



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 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 characteristics apply to children ages 11 through 12. This is a time of significant cognitive growth marked by abstract thinking. Children are able to consider the meaning of God's love and his call to love one another. Boys and girls notice the physical changes taking place in themselves during puberty, and as a result, gradually begin to separate along gender lines. Sixth graders experiment with roles and behaviors as they search for their own identities. Because of the changes and confusion during this time, children look to adults who relate to them in an honest, direct, and loving manner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ are avid readers who can relate fiction to reality.
- ▶ have a deep curiosity that demands an explanation for everything.
- ▶ work well in cooperative groups, like work that is challenging and perceived to be "grown up."
- ▶ are highly self-conscious and aware of their individual achievements.
- ▶ can see the world from a variety of perspectives—and love to debate their viewpoints.
- ▶ like rules and norms, even though they may challenge them.
- ▶ alternate easily between being playful and being serious.
- ▶ are able to understand abstract concepts involved in problem solving and chronology.
- ▶ enjoy ceremonies and rituals, particularly those that reflect their own "coming of age."

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ are idealistic and becoming increasingly competent in making moral judgments.
- ▶ are concerned with justice and are drawn to service.
- ▶ are eager to understand the why of Church moral teachings.
- ▶ rely on the viewpoints of others when making moral decisions.
- ▶ experience strong positive or negative feelings after engaging in acts they consider right or wrong.
- ▶ feel conflict between a developing internal moral compass and strong peer-group norms.
- ▶ want to be good and to feel good about themselves.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ experience dramatic peer pressure and want to spend time with friends their own age.
- ▶ tend to relegate most adults to a position of less importance.
- ▶ enjoy and need cooperative learning activities.
- ▶ experience confusion as they cross between being a child and not being a child.
- ▶ may be moody, shy, and sensitive.
- ▶ use sarcasm.
- ▶ experience an increase in tolerance, acceptance, and reasonableness.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ enjoy quiet reflection and can sustain it for long periods of time.
- ▶ desire to experience prayer that is focused on emotionally confusing issues and conflicts.
- ▶ can relate to God in a variety of prayer forms, taking complex prayers to heart.
- ▶ respond well to participating in liturgical celebrations.
- ▶ can appropriately relate messages in Scripture to their own life experiences.
- ▶ can recognize Jesus as an example to follow.
- ▶ are capable of understanding God, community, and faith in a deep way.