

Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

AUTHOR(S): Jill Goldstein Smith

SUMMARY: In this session we will be transported back to kindergarten and revisit the lessons of sharing, creativity, and joy.

GOALS:

- Participants will reconnect with joy
- Participants will remember simple truths about life
- Participants will explore their personal values

AUDIENCE: Teens or staff

TIMING: 60-75 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Shape stickers (or hand stamps for splitting into groups in a special way)
- Butcher paper
- Markers
- Finger paint and tray for paint mixing ([link](#))
- 11x17 paper or multi color construction paper
- Paper towels
- Adhesive flip chart
- Cups
- Pudding
- Crushed Oreos
- Gummy worms
- Poem *Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum (attached at the end of this document)
- Greeting sign (attached at the end of this document)
- Optional: Twister/ Jenga/ board games
- Optional: Guitar and song leader

SET-UP: Wide open space for seating on the floor, and at least two other spaces nearby for station rotation with tables for supplies, nearby to sink for handwashing.

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:10 – Welcome to Kindergarten! Introduce “teacher” & Count into groups (stickers)
- 00:10-00:30 – Explain Rules, Read Poem, Create Poster “Everything... I Learned at CAMP”
- 00:30-00:40 – Rotation #1
- 00:40-00:50 – Rotation #2
 - If additional time allows, add a third rotation option for an additional 10-15 minutes
- 00:50-01:00 – Wrap Up & Clean Up

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:10 – Welcome to Kindergarten! Introduce “teacher” & Count into groups (stickers)

Welcome the class to Kindergarten in the cheesiest Kindergarten teacher kind of way. As folks enter, try to greet each person by name and offer if they want a handshake, high five, hug, or a wave (as a non-physical-touch option) - you may use the Greeting Sign (attached at the end of this document) as a prompt.

If applicable, introduce the other “teachers” (staff leading stations).

Have other staff distribute one sticker per participant, split into three different groups based on sticker shape. (Alternative: with magic markers write numbers 1, 2, and 3 on every participant’s hand or use hand stamps of different shapes). This will be how they’ll split into groups for the stations. Invite everyone to sit in a circle (ideally on a rug), “crisscross apple sauce” (or in any fashion that is comfortable).

00:10-00:30 – Explain Rules, Read Poem, Create Poster “Everything... I Learned at CAMP”

Explain: “There are just a few rules we should work and live by while we are in Kindergarten....”

If multiple staff are available, have several staff (a.k.a. ‘teachers’) spread around the room encompassing the circle of campers and taking turns reading the poem *Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum.

Please do so slowly so kids can let it all sink in and understand everything. This can also be read aloud by a single facilitator.

Option: distribute copies of the poem to everyone before *or* after reading aloud.

Create Poster: Roll out a large butcher paper poster that says “Everything I Need to Know I Learned at CAMP” with some markers spread around. Invite participants to write lessons they’ve learned at camp over the years decorated all around the poster (no names or drawings).

Leave the poster out for participants to add to it throughout the activity. (Consider hanging it on display at camp afterwards, or better yet – snap a photo and share it on camp’s social media. Your camp director may even want to save a photo to share with the camp’s Board or donors...!)

Optional: If doing this with a large group, consider creating multiple posters or splitting the big poster up by word – this way more participants can crowd around to decorate at once.

00:30-00:40 – Rotation #1

00:40-00:50 – Rotation #2

Send groups off to different rotation station areas, for approx. 10-20 minutes each depending on time available. This **INCLUDES** clean-up time!

STATION #1 – Finger Painting (front the Fireplace at Table)

Here we get down and dirty. We let our inner child out on paper, perhaps to share with someone or a community who loves you to display on the fridge – or perhaps just for yourself, perhaps to keep or perhaps to simply enjoy this moment alone. Individuality shines through artwork. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Some instructions and boundaries to guide us as we finger paint:

- You can get yourself messy, but respect others' personal space. Hands to ourselves – do not put paint in their hair or on their bodies.
- Consent is important at every age and stage. Do not change another person's artwork without their permission.
- Nothing you create is right or wrong. Your art is expression and an extension of you. You needn't explain it or understand it, it can just be.
- "Everyone is a teacher and everyone a student, simultaneously" – Talmud
- "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up." – Pablo Picasso
- Always wash your hands!

On paper, let them paint freely. Leave time for clean-up with paper towels and hand washing. Coordinate a space for the paintings to dry.

STATION #2 – Just Desserts: Make your Own Mud

Explain: Participants will be making their own messy dessert! It's important to be willing to get a little messy.

"In life, a person can take one of two attitudes: to build or to plant. The builders might take years over their tasks, but one day, they finish what they're doing. Then they find that they're hemmed in by their own walls. Life loses its meaning when the building stops.

Then there are those who plant. They endure storms and all the vicissitudes of the seasons, and they rarely rest. But unlike a building, a garden never stops growing. And while it requires the gardener's constant attention, it also allows life for the gardener to be a great adventure.

Gardeners always recognize each other, because they know that in the history of each plant lies the growth of the whole World."

— Paulo Coelho

Give each child chocolate pudding and have them create their dirt!

Make sure that everyone cleans up and that everyone must be done making their pudding before they eat. Delayed gratification!



00:50-01:00 – Wrap Up & Clean Up

Gather participants back on the 'rug' in a circle. Read the closing/follow-up portion of the poem (below).

Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm. Think what a better world it would be if we all – the whole world – had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are – when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

Ask participants if they'd like to add anything more to the poster "Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned at Camp." Invite participants to read some out loud.

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

Additional rotation options could include:

- Playing on camp's playground
- Free swim or water play
- Childhood game series (duck-duck-goose, freeze dance, musical chairs, etc.)
- Music or circle time

All I Really Needed to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten

By Robert Fulghum

Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at elementary school.

These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life--learn some and think some and draw & paint & sing and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

Be aware of wonder.

Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup--they all die. So do we.

And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned--the biggest word of all--LOOK.

Everything you need to know is there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation, ecology, and politics and the sane living.

GREETINGS!



High-Five



Fist Bump



Hug



Handshake



Say Hello

