

### Age-Level Characteristics of 4 and 5 Year-Olds

#### Physical

At this age children are in a period of rapid physical growth. Coordination is greatly improved. These children are still constantly on the move! Girls often mature more rapidly than boys. Fours and fives may be able to cut with scissors on a curved line and draw recognizable pictures of people and objects.

**Teaching Tips:** Freehand, creative art activities are best. Don't expect perfection. Children this age still need to be recognized for their work on the process of art, not the product. Large pieces of paper, jumbo crayons and heavy lines for cutting are needed.

#### Mental/Emotional

Fours and fives are curious and questioning. They may concentrate for longer periods, but their attention span is still short. Children will interpret your words literally. Fours and fives may recall short Scripture verses, talk accurately about recent events and pronounce most common words correctly.

**Teaching Tips:** Use large teaching pictures to reinforce basic concepts. Set realistic limits and emphasize the behavior you desire. ("John, running is a good thing to do outside where there is lots of room. Inside we have to walk so no one will get hurt." "Kate, you may only draw on your own paper. Are there any more places on your page that you want to make purple?") Supply a variety of materials for children to touch, see, smell and taste. Help children discover things for themselves by having the freedom to experiment (play) with a variety of safe materials.

#### Social

The four- or five-year-old child can participate with other children in group activities. The child actively seeks adult approval, responds to friendliness and wants to be loved, especially by his or her teacher. Some children may use negative ways of gaining attention from others.

**Teaching Tips:** Provide opportunities for group singing, prayer and conversation. Give each child a chance to "lead" by serving a snack, holding a picture, etc. Give each child individual attention before negative behavior occurs. Make eye contact often, listen carefully to the child, smile and show that the child is special to you.

#### Spiritual

The four- and five-year-old child can learn basic information about God—He made the world; He cares for all people; He forgives him or her when the child is sorry for doing wrong. A child this age can also learn that Jesus died to take the punishment for the wrong things we have done and that He rose from the dead and is alive. Fours and fives can be taught that the Scriptures tell us ways to obey God and that he or she can talk to God in prayer. Provide opportunities for children to hold the Holy Scripture.

- Not able to make moral decision
- Not able to think chronologically
- Learning is episodic, not casual
- Add moral dimension

### Age-Level Characteristics of 6 and 7 Year-Olds

#### Physical

Children need opportunities for movement during every class session. Small muscle coordination is still developing and improving. Girls are ahead of boys at this stage of development.

**Teaching Tips:** Use activities that involve cutting and simple writing skills; give alternatives for children who do not write well (e.g., drawing); give children opportunities to change positions and to move about the room; vary the activities.

#### Emotional

Children are experiencing new and frequently intense feelings as they grow in independence. Sometimes the child finds it hard to control his or her behavior. There is still a deep need for approval from adults and a growing need for approval by peers.

**Teaching Tips:** Seek opportunities to help each child in your class KNOW and FEEL you love him or her. Show genuine interest in each child and his or her activities and accomplishments. Learn children's names and use them frequently in positive ways.

#### Social

Children are concerned with pleasing their teachers. Each child is struggling to become socially acceptable to the peer group. Being first and winning are very important. Taking turns is hard. This skill improves by the end of the second grade. A child's social process moves gradually from *I* to *you* to *we*.

**Teaching Tips:** Provide opportunities for children to practice taking turns. Help each child accept the opinions and wishes of others and consider the welfare of the group as well as his or her own. Call attention to times when the group cooperated successfully.

#### Intellectual

There is an intense eagerness to learn and children of this age ask lots of questions. They like to repeat stories and activities. The concept of time is limited. Thinking is here and now rather than past or future. Listening and speaking skills are developing rapidly; girls are ahead of boys. Each child thinks everyone share his or her view. Children see parts rather than how the parts make up the whole and they think very literally.

**Teaching Tips:** Use pictures to help them understand historical times and people.

#### Spiritual

Children can sense the greatness, wonder and love of God when helped with visual and specific examples. The non-physical nature of God is mysterious, but God's presence in every area of life is generally accepted when parents and teachers communicate this belief by their attitudes and actions. Children need specific examples of how God expresses love and care. Children can

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comprehend talking to God anywhere, anytime in their own words, and need regular opportunities to pray. They can also comprehend that the Old Testament tells what happened before Jesus was born and the New Testament tells of His birth, work on earth and return to heaven and the works that occurred afterwards on earth.

