



COBB COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Kindergarten Parent Handbook



2013-2014

Kindergarten Is ...

Exploring
Growing
Involving
Nurturing
Giving
Unique
New
Distinct
Active
Noisy



We are dedicated to the belief that all children can and will learn. We understand that children learn at different rates and have different needs. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-reliant and life-long learners.

Welcome!

We welcome you and your child to the kindergarten program of the Cobb County School District. The experiences of this school year will be memorable and exciting. It is with this school year that feelings and attitudes about school are first developed. Through joint efforts with school staff each stage of your child's growth be rich, full and satisfying.

Because we realize that you want only the best for your child, the Cobb County School District has prepared this handbook of information which may help to make this experience most meaningful for you and your child. We hope that you find this information helpful. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact your local school.



Kindergarten Philosophy

We believe kindergarten is an integral part of the total elementary school program and provides an opportunity for continuous growth and development of young children. Furthermore, we believe children change as they grow. The rate of development differs among individuals; however, growth always occurs in orderly stages.

We believe every individual is unique. In planning a program for young children, this uniqueness must be respected. The primary emphasis is placed on readiness skills which provide a transition to a more formal instructional environment.

We believe children should receive their kindergarten experiences in a positive climate that is conducive to physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth. We further believe a well-equipped classroom staffed with enthusiastic, warm, supportive, well-trained personnel can make immeasurable contributions to the educational lives of children.

We believe children learn best in a rich and varied environment where exploration is encouraged. Through exploration and play with real objects, children discover, clarify, organize and extend meanings as they grow in understanding themselves, others and their environment.

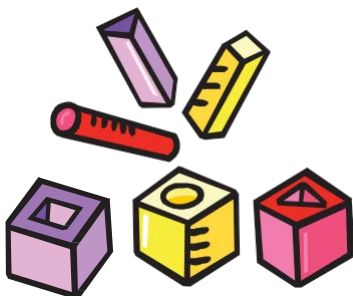
We believe the home and school should work together to provide experiences which contribute to a positive self concept for children.

Development of Young Children

It is known that the young child's thought processes are different from older children and adults. It is, therefore, appropriate that learning activities are presented in different ways.

Young children think globally in large "chunks," whereas older humans tend to think in segments or compartments. Therefore, when the young child is involved in an activity, such as making vegetable soup, he is learning shape, color, size, names, volume and cooperation all at once. Because the young child understands what can be seen and touched, activities in kindergarten utilize real, hands-on materials and manipulatives. While it is possible for young children to reproduce concepts, such as written words or mathematical concepts, they don't internalize these concepts until later. The goal of the kindergarten program is to give these young people a solid base upon which concepts will be developed.

Students may receive a short screening in the spring after registration or in the first weeks of school. Results from this screening help provide information on your child's development. If you have questions, contact your local school.



Goals

The Cobb County kindergarten program is concerned with establishing a classroom atmosphere to provide a means by which each child develops:

- self-confidence and self-worth through secure relationships, and independence through successful learning experiences
- the responsibility for one's own behavior
- positive feelings toward learning
- the responsibility for completing assigned tasks
- good habits in care of self and materials
- the ability to share, to cooperate and to live democratically with others
- an appreciation of family, neighborhood and country
- language through sensory experiences, conversation and listening
- readiness for formal reading and math
- the ability to observe, experiment, discover, think and generalize through concrete learning experiences
- an awareness of health and safety habits
- physically through use of large and small muscles
- potential in all areas of learning
- an opportunity for aesthetic appreciation

Curriculum

A planned curriculum is an essential element in a kindergarten program. The curriculum in the Cobb County Schools is not a junior first grade, and it is not “just a place to play.” It is designed specifically for the five-year-old. You will see children busily painting, manipulating blocks and beads, “cooking,” measuring, classifying and sorting materials, engaging in pre-writing and pre-reading as well as reading and writing; you will not see frequent use of workbooks.

Language Arts and Mathematics Common Core State Standards were adopted by the Georgia Department of Education. These standards were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAYEC) and the National Association of Education Consultants in State Departments of Education indicate that they thought the standards, as a whole, were fair and age appropriate for K through 3rd grade; they were clear and developmental.

