Teaching All Children

Children are introduced to more complex ideas and concepts as they progress in school. As catechists, we show our respect for God’s creation by accepting all children as they are and mentoring them as they grow in their personal relationships with God. As catechists, we recognize that each child is unique. We know that developmental age does not always coincide with chronological age. Furthermore, we recognize that some children have special needs. Finding God: Our Response to God’s Gifts® effectively links faith formation to children by using lessons and activities designed to appeal to many different learners at various developmental stages.

Although no two children are alike, some general characteristics apply to many children ages six and seven. This is often a time of many changes. Physically, children are growing rapidly. They are often enthusiastic, industrious, active, competitive, and curious. They like to explain their thoughts and ideas, especially to adults. They can be bossy and may begin to challenge authority. They may often appear restless and easily distracted, and they tire easily. As they form friendships beyond their immediate families, they begin to develop important social skills and may start having best friends.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children in first grade often experience a striking increase in cognitive development.
- They have vivid imaginations; enjoy hearing stories, poems, and songs as well as reading simple stories and poems.
- They begin to think logically; love to ask questions.
- They learn best by doing, such as participating in games or activities.
- They have short attention spans.
- They require structure and routine.

### MORAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children in first grade often realize when they have done something wrong.
- They determine a right course of action simply as the one that allows them to avoid punishment.
- They seek fairness; they may fight or squabble if they can’t work out a solution among themselves.
- They are easily influenced by significant adults.

### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children in first grade often develop friendships that compete with those of family and teachers.
- They are truly the center of their own worlds.
- They tend to work better in pairs than in groups.
- They like to spend considerable amounts of time alone.
- They are engaged in their own thoughts and activities.
- They can be grumpy and pout.
- They need a great deal of affirmation, security, and structure.
- They rely heavily on parents, teachers, and other important adults.

### SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children in first grade often have a sense of the sacred and are open to spiritual realities.
- They are comfortable with prayer and capable of taking simple prayers to heart.
- They have a sense of wonder and awe.
- They respond to a quick reparative measure and forgiveness better than a long overdue punishment.
- They think of God as a provider and protector.
- They seek an atmosphere of warmth, protection, and gentle teaching.