

# Kindergarten the Transition Year!

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I realize many churches want to move Kindergarten classes out of the preschool division and into the children's division but wait. Maybe it has to do with space constraints. Maybe it involves a children's worship or any number of reasons. I was lured into this way of thinking too. Here's what I learned.

Although the kids are attending all-day school now, their brains are still learning with early childhood methods. There are activity centers for hands-on, experiential learning through play and group time. Probably the hardest work Kindergarteners do is to follow instructions, respect the teacher and other classmates, work together, walk in line, raise your hand before speaking and taking turns. You guessed it, social courtesies and operating within a group. Many people think a child just knows this when they go to school but not true. Our teachers work hard to teach and practice these skills with our children daily.



If the same child advances to the children's division before learning these skills, there is chaos. Teachers become frustrated because we have set them up to struggle. Older children they have been mixed with are frustrated too. Do yourself a favor and allow Kindergarten to be early childhood learners with new challenges of introducing longer group times, applying Bible truths to scenarios you introduce, laying foundations for salvation and opportunities for service. Practice social courtesies and celebrate the way they are growing. Here's a comparison list:

## Characteristics of Kindergarteners

- Need active play; like to move freely during games and music
- Refine physical gains made during the first four years; girls may display more maturity at this age than boys
- Begin to separate fact from fantasy
- Can follow simple instructions in doing tasks
- Remember and like to tell Bible stories
- Use the Bible and like to find Bible phrases located by Bible markers
- Recognize church as a special place where people learn about God and Jesus
- Are developing a conscience; experience guilt for misbehavior
- Cooperate in play with peers; show limited ability to share; exclude peers when angry rather than using name calling
- Display a full range of emotions; are prone to self-criticism and guilt

## Characteristics of First Graders

- Less self-centered than earlier years
- Continue developing a conscience
- Forming concepts of personal worth
- Can put many Bible teachings into practice
- Are active learners
- Have surface-level of emotions (easy tears or laughter)
- Enjoy informal play without many rules
- Show their feelings in behavior rather than words
- Are concrete thinkers who do not understand symbolic language
- Have limited reading skills