For information, please visit www.corestandards.org, www.naeyc.org, or www.naecs-sde.org.

The curriculum is flexible and covers five major areas.

1. Social Development where the child:
 - a. relates to peers in work and play
 - b. shows an awareness of others’ feelings
 - c. accepts decisions of the group
 - d. feels positive about school
 - e. shows an awareness of responsibilities

2. Emotional Development where the child:
 - a. shows self-confidence
 - b. practices self-control
 - c. adjusts to change
 - d. accepts responsibility for own actions
 - e. learns to care for own needs

3. Work habits where the child:
 - a. follows directions
 - b. works independently at times
 - c. plans appropriately for his or her own time
 - d. makes use of a variety of materials
 - e. accepts responsibility for care of materials
 - f. observes safety rules

4. Academic Development where the child:
 - a. shows an interest in reading
 - b. understands what is read to him or her
 - c. tells what is happening in pictures
 - d. shows confidence in speaking
 - e. expresses ideas clearly
 - f. tells a story in sequence
 - g. listens attentively
 - h. arranges objects by size, shape
 - i. explores capacities of containers
 - j. counts and works with numbers
 - k. compares and describes objects
 - l. measures
 - m. shows interest in scientific experimentation
 - n. demonstrates knowledge about the surrounding world

5. Physical Development where the child:
 - a. uses large muscles to climb, run and jump
 - b. refines the skills of locomotion, balance and awareness of space
 - c. demonstrates how to cooperate, succeed, lead and follow
 - d. participates in developmental activities related to strength, muscular endurance, heart-lung endurance and flexibility

Online Parent Resources

The District's curriculum standards and other parent resources may be viewed online at <http://www.cobbk12.org/centraloffice/picasso/> or by visiting the CCSD homepage and clicking on **PICASSO (Parents)** in the left navigation bar.

To view standards, highlights, and other resources, click on content area in left column.

The screenshot shows the PICASSO website interface. On the left, there is a navigation menu with categories: Curriculum (with sub-links: ALP, Career Tech, ESOL, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Health, Language Arts, Physical Education, School Counseling, Science, Social Studies, Technology Literacy), Teaching Resources, and Parent Resources (with sub-links: General Information, CACT Facts, Classroom Tools, Reading, Math Transition 2011-12). The main content area has a header with navigation links (PICASSO Home, About Picasso, FAQs, Contact Us) and a 'Message From' section. Below that is an 'ABOUT PICASSO' section with a 'READ MORE' link. A 'What is PICASSO?' section follows, containing a list of bullet points and a 'Read More about PICASSO' link. The right sidebar features several resource boxes: 'WHAT'S NEW IN RESOURCE?', 'Skills Tutor', 'Primary Report Card Information', 'Math Transition 2011-12', 'Summer Reading is Fun', and 'HighSchool'. The footer includes navigation links (Home, Academic Paths, Services/Support, Local News, About) and a copyright notice: '© 2013 Cobb County School District. All Rights Reserved.'

Conferences and Reporting

The school seeks to maintain a close working relationship with parents. The key to this vital relationship is communication. Parent-teacher conferences are essential and are scheduled during the school year. Other conferences are scheduled at the request of parents or teachers.

While direct communication with examples of children's work is the best means of sharing progress, the written report card and Report Card Information for Parents will also show student progress.

Materials used by teachers are many and varied. The district utilizes the following:

PICASSO: Cobb County resources for all content areas including music and art.

Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Skills

Language Arts

Good Habits, Great Readers (Celebration Press)

Good Habits, Great Writers (Celebration Press)

Leveled Classroom Libraries

Words Their Way (Pearson)

Handwriting (Zaner Bloser)

Math

Under adoption at this time

Manipulatives

Math *Exemplars*

Social Studies

Houghton-Mifflin Social Studies: *My World*, and *Holidays* (Big Books)

Exploring Where and Why: New Friends & New Places –

Hands on Geography Kit

Online teacher resource from Gallopade International

Science

Harcourt Science Program/K-5

Health

Harcourt: Health and Fitness

www.healthteacher.com

Art

Portfolio series – Scott Foresman.

