

Best Practices for Teaching to Your Age Group



Characteristics of 1st through 3rd
grade children

Characteristics of 4th through 6th
grade children

Implications for teaching

Implications for teaching

Our Goal

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives a **clear and concise goal** for teaching children (or anyone for that matter) Therefore, go and make disciples...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. He did not tell us to teach children **what to obey** or even **how to obey**. Jesus made **life-altering transformation** (not simply information or education) the primary goal for teaching.

Of course we all know children (people) change because God is at work in them. The Truths we teach are not ours but God's. However, God chooses to work through us as we teach His Word. This is why we strive to become effective communicators and include teaching principles and methods that bring about transformation.

Teachers must clearly teach biblical truths and principles but the most effective teachers know how to help children integrate this information into their lives. Good teaching includes teaching and explanation of God's truth, application and finally transformation. We are called to be transformational teachers not simply informational teachers—transforming the heart not simply informing the mind. This kind of teaching creates a ripple that extends all the way into eternity.

What are some best practices that can help us achieve this goal?

1. Know your audience.
2. Good Classroom Control—without it the whole day may go south!
 - Establish consistent behavior standards—Use/Repeat
 - Christ Behavior Champions each class period.
 - Tell/Repeat/Do/Repeat
 - Establish a quiet signal or a call and response routine.



1, 2, 3 Eyes on me

1, 2 Eyes on you!

Five Count

- Use of rewards: team competition, Skittles, positive reinforcement of good behaviors.
- Redirecting bad or unwanted behaviors: “Make a better choice”, “Thank you for not...”
- Build relationships—Children accept correction from people they know love them.
- Be firm but loving. Don’t ignore bad behavior. Be willing to have consequences.
- Discipline is everybody’s responsibility.
- End the night/morning well not with chaos.

3. Use of Multiple Teaching Techniques

- See Chart—Multiple Intelligences
- Techniques for smooth transition.
- Be well prepared and over schedule/prepare
- Always be ready with a fill in game or activity
- Vary your activities every 15-20 minutes
- Abandon things are not working—“Don’t beat a dead horse!”

4. It’s not over till it’s over...ending well.

Exploring how age characteristics impact your teaching time...

Group Time

1-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)	4-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Bible Memory Time

1-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)	4-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Bible Teaching Time

1-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)	4-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Game Time

1-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

4-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Learning Styles

VERBAL

Words are your strongpoint!
You prefer to use words both
in speech and in writing!

VISUAL

You prefer to use pictures,
diagrams, images and spatial
understanding to help you
learn.

MUSICAL / AUDITORY

You prefer using sounds or
music or even rhythms to
help you learn.

PHYSICAL / KINAESTHETIC

You use your hands, body
and sense of touch to help
you learn. You might 'act
things out'.

WHAT'S YOUR LEARNING STYLE?

LOGICAL / MATHEMATICAL

Learning is easier for you if
you use logic, reasoning,
systems and sequences.

SOCIAL

You like to learn new things
as a part of a group.
Explaining your
understanding to a group
helps you to learn.

SOLITARY

You like to work alone. You
use self-study and prefer your
own company when
learning.

COMBINATION

Your learning style is a
combination of two or more
of these styles.

Age-level characteristics of children

Age 6-8

Overall characteristic: Activity

Children of this age:

Have better coordination which enables them to play sport
Understand rules and the consequences of breaking them
Want to help adults
Are growing in their skills and abilities
Learn more by doing than by listening

Are eager to learn
Learn by repetition
Cannot really understand the distant past or the future
Become easily discouraged
Enjoy organised games but are poor losers
Perfectionistic—fear failure
Are concrete not abstract thinkers

Have a growing need for approval
See winning and being first as important
Enjoy organised games but are poor losers
Want to be a helper
Are increasingly influenced by what the teacher says
Develop distinct personalities (recognisable traits)
Have empathy for poor and suffering people

Sense the greatness and the love of God
May struggle to understand the non-physical nature of God
Have great faith
Are trusting

Teaching tips

Vary the program every 10 to 15 minutes

Notice them

Physical

Plan activities that allow for movement at regular intervals
Use activities such as writing, drawing, cutting and gluing
Make them feel useful (like holding something for you)

Mental / Emotional

Encourage children to memorise verses / books of the Bible
Let them repeat stories / tell of their own related experiences
Use pictures and maps to explain time and place concepts
Avoid long or difficult tasks
Include problem solving to teach principles and application
Let children use pencils and have an eraser at hand

Social

Let children take turns to respond, recite, help and play
Promote fairness and treat each child equally
Allow them to help you with certain tasks
Take time to listen - you may be one of the few who do
See each child as unique - be aware of personality traits
Teach them to pray for the needs of others

Spiritual

Teachers are a role model; be trustworthy, loving and fair
Let the children look up Bible verses and read them
Use songs, games, crafts etc. related to the Bible story
Explain Bible terms such as sin, grace, salvation and worship
Encourage short-sentence prayers in the group

Age-level characteristics of children

Age 9-11

Overall characteristic: Energy

Children of this age:

- Enjoy hobbies
- Want to go places and do things (they love adventure)
- Are more independent
- Enjoy the outdoors and nature

- Are able to remember well and concentrate
- Develop reasoning skills
- Like to make lists
- Like to collect things
- Are creative
- Read well - they may start reading novels
- Are interested in facts and true stories
- Tend to worry more
- Are concrete thinkers (no longer fantasy, not yet abstract)

- Place greater importance on friends and group approval
- Form close friendships
- Can do projects and work in a group
- Have a strong sense of fairness and justice
- Start taking responsibility and like to be trusted
- Look to adults for role models
- Become self-aware and are critical of themselves
- Usually have a hero (with superhuman qualities)
- Compare themselves to their peers

- Are most easily lead to Christ at this age
- Relate Bible stories to their own experience
- Can participate in meaningful worship
- Can understand basic doctrinal principles (truths)
- Want their leaders and role models to be good people

Teaching tips

Be creative in planning the lesson time

Trust them

Physical

- Involve them in mini dramas, singing, preparing and tidying up
- Movement is a natural way of dealing with growing pains
- Arrange special events and outings for your group
- Point out the marvels of God's creation / how special they are

Mental / Emotional

- They need affirmation and encouragement - come alongside
- Explain the meaning and significance of symbolism in the Bible
- Ask rather than instruct them to do something
- Avoid embarrassment - allow the slow and weak to succeed
- Encourage a high standard (the best they can do)
- Use more involved actions with songs and explain the actions
- Encourage them to memorise a short passage of scripture
- Relate more easily to Jesus (as a friend) than to an unseen God

Social

- Trust them
- Encourage them to help the younger ones to complete a task
- Live what you teach - they can spot inconsistency
- Point to God/Jesus as always doing what is right
- Encourage them to choose good friends
- Don't talk down to them
- Setting boundaries for the group shows that you care

Spiritual

- Encourage them to read the Bible and pray (daily devotions)
- Let them voice their worries and concerns; pray with them
- Teach about worship and facilitate worship experiences
- Apply the lesson to their everyday lives
- Explain the way of salvation
- Provide regular opportunities for children to accept Christ
- Your role as a teacher is more than merely teaching a lesson
- Let them suggest things to pray for - then pray in small groups

