



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. 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 may have disabilities. *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 children ages 9 through 10. This is often a relatively calm period. Many children feel capable and in control because they have practiced and refined skills learned at earlier stages. Fourth-grade children are beginning to understand more clearly the role of intention in determining whether an act is right or wrong. The fourth grade is an ideal time to introduce moral concepts such as the Ten Commandments, examination of conscience, and making moral choices.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fourth grade often

- ▶ are looking for explanations for just about everything and like to discover their own answers.
- ▶ learn best from experiences and through project-oriented activities, including games.
- ▶ have a lengthy attention span and read and write with confidence.
- ▶ love vocabulary and possess a dramatically increased capacity for memorization.
- ▶ are usually highly productive and conscientious; can be self-critical and easily overwhelmed.
- ▶ have a strong ability to work in groups but require clear directions.
- ▶ need humor and lightness to give balance to the seriousness of this age.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fourth grade often

- ▶ are becoming increasingly competent in making moral judgments.
- ▶ begin to consider other points of view when making moral decisions.
- ▶ consider the role of the intention of an act in determining whether it is right or wrong, for example, in identifying the difference between a lie and a mistake.
- ▶ notice how they feel after engaging in acts that are right or wrong.
- ▶ are ready for solid conscience formation.
- ▶ are idealistic and enjoy thinking about solutions to social issues.
- ▶ are highly competitive but tend to be legalistic and concerned with fairness and justice.
- ▶ are concerned with rules, reward, and punishment.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fourth grade often

- ▶ enjoy their families and their peers; are intensely aware of how they fit into peer groups.
- ▶ like to choose their own partners to work with, usually of the same gender.
- ▶ base their sense of identity on their perceived achievement or lack thereof.
- ▶ become highly competitive and critical; complain about issues related to fairness.
- ▶ need laughter and humor to counteract being overly serious and worried.
- ▶ want to be independent but still need and seek adult guidance.
- ▶ anger quickly but forgive just as quickly.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fourth grade often

- ▶ enjoy short, quiet reflection; are capable of taking complex prayers to heart.
- ▶ are comfortable thanking God for positive things and asking him for help.
- ▶ enjoy the rituals of liturgy and have a great sense of God's presence.
- ▶ have a realistic image of Jesus; enjoy stories about saints and model Christians.
- ▶ see God as faithful, just, and fair; trust that things will work out with God in charge.