Supplemental teacher resources by multiple publishers

Music

Scott Foresman/Silver Burdette – *Making Music*

Game Plan – Randy & Jeff

Field trips are also used to supplement the curriculum

Program for Exceptional Children

Specialized instructional programs are available for exceptional children. Children in these programs include those who are physically or mentally handicapped, hearing or visually impaired and those who may be facing emotional challenges.

Student Support

For many reasons, students struggle with the demands of school and may begin to fall behind in academics or may have behavior problems. Schools across the nation are implementing an approach called Response to Intervention or RTI as a flexible problem-solving model to provide assistance that matches learner's needs. The Cobb County School District has adopted the model developed by the Georgia Department of Education that organizes school intervention services into four levels or Tiers.

Students with emerging difficulties are first given Tier 1, universal support. If that help is not sufficient, they are next provided with Tier 2, more targeted interventions. If sufficient progress is not evident, the student may move on to Tier 3 for more intensive interventions. Finally, Tier 4 may involve specially designed instruction.

In addition, there is a guidance counselor available to work with parents, teachers and students as the need arises.

Program for English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Specialized instructional support is provided to students who are eligible for the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. This program is federally mandated and focuses on the development of all four domains of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing. For more information about eligibility requirements and the instructional support provided to students who qualify, visit the Cobb ESOL Blog at <http://tinyurl.com/cobbesol>.

Student Admission Requirements

Requirements for admission to the public schools of Cobb County are established in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia and the policies of the Cobb County Board of Education. Some general information follows.

1. Children must be five years of age on or before September 1st. A legal birth certificate is required. Pages 27 and 28 provide sources for assistance in obtaining birth certificates.
2. Children must reside in the Cobb County School District with parents or legal guardians. Proof of residency in school attendance zone is required. Custody papers are helpful if the child does not live with both natural parents.
3. The law requires that a child entering any child care facility or school in Georgia for the first time must present to the school a Georgia Certificate of Immunizations (Form 3231) attesting that students have been age-appropriately immunized with all of the required vaccines. Certificates are available at the Cobb County Health Department (770-514-2364) and through private physicians.
4. A completed Eye, Ear and Dental certificate (Form 3300) is also required for admission. This form is available at the Cobb County Health Department or through private physicians. This form must be dated within 12 months of the first day of school.



How You and Your Child Can Prepare for Kindergarten

Preparing a child for kindergarten is not a matter of a few days or weeks. Many varied experiences, at home and away from home, over a period of years will establish the foundations necessary for a happy and successful time in kindergarten.

Both you and the schools have major roles in helping your child learn, but how much the school can do depends on how much you do. Here are some suggestions to help your child have a successful year:

- Accept your child as he/she is. Seek out strengths and capabilities. Be ready with praise when things are done well.
- Talk about school with your child.
- Guide your child to trust the teacher and those who want the best for him/her.
- Discuss the need for rules in the community, home and school.
- Help him/her to understand that sharing is necessary in order to get along with others and to be part of a group.
- Help your child establish regular routines of sleeping and eating. Agree upon a **specific** bedtime.
- Teach your child to button, zip or snap his/her clothing and to take care of his/her toilet needs.
- Read to your child to help him/her develop an appreciation for books.
- Encourage your child to look at and listen to the person talking.

- Take trips to points of interest. Museums, planetariums, art displays, concerts and sporting events are examples of enriching experiences.
- Give your child opportunities to refine oral language by allowing him/her to explain and describe experiences.
- Encourage your child to recognize his/her name.
- Encourage play with manipulative toys. Let your child experiment with typing, cooking, building and sewing. Children learn best by doing.
- Help your child's sense of security by being certain that bus directions are clearly understood. While practice runs will be made during the first school days for loading buses, you could review them - being careful not to cause undue concern.
- Give your child opportunities to count and sort objects found in the home (socks, silverware, shoes, groceries).
- Give your child tasks to do at home. Such experiences develop responsibility, independence and self-reliance
- Encourage your child to make decisions by giving choices and having them **abide** by those choices.
- Listen to what your child has to say about school. It is important not to **force** the conversation, but be attentive when your child is ready to share an experience.
- Kindergarten children need to wear clothing and shoes that facilitate easy movement. Shoes should allow for easy running. As children spend much time painting, cooking and sitting on the floor, washable clothing is recommended. Sweaters, jackets, raincoats, etc., can look amazingly alike, and numerous items end up in lost and found each year. Therefore, clothing should be labeled.

