put their coat, lunch and other personal items before they begin working. **Practice putting all school supplies in one place.** Since neatness is not an easily learned trait, other children might be rewarded simply for being able to find the items being requested. Have a search for different items and time the child— best time wins.



The School Family

Teach children that they may have to give up certain things to be in a group. At school they will not get to wear their jacket all day or may not get to keep their snack with them. In some schools uniforms are required, so they will have less choices in what they can wear. But they can still choose from "acceptable choices" you have selected ahead of time. Living and working in a group requires that they compromise.

Teach sharing by asking them to give up an item for a time.

Set a timer or a set amount of time, such as a few hours, and take away the item. When the time is up, give the item back to them.

Who's in Charge

At school the teacher is in charge and the students must follow directions. This may be difficult for some children. It's often challenging, but children must learn to obey many different adults other than their teacher.

A Time and Place to Think

Make a time and space to cool off and think about things. It's natural to become upset when things don't go as expected. But children need to learn how to deal with their feelings. Arguing, throwing a



tantrum, hitting others or throwing things is not an acceptable way to let others know they are unhappy.

A place to cool off is a good way to give the child a chance to regain control of his feelings.

Time-out areas do not have to be used to punish people. Everyone should learn that when they are tired or confused, they need a space to ponder and reflect. If time-out space is used as a learning tool, it shouldn't last over one minute for each year of their age.

One Thing at a Time

Ask your child to complete one task at a time. Compliment or redirect him or her until this task is finished. Making a list and marking off completed items can be helpful. If you can draw stick people, make a picture list of what needs to be done.

Make a game of simply following directions. Take turns practicing doing what the leader suggests. Successful students often follow directions without arguing or complaining.

Predicting Changes

You can even teach the use of time by having a to-do-list of items you can do together during certain times of the day. Have the child check off accomplished work and discuss what needs to be done next.

Use a timer, chime, bell or musical tape to remind children when changes are about to occur. School will offer many chances to learn to accept change as a natural part of learning. Help your child be ready for accepting change by predicting when it will happen.

Getting to the Point

Let your message to your child be clear. For example saying, "My, you need a haircut," may lead to finding that he has done it himself. Don't suggest that he needs to do something, unless you want him to take action on what you have said.

Understand that children take what we say literally, so don't give them ideas they can easily misunderstand. Check for understanding. "I've asked you to clean your room, so what would a clean room look like to you?"

Starting at Home...

Don't say anything at home you don't want your child to repeat at school. Children repeat what they hear. They also learn much from older brothers and sisters. Even kindergarten students want to feel and act grown up, so they copy the actions and words of adults and brothers and sisters.

If you don't like the teacher or the school, it's best not to talk about this when children can overhear it. Your child needs your support and understanding. If he says he doesn't like something, listen and try to

understand his point of view. It's good to offer choices. You might say, "So what could you do about this?" Sometimes all they can do is to accept the situation. **Suggest to them what they can and cannot change.**

The Power of Respect

Help your child to understand the value of respecting the teacher and fellow students. **Without respect it's almost impossible to learn and be successful in school.** Respect is a skill that is both "caught" and taught. So practice respect when dealing with everyone.

Offer your child some ideas he could say or do, when he doesn't feel like being respectful. "So could you talk to your teacher about what you don't like?" or, "Remember school time is very short, so ask for help and remember you'll be coming home soon."

Offer practical ways to help to compromise and to work with those around them. You'll be teaching skills they can use for a lifetime.

Don't tease or make fun of kindergarten friendships

It's wise to honor the friendships children make with both boys and girls at school. A child is never too young to be asked, "What do you like about being Sally's friend? What don't you like?" Build skills in helping children know they can choose their friends (it doesn't just happen) and that it's acceptable not to like certain people or situations.

Be specific when offering thanks or correction

Keep your messages clear. You might say for instance: "Bobby, thank you for taking out the trash and putting it in the right place," or, "I appreciate the way you settled that problem without arguing."

A Job for Everyone

Make certain the job you give your child is reasonable and within the ability of the child. A daily job is often easier to remember than one that only happens once in a while.

If possible, let the child select from two or three jobs he may want to do, as it's easier to encourage him when he wants to do something. If you can, when your child requests to "help," let him do what he can. Safety is always an issue, but it's important for them to be a part of what is happening.

Explain what a family is and how it works

Help a child understand that the school family is similar to the one at home. In a family each person has a job and is expected to do that job. Make it clear that some things in school will be fun and entertaining, others will simply need to be done.

Make a reminder sheet and check off when a job is accomplished. Teach your child that there is a payday for hard work. Whatever the reward, you will need to make it concrete and easy for your child to see.

Teaming for Success

Working in a team can help children realize they are part of more than one "family" – each with different expectations. Through pictures, you can help children understand the expectations for different activities. There are different rules for different areas of the school. The music teacher's expectation may be different from that of the PE teacher. Ask the child to explain how they are different and make a game of practicing what works with each teacher.

Routine Changes

Explain how people act differently in each situation. Some rules apply when they are in daycare, with Aunt Sally or on the playground. Explain that it takes some time to work with different people, but it is something he will need to learn to do.

Create games that demonstrate the importance of following different rules. *Follow the Leader* is a simple game that teaches the importance of





following the rules. Or *Do What I Say*, is another good option, where the parent asks the child to follow directions for three minutes, then the child gets to pretend she or he is the adult, and offers the directions.

Ask him to be a detective and to discover what each teacher wants and talk with him about it each day. Make trying to meet that teacher's expectations a game, not a chore. Pretending is fun and something kindergarten students love to do.

Planning Consequences

Plan consequences ahead of time and make them reasonable, respectful and related to the event.

Reasonable

Remember, the intent is to teach and train children to comply with the rules, not to punish. Unreasonable discipline can lead to resentment.

Respectful

"Time out" should be a brief time (no more than one minute per year of age). The purpose is to give your child time to think and for you to state briefly what you want the child to do. Try not to let your voice become emotional. You are simply stating what must be done. If you allow yourself to become angry, the child will often respond in anger. Be patient, but firm with children, until they learn the skill they need.

Related

Plan a consequence related to the child's actions. This consequence should be explained to the child. For instance, the parent might state, "You are losing some game time because you played during the time you needed to clean up." or, "You played during work-time, so you must work during playtime."

Brothers and Sisters

Don't talk about brothers, sisters or the child in his presence. Nothing is more difficult than feeling someone else receives something you deserve. Praise, criticism and other comments about brothers, sisters or other family members are often difficult for children to understand.

Practice having eye contact with your child. Practice shaking hands and looking directly at him. Teach him to say, "Yes" or "No," while looking at the person. Teach him to accept compliments by saying, "Thank you." Teach him to accept directions by saying, "Yes," looking at the person making the request and having him do the task within a short time.

Compliments should be specific, such as, "I like the way you made up your bed, by tucking in the corners, without being asked," or "Please don't splatter water on the floor when you get a drink."

Be specific, concrete and practical. Check with the child regularly to be certain he understands what you want him to do. Ask him to explain what he heard you say. "Did you understand?" is not the right question to ask.

You're the One

You can contribute to your child's success in a very meaningful way by offering to teach him the skills needed to be successful in school. It's such a joy to know that you have taught a child a skill which will help him for a lifetime.

Much of your child's perception of school is "caught" rather than taught. From your actions he learns how to relate to school. Is it fun or simply work? Is it a great place to be, or a place he has to go? Adjusting to a new situation can be both exciting and challenging.

You are your child's best resource for being successful in school. You are the key to their success.

For more information about working with your pre-kindergarten/kindergarten student, ask your school for a copy of *Great Beginnings*.