

Stages of Development

Look What I Can Do: 1st, 2nd, 3rd Graders (6 to 8 Years)

Children these ages are changing dramatically. They are energetic, curious, imaginative, open and enthusiastic. They are developing friendships and what it means to be in relationship with one another. They still need adult help and reassurance but also need time on their own to explore new ideas and concepts. They are developing the ability to talk about and explain their ideas. Children of these ages need a lot of physical movement and activities that are broken into short segments. They are beginning to understand how and why things happen and to see other viewpoints. Help them become masters of their own lives by giving them multiple ways to explore the same idea or concept.

Physical

- Cannot sit still for more than a few moments without needing some movement.
- They are unable to move slowly as they are developing large-muscle groups. This accounts for their awkwardness and spills at this age.
- Active learning experiences are a must.
- Vary the pace, the focus and the setting throughout the lesson.

Cognitive

- They are concrete thinkers and have difficulty grasping abstract concepts and symbolism.
- Offer choices when possible. They love having input – it is part of the adventure.
- They enjoy a certain amount of repetition and the security of familiar routines. They learn to master an activity.
- Balance new activities with familiar ones to avoid discipline problems.
- Staying on schedule is helpful.
- Listening skills are developing, though their attention span is still only six or seven minutes. Girls tend to have a longer attention span than boys.
- Auditory learning is emerging. These kids are better able to handle verbal instructions and participate in questions, answers and discussions. Small groups work well at this age.
- Reading aloud should be done by the teacher or as a group to avoid discipline problems as students sound out words.
- These children think literally. Give instructions in concrete terms.

Moral

- They need to be understood for a healthy sense of self-worth.
- Make a point of calling their names and knowing their likes and dislikes and interests.
- These kids are in the “eraser age.” They are driven to master every skill and every task.
- They need extra approval because they are so hard on themselves.
- They may still express emotions with very little control. Redirect the child to appropriate ways of dealing with strong emotions.

Social

- They will clamor to be first at everything. They will need help learning to take turns and be considerate of others.
- They do not handle competition and losing very well. They may be insensitive to their peers and hypersensitive to their own acceptance.
- They are oriented toward cooperative activities.
- At this age they need to learn to work together, listen to everyone, accept group decisions and play various roles within a group.

Overall Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To understand that good dwells within them and is a part of them
- To see Jesus as a person who had challenges and difficulties but created a relationship with God that helped him to move through these challenges with loving kindness and generosity and to use who Jesus was and how he behaved to create a model of behavior for their own lives
- To explore the power of their thoughts and words and are able to explore meditation styles and practices.
- To continue to learn Unity prayers and explore affirmations and denials
- To help the children explore how they, too, can let God live through them as an expression of life, love and kindness

Stages of Development

Look What I Can Do: 4th & 5th Graders (9 & 10 Years)

This is a time of budding intellectual curiosity. Children of these ages move from being brooding and worried to happy and relaxed. They are looking for the “why” of things and are beginning to enjoy research and deeper exploration. They still enjoy adult encouragement and recognition and need adults to be lighthearted and empathetic. Their coordination is improving and still need lots of movement and activity. They can concentrate for longer periods of time but still need a variety of activities. Help them to develop stronger relationships with others by encouraging them to look past their own personal world and out into the bigger world around them. Also give them opportunities to challenge your explanations so that they develop the capacity to think for themselves.

Physical

- Both boys and girls of this age can react physically with speed and accuracy.
- They enjoy organized games and larger group activities.
- Their bodies are beginning to change.
- Girls are generally more mature than boys.

Cognitive

- Reading and writing have advanced.
- They can work independently for longer periods.
- More in-depth challenges and projects are appreciated.
- Interactive learning and small groups are effective where they share then come back together and discuss their findings with the whole class.
- At this age they see the potential for multiple correct answers and ideas.
- They will be discontent with just sitting and listening.
- An atmosphere of trust and acceptance is important to their self-confidence.

Moral

- Emotional fulfillment requires a broad spectrum of creative, meaningful activities.
- They enjoy educational games, music and art. It is important to demonstrate the relevance of their new experiences.
- Be a positive mentor that challenges and encourages them and sets high but reasonable goals.
- They are developing identities through the influence of their peers.
- They are looking for a place to belong.
- They have an extremely difficult time at this age accepting evaluation from an authority figure. It is better to guide a discussion in a small group.
- If you see teasing, put-downs and criticism, this may be a child with pent up anger. See if you can find out what is troubling the child because this is a red flag.

Social

- They are very concerned with the truth. They will tell the teacher “what really happened” regarding a conflict. Their goal is to develop a clear sense of right and wrong.
- It is still best to avoid highly competitive games.
- They desperately need approval from both adults and peers.
- More reasoning is possible in discipline as they grasp other points of view.

- Give them opportunities to discuss classroom expectations, rules, and consequences. The group experience strengthens your ability to create meaningful systems of discipline.
- They are reaching out to others more and showing more concern.

Overall Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To know that they are each created in the image and after the likeness of God
- To know they are inherently good and that God lives within each of them
- To understand that Jesus represents this Christ potential, this goodness and power
- To begin to compose their own affirmations and denials and to sit for longer meditations.
- To begin to understand that the teachings of Jesus are examples of how we are to be in this world