Typical Day

During a typical day, your child will be involved in the following activities:

Openings: During the arrival period, children browse through books, work with manipulatives, view displays or work at learning centers. They may use this time to share experiences.

Large group time: The teacher or aide will discuss daily activities, the weather, calendar and other large group activities.

Small group time: The group may be divided into small groups for activities. This may take various forms such as learning centers, language, reading, writing or mathematics instruction or individual work.

Activity period: Children are given a choice of activities and may change at any time during the period. Many of the children may be involved in activities at the learning centers, working independently, working individually or in small groups. The teacher and paraprofessional may work with a single child, a small group or supervise the entire group. Included in the activities are opportunities for dramatic play, arts and crafts, blocks, listening centers, reading, writing, science experiences and other activities planned by the teacher.

Outdoor activity time: This is the time when children climb, run, jump and use large muscles. Total development depends on refinement of the skills of locomotion, balance and awareness of space. Cooperation and working relations are emphasized.

Preparation for dismissal: The children will discuss the day's work, secure any "take-home" projects and get coats and personal items together before departing for home.

Learning

Kindergarten is “learning by doing”. Learning activities involve experiences with a variety of manipulative materials. Activities are based on the kindergarten essential elements. Materials have a direct correlation to the particular concept being introduced. Frequent introduction and rotation of new materials help stimulate interest. These experiences make possible individual and small group instruction while providing an opportunity for the children to explore and experiment in many different areas.

In **Language Development** children learn to:

- Print many upper and lower case letters
- Understand and use question words
- Spell simple words phonetically in writing

In **Speaking and Listening Development** children learn to:

- Follow agreed upon rules for discussions
- Continue conversations through multiple exchanges
- Develop self-expression
- Recognize new language patterns
- Share experiences

In **Reading Development** children learn to:

- Participate in reading activities
- Actively engage in group reading activities
- Recognize common types of books
- Identify the main ideas and details in fiction and nonfiction books
- Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page
- Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters

- Understand that words are separated by spaces in print
- Recognize and produce rhyming words
- Recognize and name all upper and lower case letters
- Count, pronounce, blend and segment syllables in spoken words
- Read common high-frequency words by sight
- Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding

In **Writing Development** children learn to:

- Participate in writing activities
- Actively engage in group writing activities
- Hold a pencil correctly
- Use a combination of drawing, writing, dictating and writing to compose narrative, informational and opinion pieces
- Print many upper case and lower case letters
- Capitalize the first word in a sentence and pronounce “T”
- Recognize and name end punctuation – period, exclamation point, question mark
- Spell simple words phonetically (by sound) in writing

In **Learning Centers** children learn things like:

- Self-regulation and independence by practicing what has been previously taught
- Perceptual discrimination by shape, size, color direction, detail, and design.
- Eye hand coordination
- Problem solving skills
- Story telling skills

In **Technology Development** children learn to:

- Demonstrate the proper operation of the mouse or touchpad or trackpad to click and double click
- Use drawing tools to create an original illustration or picture story
- Enter text and add images to a document
- Explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing

In **Small and Gross Motor** children learn to:

- Experiment with locomotor activities (run, hop, skip, jump)
- Develop muscular strength, coordination, and flexibility
- Relieve tensions and use energy constructively and imaginatively

In the **Media Center (school or classroom)** the children learn to:

- respect and care for books
- imagine events and situations
- tell and dictate stories
- be interested in words and books
- sequence pictures
- interpret pictures and details of pictures
- use left-to-right progression
- recognize the sequence of a story

In **Math** children learn to:

- know number names and the count sequence
- count to tell the number of objects
- compare numbers
- understand addition as putting together and subtraction as taking apart and from
- work with numbers 11-19 to gain foundations for place value
- describe and compare attributes of objects, e.g., length or weight
- classify objects and count the number of objects in categories
- identify and describe shapes
- analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes

