

# Kindergarten Frequently Asked Questions

## Classroom questions:

### 1. What is my child's daily schedule?

Your Kindie's specific daily schedule is going to be different based on which classroom they are in. This information is available on your Kindie teachers website. It will be VERY helpful for you to sign up for updates on your classroom web site!

### 2. What is a fancy folder?

The fancy folder will be one of the folders that you will bring in as part of your school supplies. This folder will come home with them each day and your Kindie will also turn it in each morning. Inside their fancy folder will be a behavior sheet, where they will fill in the color from our behavior chart. Please check and sign this folder each evening. This folder is also a great way to communicate, as we will look through them each day.

### 3. Why do we save Box Tops for education? How does that benefit the classroom, school, student etc.

All classrooms collect Box Tops and our Librarian runs a contest to see which class can collect the most! The box tops supply funds for our library to purchase new books.

### 4. Who are the classroom assistants and what do they do in the classroom?

We are SO fortunate and have the BEST instructional aides!! Each Kindie classroom has a consistent aide that comes in to help every day!! They do a wide variety of things but their main objective in our classrooms is to provide support and interventions during our guided reading and writing centers.

### 5. What are Specials?

Our six Specials are Art, Music, Physical Education, Technology, Engineering, and Spanish. The Kindies will go to Specials on a rotating basis. The specials schedule will be posted on our school web page. Please make sure to note when your Kindie will be going to P.E. so they have their tennis shoes!



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## 6. Can I observe class for a day?

Parents are always welcome in our classrooms! They will need to have filled out a volunteer form through our volunteer coordinator, Sue Cope ([sue.kerrcope@dcsdk12.org](mailto:sue.kerrcope@dcsdk12.org)), before visiting or volunteering in the classroom.

## 7. How can volunteers help?

We typically like to wait a while before parents start coming in to Kindergarten to give us time to establish our community. And, it's very important volunteers need to know that they are absolutely welcome in the classroom and that their work is important and very helpful! A volunteer's involvement will contribute to their children's success in school because it reflects the attitude that school is important. There are so many ways to help out, just let us know what your most comfortable ways to help are: working on reading, or math, or art, or helping decorate the walls, or help with paperwork. We have an amazing volunteer coordinator; Sue Cope, and she will help to get all of the schedules, needs and interests aligned. Volunteers are a HUGE part of our Kindergarten program...we'd LOVE to have you!

## 8. What is the Rattler way? How is this reinforced in my child's classroom?

The staff at Roxborough feels it is incredibly important to reward and recognize positive behavior. Our school rules are "The Rattler Way - Respect, Responsibility, and Safety." Students demonstrating the Rattler Way can be rewarded with silver stickers, and for going beyond expectations students can earn gold slips.

## 9. My child doesn't want to separate from me. How can I deal with this?

Leave a personal belonging with the child. This often makes the child feel secure enough to stay. Don't sneak away since this will leave the child feeling deserted. Discuss this prior to the day's start; carefully explain to the child how they will be picked back up. You can also provide opportunities for your upcoming Kindie to be without you. For example, have play dates where you leave them for a while and then see that you will come back for them. We have all had Kindies come into our rooms with separation issues and know that we will love, comfort and reassure them that you will be back with them soon.



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## Curriculum questions:

### 1. How do we learn the numbers poems and color songs?

Each teacher that uses these number poems and color songs should have them posted on their web sites for parents to view.

### 2. What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic awareness is a set of pre-reading skills necessary for reading and writing success. Phonemic awareness skills are about hearing sounds therefore letter names are not used. These skills include:

Rhyming: hearing and creating rhymes

Isolating the beginning, ending and middle sounds in a word: given a word the student can tell you what sound they hear at the beginning, end and then middle of a word.

Blending: Given the sounds in a word the students can blend the sounds together and tell you what word they hear.

Segmenting: Given a word the student can tell you what the sounds are that make up the word.

### 3. What is Phonics?

Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. Students will be able to identify the names of all upper and lowercase letters as well as identify the sounds the letters make. Students will then use this information to begin reading and spelling!

