

Teaching Young Children

Teaching young children can be exhausting for teachers. But nothing is more worthy and rewarding either.

When teaching “kids”, a teacher needs to take a different approach than when teaching teens or adults. An approach that is more “bottom-up”, allowing for and nurturing the innate curiosity of children. There must be much more exploration and discovery in the learning process. As well, teachers need to consider the many ways children differ from older learners when it comes to learning.

The following are some ways that young children, especially those under the age of nine or ten, learn differently than older kids, teenagers, and adults:

1. They respond to meaning even if they don't grasp individual words.
2. They frequently pick up information from a variety of sources rather than only concentrating on the specific subject they are being taught, which means they learn from everything around them.
3. Their comprehension comes from more than simply explanations; it also comes from what kids see, hear, and, most importantly, have the opportunity to touch and engage with.
4. They have a hard time understanding abstract ideas like grammar rules.
5. They typically exhibit a passion for learning and a curiosity about the world.
6. They require the teacher's consent and individualized attention.
7. They enjoy talking about themselves and are receptive to instruction that centers on them and their personal experiences in the classroom.
8. They can easily become bored and lose interest in an activity after around ten minutes unless it is really interesting.

When talking about young learners, it's crucial to consider the changes that occur over this wide range of ages. For instance, according to researchers Gul Keskil and Pasa Tevfik Cephe, pupils who are 10 and 11 years-old like games, puzzles, and songs most, those who are 12 and 13 years old like activities built around dialogues, question-and-answer activities, and matching exercises.

The way children develop and the many ages and stages they go through have been theorized about by a number of different theorists.

Children should begin at the sensory-motor stage, move through the intuitive and concrete-operational stages, and then finally arrive at the formal operational stage, where abstraction becomes increasingly possible, according to Piaget.

Leo Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social connection in growth and the 'knower's' function in providing scaffolding to aid a child who has reached the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a stage where they are ready to learn new things.

Erik Erikson and Abraham Maslow both believed that a child's confidence and self-esteem were intimately related to their growth, and Reuven Feuerstein proposed that children's cognitive structures are indefinitely adjustable with the aid of a modifier, similar to Vygotsky's knower.

Maria Montessori developed an approach that emphasized the self-direction and discovery of knowledge by children. A hands-on, real-world focus where students learned experientially, by playing, interacting with the world around them.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner, a teacher in New Zealand, pioneered the language-experience approach. She taught Māori children and had success by building language up, using their existing language and student world to develop and grow a child's literacy.

When teaching children, consider the things we've mentioned as well as making your classroom a warm, inviting and welcoming place where children feel at home to explore, discover and learn.

Got a question about teaching children. Please ask in the comments and we'll be sure to reply straight-away.

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