In **Science** children will learn to:

- Sort materials (rocks, soils, paper, etc.) by color, size, shape, weight, texture, buoyancy, and flexibility
- Describe time patterns (day to night and night to day)
- Recognize the differences between living and non-living things
- Explain similarities and differences in plants and animals
- Investigate different types of motion and the effects of gravity on objects

In **Social Studies** children will learn to:

- Learn about important American holidays and symbols
- Use words and phrases related to time to explain how things change
- Tell about experiences related to community and family celebrations and customs
- Manipulate hands-on maps and globes
- Tell their address, city, county, state, nation and continent
- Tell why rules are made and follow classroom and school rules
- Describe what workers do
- Identify coins and currency we use in the U.S.
- Distinguish goods from services
- Explain that people must make choices

In **Art** the children learn to:

- be creative through planning, designing and constructing an idea
- express ideas, impressions and feelings in a satisfactory way
- experiment with color, shapes, sizes, textures and configurations
- develop eye-hand coordination and refine muscle control for later writing skills
- respect the artistic expressions of others
- develop their individual and tactile skills

In **Music** the children learn to:

- begin to match pitch (high/low, loud/soft)
- differentiate among sounds
- listen carefully
- express themselves through creative movement, rhythm instruments and singing

In **Physical Education** the children learn to:

- explore basic locomotor movements (run, hop, skip, jump, gallop, slide)
- apply manipulative skills to various games (throw, catch, kick, strike)
- develop positive, personal and social skills by sharing equipment and taking turns

In **Health Education** the children learn to:

- make healthy decisions related to emotions, nutrition, germs, and safety
- use communication skills to enhance their health

Balanced Literacy

In all elementary schools, a balanced literacy approach is used to deliver concepts during the language arts instructional period.

Children are involved in interrelated activities presented within integrated units of study. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between the spoken and written word, letters, sounds and words, and language play. Opportunities for practice of concepts presented occur daily during center time.

The following strategies are used in the Balanced Literacy classroom:

- Read Alouds – Builds background knowledge and increases vocabulary
- Shared Reading – Teaches and models national, state and district standards and curriculum
- Guided Reading – Allows for small group and individual instruction
- Word Study – Includes daily systematic and explicit lessons that emphasize phonemic awareness activities and instruction in the alphabetic principle
- Independent Reading – Builds fluency in text to assure that children understand what they read
- Modeled, Shared, Interactive and Independent Writing – Teachers model good strategies, children share ideas and the teacher records their words, children write/teachers write, students write regularly in journals and/or Writing Workshop

This approach supports children at various levels of literacy development. It stimulates an interest in books and serves as a motivation to succeed. Additionally, the balanced approach assures that all students receive the tools they need to achieve their ultimate capabilities.

Getting Ready to Write

- Let your child see you writing for various purposes: Making lists, writing letters, and emails, jotting down notes
- Provide a variety of materials available such as paper, pencils, markers, sticky notes
- Encourage your child to write his or her name and the names of family members
- Respond to the ideas your child has written
- Plan a time and place for your child to write every day

Getting Ready to Read

Some readiness activities to use at home are listed below:

- Sing simple songs with your child. You will be helping him/her to hear and feel the rhythm of our language.
- Recite nursery rhymes and poems with your child. Encourage him/her to memorize the selection.
- Have a regular story time. Read all types of literature, especially the classic fairy tales and other stories that encourage imagination and creative reasoning.
- Read books that rhyme and ask your child to listen for the words that sound alike. Let them try to supply the missing rhyming word as you read aloud.
- Look at the book cover with your child. Use the terms “front cover, back cover, title, author, illustrator, top, bottom.” This exposes him/her to a proper reading vocabulary.
- Look at the cover of the book and ask your child to predict what the story will be about.
- When reading with your child, follow the print with your fingers.
- Point out single letters, a group of letters that make a word and groups of words that make a sentence.
- Be sure that you let your child see you reading! Modeling good reading behavior is powerful motivation for your child.
- Story telling and role play are wonderful ways to encourage children to participate in reading.