**Teaching Tips:** The Scriptures become real as children feel love from adults. Teachers who demonstrate their faith in a consistent, loving way are models through which the loving nature of God is made known to children.

### Age-Level Characteristics of 8 and 9 Year -Olds

#### Physical

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

**Teaching Tips:** Give clear, specific instructions and 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 verbal skills to vent anger. At eight years children have developed a sense of fair play and a value system of right and wrong. At nine years children are searching for identity beyond membership in the family unit.

**Teaching Tips:** Here is a marvelous opportunity for the teacher to present a Christian model at the time children are eagerly searching for models! Provide experiences that encourage children's creativity and self-concept. Let all the children know both verbally 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 to be.

#### Social

Children's desire for status within the peer group becomes more intense. Most children remain shy with strangers and exhibit strong preferences for being with a few close friends. Some children still lack 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 opportunities for each child to assume increased responsibilities.

#### Intellectual

Children are beginning to realize there may be valid opinions besides their own. They are becoming able to evaluate alternatives, and are less likely than before to fasten onto one viewpoint as the only one possible. Children are also beginning to think in terms of "the whole." Children think more conceptually and have a high level of creativity. However, by this stage, many children have become self-conscious about their creative efforts as their understanding has grown to exceed their abilities in some areas.

**Teaching Tips:** Encourage children to look up information and discover their own answers to problems. Provide art, music and drama activities to help children learn Scripture information and concepts. Encourage children to use their Holy Scriptures by finding and reading portions of Scripture. Scripture learning games are good for this age, and these are good years for Scripture memory work. Help children understand the meaning of the verses they memorize.

#### Spiritual

Children are open to sensing the need for God's continuous help and guidance.

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**Teaching Tips:** Give children opportunities to communicate with God through prayer. Help them understand the forgiving nature of God. Ask simple questions to determine the child's level of understanding.

### Age-Level Characteristics of 10 and 11 Year-Olds

#### Physical

Children have mastered most basic physical skills, are active and curious and seek a variety of new experiences. Rapid growth can cause some 11-year-olds to tire easily.

**Teaching Tips:** 10-year-old boys will still participate in activities with girls, but by 11 years old they tend to work and play better with their own sex. This is a good age for exploration and research activities. Use active, creative ways to memorize Scripture verses.

#### Emotional

Children are usually cooperative, easygoing, content, friendly and agreeable. Most adults enjoy working with this age group. Even though both girls and boys begin to think about their future as adults, their interests tend to differ significantly. Be aware of behavioral changes that result from the eleven-year-old's emotional growth. Children are experiencing unsteady emotions and often shift from one mood to another.

**Teaching Tips:** Changes of feelings require patient understanding from adults. Give many opportunities to make choices with only a few necessary limits. Take time to listen as children share their experiences and problems with you.

#### Social

Friendships and activities with their peers flourish. Children draw together and away from adults in the desire for independence. The child wants to be a part of a same-sex group and usually does not want to stand alone in competition.

**Teaching Tips:** Children no longer think aloud so keeping communication open is of prime importance. Listen, ask questions and avoid being judgmental.

#### Intellectual

Children of this age are verbal! Making ethical decisions becomes a challenging task. They are able to express ideas and feelings in a creative way. By 11 years children have begun to reason abstractly. They begin to think of themselves as adults, and at the same time question adult concepts. Hero worship is strong.

**Teaching Tips:** Include lots of opportunities for talking, questioning and discussing in a safe, accepting environment. These are good years for poetry, songs, drama, stories, drawing and painting. Give guidance in a way that does not damage children's efforts in becoming thinking, self-directed people.

#### Spiritual

Children can have deep feelings of love for God. One of the ways a child expresses that love can be through enthusiastic involvement in service projects. The child may seek guidance from God to make everyday and long-range decisions.

**Teaching Tips:** Provide opportunities for children to make choices and decisions based on

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Scriptural principles. Involve children in work and service projects.