



What to Expect from Children in Grades 3 and 4

Physical

Children at this level have increasingly good large- and small-muscle coordination. The girls are still ahead of the boys. Children can work diligently for longer periods but can grow impatient with delays or their own imperfect abilities.

Teaching Tips: Give clear, specific instructions. Allow children as much independence as possible in preparing materials. Assign children the responsibility for cleanup.

Emotional

This is the age of teasing, nicknames, criticism and increased use of verbal skills to vent anger. By eight years of age, most kids have a very developed sense of fair play and a value system of right and wrong (especially if it benefits them!). By the time most kids are nine years old, they're beginning to look for an independent identity beyond membership in the family unit.

Teaching Tips: Children are eagerly searching for role models at this age—here is a marvelous opportunity for you to model the love and grace of Christ to them! Provide experiences that encour-

age children's creativity. Let all children know by your words and by your actions that "love is spoken here" and that you will not let others hurt them nor let them hurt others. Make your class a safe place where children feel accepted, where they are comfortable asking hard questions and where they may express their true feelings without fear of teasing.

Social

Children's desire for status within their peer group becomes more intense. This often leads to acting silly or showing off to get attention. Many kids are still shy with strangers and exhibit a strong preference for being with a few close friends. Many still lack the essential social skills needed to make and retain friendships.

Teaching Tips: This age is a good time to use activities in which pairs or small groups of children can work together. Create natural opportunities for each child to get to know others and to take on greater responsibility. Give them ideas and words that they can use in social situations. Help them learn how to cultivate relationships.



Cognitive

Children are beginning to realize there may be valid opinions besides their own. They are becoming able to evaluate alternatives and growing in their ability to see more than one viewpoint as possible. Children are also beginning to think in terms of “the whole.” Children think more conceptually and have a higher level of creativity. However, by this stage, many children have become self-conscious and critical about their creative efforts as their understanding may exceed their abilities in some areas.

Teaching Tips: Encourage children to find information and discover their own answers. Provide art, music and drama activities to help them learn Bible information and concepts. Encourage children to learn to use their Bibles and find portions of Scripture in class. Bible learning games are good for this age and children are often eager to memorize Bible verses. Help children understand the meanings of the verses they memorize.

Spiritual

Children are open to sensing their need for God’s continuous help and guidance. They can recognize their need for a personal Savior. There may be a desire to become a member of God’s family. Children who indicate an awareness of sin and concern about accepting Jesus as Savior need clear and careful guidance without pressure.

Teaching Tips: Give children opportunities to communicate with God through prayer. Help them understand the forgiving nature of God. Talk personally with a child whom you sense the Holy Spirit is leading to trust the Lord Jesus. Ask simple, open-ended (“What do you think..?”) kinds of questions to determine the child’s level of understanding.