Mathematical Instruction

Daily schedules in kindergarten include one hour of mathematics instruction plus a communication component. Classroom activities provide opportunities for mathematics to be delivered “to” the student, “with” the student, and “by” the student for a balanced approach. Time for mathematics will include integrated activities presented in a developmentally appropriate way through visual hands-on and interactive activities. Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts by using them to solve problems, representing them in multiple ways (graphs, numbers, words), and explaining them to someone else.

Mathematical Readiness

Some readiness activities to use at home are listed below:

- Touch and count household objects – pieces of furniture in a room
- Find and name patterns in everyday objects – stripes, checks
- Sort household items by size, color, shape, use - socks, towels, utensils, cans, etc.
- Talk about size relationships - bigger – smaller, shortest – tallest, more – less
- Use position words to locate items – above the picture, under the bed, beside the chair, behind the door, etc.
- Locate items by shape – square (TV), rectangle (door), etc.
- Number rhymes, games, songs, chants
- Post a calendar and refer to it often
- Talk about time – yesterday, today, tomorrow

Questions Frequently Asked by Parents

Is reading taught in Kindergarten?

Current research is giving educators exciting new insights into the ways children learn to read and write. The term **emergent** is used to convey the fact that young children are in the process of becoming literate long before they enter kindergarten. The term **literacy** is used to emphasize the close ties between reading and writing in young children's experiences.

Research in **emergent literacy** shows that young children's learning about reading and writing begins at home as they observe family members engaged in common literacy activities such as taking phone messages, writing shopping lists, and reading books and other material.

Research in **emergent literacy** suggests that children who have had the opportunity to hear our language in many forms have a greater understanding of how the language works. Literature helps to build background knowledge, develop vocabulary and motivate children to want to learn to read. As stories become familiar, children will begin to read along and finally to read alone. The sequence of the shared reading model follows:

1. Children become interested in the story.
At this point, the teacher has the opportunity to develop students' comprehension.
2. Children have questions about words or phrases in the story.
Once students have a general understanding of the story, they are likely to have questions about words or phrases in it. The teacher can use these questions to help students explore language patterns and learn about sentence context.
3. Once children are familiar with the words and language patterns, they are likely to become interested in print. At this point, the teacher can develop their knowledge of letters, sounds and words.

Are phonics skills taught in kindergarten?

The reading process actually begins before a child enters school and is continued through the early years to develop fluent readers. In kindergarten, the emphasis is placed on teaching and refining phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills. Students need to be able to understand how the alphabet works in order for phonics instruction to be successful. Through teacher directed activities, children learn to distinguish individual sounds (phonemes) within words. The phonemic awareness activities are primarily oral and involve taking words apart (segmentation) and putting them back together (blending). As students become proficient in oral exercises, phonics instruction (or the association of sounds and the letters that represent those sounds) is introduced.

Do you use workbooks at all?

Young children are physical learners. They need to – Hear it, Say it, See it, and Touch it – for a concept to be meaningful. Paper and pencil activities are only one way for a child to practice. Hands-on manipulative activities are preferred.

Why do you de-emphasize worksheets?

Worksheets can be used successfully, on occasion, as reinforcement activities after a concept has been taught. Regular use does not encourage creativity. Also, many five-year-olds have not developed the necessary small muscle control or hand-eye coordination needed for the successful manipulation of a pencil. Pre-writing skills receive a high priority in the program.

Will my child learn to write in kindergarten?

Writing and reading are taught interchangeably in kindergarten. When children develop an interest in print, they become interested in producing their own print. As they are exposed to writing that is modeled, shared and interactive, they will begin to use their knowledge of sound/symbol relationships to write. Every child will have numerous opportunities to develop hand/eye coordination and fine motor control by writing. Children will learn to write stories, write things they know and express their opinion with teacher support.

What are the hours of attendance?

The daily schedule aligns with the regular school day of six and one-half hours.

What transportation arrangements are available?

Bus transportation will be provided by the Cobb County Schools. Guidelines for pick-up and drop-off will be the same as those for other students. For each child's protection, teachers **MUST** be notified **in writing** if after-school transportation plans change.

Are birthday celebrations and other special parties permitted at school?