### 4. What is Foundations?

Foundations is a researched based systematic way of teaching students phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling skills. Foundations is taught in a whole group setting each day, and then is reinforced in small groups/ or as an intervention if needed.



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## 5. How are Kindergarten students assessed and evaluated?

Student assessment encompasses the whole child and includes a variety of methods in which teachers observe students, record and collect information in student files and assessment portfolios. Formal and informal assessments are given throughout the year to make sure students are progressing along the scope and sequence of our reading, writing and math curriculum. The results of these assessments help us plan for the next best instructional steps for students.

Students will also be asked to demonstrate their learning and understanding for each of our six I.B. units. These assessments will look different than what we think of as traditional assessments.

## 6. What are Literacy Centers?

Literacy centers are when your child will receive direct and specific instruction from their teacher in reading and writing based on their next area of need. During this time students are in small groups and will rotate through different centers, one of which will be with their teacher. It is during this time that we can most effectively use our parent volunteers.

## 7. My child is reading, but you're still teaching her reading, why?

There are many, many different aspects to "reading" beyond just being able to decode words. It is important that children have all of their phonemic awareness skills, their pre-reading and decoding skills well developed. These skills continue to build on each other and if they are not all understood it can cause difficulties later in their reading. Another component of reading is re-tell and comprehension. Children need to be able to do a story re-tell and understand what they have read, not just being able to 'read' the text.

## 8. What will happen for my child who is already reading as Kindergarten starts?

Through assessments it will be determined at what level your reader is reading, comprehending and understanding. From this they will be placed into a reading group with children that have similar needs in their reading development. However, this area of the child's development should not be *overemphasized*. The Roxborough Kindergarten curriculum advocates developing the whole child, physically and socio-emotionally as well as intellectually. It is as important to provide opportunities for each student to learn to communicate, collaborate, be creative and think critically.



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## 9. How can my bright child be challenged and not bored in Kindergarten?

In Roxborough's developmentally appropriate Kindergarten Program there are unlimited opportunities for growth and learning for everyone. A balanced program, which considers the whole child, provides socio-emotional and physical challenges in addition to intellectual ones. Individual activities are planned to help meet the needs and interests of each child.

## 10. Some kids are already reading. Is my child hopelessly behind?

While it is true that with today's academic preschools, some children arrive in kindergarten already reading, but teachers don't require or even expect it. In the early months of kindergarten, we want kids to practice writing their own name, identifying letters and matching them to sounds. We want kids to develop "concepts of print," like the fact that we read from left to right on a page and from front to back in a book, and that every spoken word has a written version, too.

What should you do to help? Go ahead and have fun with all the letters and sounds, practice writing names, and most of all, enjoy those books! Read aloud, as often as possible. Savor the pictures, and talk, talk, talk. "Who is that character?" "What is she feeling?" "What do you think will happen next?" Independent reading is just around the corner for your child—what you're doing now is ensuring that the encounter will be richly satisfying both now and for years to come.

## 11. My kindergartener does not want to write and has no interest in drawing. I know that fine motor work is important in kindergarten: What should I do?

Often, the issue is simply one of time and gentle understanding. These may just be developmentally young children who need some skilled handling. What we forget is how many skills it takes to be able to manipulate a pencil or scissors. We don't encourage forcing rote practice for long intervals. Instead, handwriting *readiness* skills need to be addressed. Try breaking down a task into component parts, and allow your child to succeed one at a time. Your child might enjoy playing with play-doh-roll it into a snake and form letters. Squirt shaving cream, or poor salt onto a cookie sheet and have students practice writing with their fingers. When they are ready to write, sitting straight, without swinging feet or draping body over the table is crucial first step! Some children may work better with a different width pencil that supports a more functional grip. Aim for short intervals, and let your child break them up with gross motor activities like running around or swinging. And, look for progress, not perfection. Concentrate on what the child *can* do. With steady, constructive encouragement, those fine motor skills almost always come along just fine.



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## 12. My child writes b for d and d for b all the time. Is this OK?