Cobb County School Board policy permits only one class party per year. Birthdays and special events are recognized in classes. However, don't disappoint a young child by preparing for an in-school event that cannot be permitted.

When I ask my child what he learned today, the answer is "We played." Is that all kindergarten children do --- just play?

What a great compliment of a kindergarten program that a youngster would describe it as a play experience or that a parent could comment that the learning activities seem to look more like play! Young children experience their most rapid growth in learning and personality development during times that feel and look like play. The phenomenon is that play in the world of children is a serious scheme through which they learn. What appears to be play to the outsider observing a kindergarten program is a very carefully planned and staged program of instruction. The informal learning may resemble play; however, it is not of a frivolous manner. As a problem-solver and the decision-maker, the child is building ego, willpower and reasoning.

The kindergarten curriculum is one in which children learn by doing in addition to explicit instruction. Through play, children develop the concepts and skills that establish a foundation on which all future learning can be built.

What are some good books that I should read to my kindergarten child?

Choose top quality books, not those based on toys and TV characters. Children's librarians and knowledgeable clerks in bookstores can help you select the best of children's literature. An excellent paperback guide to children's books is The Read-Aloud Handbook, by Jim Trelease (Penguin Books). Books given the Caldecott award of the American Library Association are always good choices.

What do I need to know about lunches and snacks?

Children are encouraged to purchase a nutritious school lunch that has been planned according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans by a staff of Registered Dietitians. Lunch includes milk. If your child chooses to bring a lunch, milk may be purchased in the Café. In addition, your child should bring a nutritious snack each day. You may pre-pay for your child's meals either with a check or cash in the Café or with a credit card using the MealpayPlus system by telephone at 1-877-237-0946 or on the internet at www.mealpayplus.com. You will need your student's school ID Number to use the Mealpay system. The Café Manager can provide you with the ID number as soon as it is available. Additional information about the School Lunch Program will be sent to you the first week of school. You may also visit the Cobb County School District's web site www.cobbk12.org for additional information on menus and email links to the Food and Nutrition Services Central Office

What do I need to know about the Georgia requirement that all students meet certain minimum standards in order to go on to first grade?

The State of Georgia, through legislative requirement, has a set of standards which are considered necessary to help assure success at the first grade level. Your child's teacher will be presenting and evaluating each child's meeting of these standards. It is our desire that every child experience success and have a sense of security about his/her progress. Every effort will be given to see that each child achieves the required level of proficiency on the state instrument.

Birth Certificates

1. Children born in Georgia:

Apply at: Cobb County Health Department
1650 County Services Parkway
Marietta, GA 30008

Attention: Vital Records Department

Phone: (770) 514-2337

Charges: \$25.00 (first copy) per child.\$5.00 (each Additional copy) per child. if purchased at the same time. Birth Certificates should be requested by letter or in person by parent listed on certificate or by grandparent.

Payment may be made by money order, Visa or Master Card. Online ordering is available at www.vitalchek.com. A \$9.00 charge will apply.

2. Children born in states other than Georgia

Contact: Cobb County Health Department

Attention: Vital Records Department

Phone: 770-514-2337 or at www.vitalchek.com A file of addresses for the vital records department of each state is maintained or is available online at www.vitalchek.com.

3. American children born outside of the United States

Contact: U.S. Department of State
(202) 955-0307

Cobb County Schools and Your Child's Safety

In the Cobb County School District the safety of your child is our highest priority. In Cobb we are fortunate to have superb security resources for our schools including:

- Police officers assigned to every high school and middle school and available to every elementary school on call;
- Electronic access-control systems for all elementary schools;
- Surveillance cameras in every school;
- Custom safety plans for each school reviewed and certified by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA);
- Cooperation and coordination with local police and fire agencies, including the Georgia State Patrol;
- Coming soon: Electronic buzz-in systems for the front door of all elementary schools.

These resources go a long way toward maintaining a safe learning environment for our students. While arbitrary events are always a possibility in our society, fortunately these events are extremely rare and isolated. When all factors are considered, there is no question that our schools remain one of the safest places a child can be.

If you need more information about school safety, please contact the school district's Public Safety Department at <http://www.cobbk12.org/centraloffice/publicsafety>.

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Marietta, Georgia**

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