Lots and lots of kindergarteners—and first graders—do this, and don't be surprised if they mix p and q or write a backward s or two while they're at it. That's because in kindergarten they are just coming into the fine motor skills they need, as well as the visual and perceptual skills, to form consistent letters. Mixups are all part of the experimental process.

So for now, if your Kindie writes "bot" for "dot," your best bet is to relax. As the year goes by, you can point out corrections gently, and perhaps reinforce letter directions by letting your child trace them in sand or fingerpaint, using the whole hand. But above all, celebrate your child's willingness to experiment, and enjoy the surprising words that turn up!

## 13. My child is just getting comfortable with counting from 1-20. Are we behind?

NO! The end of the year expectation for this skill is counting to 100, BUT we also want students to understand number sense. They need to understand that whole numbers can be used to name, count, represent and order quantity. We want kids to recognize what a number means—that it represents real things. We hope that parents count aloud at home as often as possible, and not to skip this phase of conceptual learning. Forward and backward counting from random numbers can also help! This is a crucial time for children's math understanding, as their grasp of numbers becomes intuitive and automatic, and it makes for fast learning later.

## 14. What are sight words?

These words are the most commonly used words in the English language, and many kindergarten curriculums include learning them by sight, rather than by sounding or stretching them out. Many of these sight words, such as "the", do not follow "sounding out" rules, which is another reason students are encouraged to memorize them. When reading sight words students need to do so with automaticity!

There are three different sight words programs that are part of our curriculums:

\*Kindie no excuse words- these are a list of words that all Kindie students will be asked to be able to read and spell! The words on this list are: the, a, is, it, of, to, you, and, in, that, was.

\*Foundations trick words- as part of our Foundations program there is a list of trick words that will be introduced to your student a few words at a time. These are words that just need to be read!



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\*Sight word folders- These will be individual folders for each of our Kindies based on where your student is reading.

All three of these sight word programs usually start after the first of the year!

### 15. What is Parent Portal compared to My School Bucks compared to DCSD ExpressLine?

Parent Portal allows parent access to our student information system, including attendance data and progress reports. You can access this system through the Parent Links category in the left hand navigation on the school website.

My School Bucks is a system for managing and paying for school lunches.

DCSD ExpressLine is online payment system to pay school fees.

Links to My School Bucks and DCSD Express Line are on the right side of the Roxborough website home page.

### 16. When it's time for everyone to sit in their places on the rug for story time, my child only wants to walk around or build blocks. Does my child have an Attention Deficit Disorder?

Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD and its cousin, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) are all over the news, and may seem like an epidemic. But if your kindergartener comes home in September saying he'd rather not sit for rug time, beware rushing to dire conclusions! Chances are this is just an example of "RLKB" —Regular Little Kid Behavior.

Does that mean the child can't do kindergarten? Not at all. Instead, parents and teachers need to work together. First, you need realistic expectations. A half hour of sitting still is too long at this age. For a typically developing child in the first 3-4 months of kindergarten, 10-15 minutes of listening to a story is reasonable, provided that the book is at their level and read well. Second, parents can help by maintaining predictable routines at home. Every human really craves predictability and routine. It's soothing to be able to know what expect what's coming next, and it makes for better learning, too.

Above all, do not rush to judgment. So if you're in the first months of kindergarten and your child rolls over and wiggles when it's time to sit on the floor quietly during circle time, hang in there. Pay attention, but don't leap to conclusions. In all likelihood, the message is, I am a five year old kid and I'm am not ready for this yet. And in due time, with gentle



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handling, that readiness will come. If you still have concerns, parents should consult their pediatrician.

### 17. My child still does "baby talk" r's and l's. Is this a speech defect?

Not necessarily! In kindergarten, lots of kids are still mastering the "late eight" sounds: "th" (the), "s" (snake), "z" (zipper), "l" (little), "r" (run), "er" (brother), "sh" (ship), and "ch" (chip). Having problems with a maximum of three of these sounds is normal for the age. If your child shows problems with more than three of these sounds, however, or if she has a "speech distortion" such as a lisp, you may want to consult your pediatrician or a specialist. Quite a few kids receive this special help in kindergarten, only to "graduate" within a few months.



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