**CREATIVE PLAY WITH YOUNG CHILDREN**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG CHILDREN**

Wiggly

Vocal

Curious

Concrete Learners

Short Attention Span

Active – Enjoy large muscle movement

Emotional

# **Physical**

Active – Plan learning activities that involve movement.

Uncoordinated fingers – (depending on age of preschooler) – For older preschoolers plan very simple cutting and/or gluing activities. Expect to teach the how-to of gluing and cutting. Praise all efforts.

# **Mental**

Think literal/concrete concepts – Teach Bible lessons using concrete objects such as blocks, dolls, toy cars, etc. Stay away from abstract ideas.

Examples:

Short attention spans – Plan a number of short activities for each lesson. Adjust the time spent on each activity according to the age of the child and the interest in the activity. Don’t be afraid to be flexible. You may need to change your plans according to the interest of the children.

Limited vocabulary – Be aware of your adult language. Use simple words and short sentences. Add church words to their vocabulary i.e. Jesus, Bible, prayer, etc. Rephrase adult ideas into words that small children know.

Forget easily – Be prepared to calmly remind children of rules many times. Don’t belittle a child when he/she forgets last week’s lesson – **Repetition**.

Benefit from repetition – Repeat an activity as long as children are interested. Teach the same lesson objectives in several ways.

Learn by imitating – Take part in all activities with children. Teach by example the lessons you want children to learn – sharing, speaking softly, praying, etc.

# **Emotional/Social**

Intense feelings – Expect emotional outbursts. Help children express needs with words. Preschoolers are more emotional when they are tired or hungry. Consider having a small snack in your class time.

Fearful, anxious – Take time to win their confidence. Help tearful children become involved in enjoyable learning activities.

Play alongside others – Use games and drama-play to allow all children to take part at the same time. Provide duplicate of favorite toys so several children can use them at the same time. Many children will begin playing with others during preschool or kindergarten.

See life from own perspective – Don’t expect children to know how to cooperate. Establish and repeat rituals for taking turns, cooperating, and sharing until rituals become habits.

Respond to praise – Catch the children doing good and praise that behavior. Your praise will encourage children to repeat the good behavior. When children are learning new skills, your praise will encourage them to keep trying until the skill is mastered.

Need attention – Give children loving attention. Your loving attention helps build their faith in God’s love.

# **Spiritual**

Learning to trust – Care for the children as well as teach them. As they receive consistent, loving care from adults, children learn to trust. This is a vital part of growing faith.

Learning first ideas about God and Jesus – Speak of God and Jesus in happy terms. Create activities around pictures of Jesus. Tell children how much Jesus loves them. Sing happy songs about God and Jesus. Tell them God wants them to know Him. Be sure they feel God loves them all the time.

Forming attitudes about church and Christians – Make learning at church a happy experience for children. Express pleasure at seeing each child.

Worship spontaneously – Provide many moments of wonder about God’s creation of the world, babies, family, pets, etc (things they relate to every day). This will allow children to respond to God from their hearts at their level.

Many things influence the learning potential of a child.

1. Basic Needs

Are the child’s basic needs being met? Emotional, Mental and Physical

1. Birth Order

Where does the child fit in his/her family?

1. Mental Maturation Level

Children are ready to learn different things/concepts at different points in their maturation.

1. Physical Maturation Level

Take into consideration the physical capabilities of the child.

1. Learning Style

Are you using a learning style that makes it difficult for the child learn.

1. Learning Disability

Are you sensitive to a challenge that the child may deal with?

**REINFORCE TEACHING THROUGH A VARIETY OF METHODS IN THE CLASSROOM/SMALL GROUP**

Learn through their senses.

Sight – Hearing – Touching – Tasting – Smelling

Practice 2-way Communication

Two-way communication involves not only listening to children but also encouraging them to express their thoughts and ideas. This can be done through open-ended questions, group discussions, and creative activities.

Multi-Sensory Instruction

Young children learn best when they are actively engaged in hands-on activities that stimulate all of their senses. Multi-sensory instruction involves using visual, auditory, and tactile materials and activities to teach a concept. For example, instead of solely relying on worksheets or lectures to teach about shapes, early childhood educators can incorporate shape-sorting games, songs about shapes, and opportunities for children to touch and feel different shapes. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the material and caters to the diverse learning styles of young children.

Provide Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool for promoting positive behavior and learning in early childhood education. Instead of focusing on punishment and discipline, educators can use praise, rewards, and positive feedback to encourage good behavior and academic achievement. This approach helps create a nurturing and supportive learning environment where children feel valued and accomplished.

Provide Hands-On Experiences

Young children are naturally curious and learn best through hands-on experiences. As such, it is important for early childhood educators to provide a variety of hands-on activities that allow children to explore and discover new concepts and ideas. For example, you could start a small garden with your students to teach them about plant life, or conduct a science experiment to learn about the properties of water. These hands-on experiences not only make learning fun but also promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Implement Play-based Learning

One of the most[effective teaching strategies](https://www.athenacareers.edu/is-teaching-right-for-you) for early childhood education is play-based learning. Play is the natural way children learn about the world around them. It allows them to explore, create, problem-solve, and develop important skills such as communication, social interaction, and creativity.

As educators, it is important to incorporate play into your lessons and provide children with opportunities for open-ended play. This type of learning fosters curiosity, independence, and a love for learning.

**TAP INTO THEIR SENSE FOR LOVE, SAFETY, SECURITY, AWE**

Because people are different and receive incoming information/sensations differently, use may different methods.

Creative Teaching Methods used in the classroom/small group

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prayer | Modeling | Storytelling |
| Movement | Singing | Recitation |
| Games | Arts/Crafts | Drama |
| Puppets | Conversation | Play-based engagement |

**PLAY**

Playing is a method frequently overlooked. There is little argument about the use of Singing, Crafts, Storytelling, etc., but many teachers find it difficult to see the value of relating “let’s pretend” to spiritual instruction.

**PRETENDING IS A PART OF CHILD GROWTH.**

Children are not taught to pretend.

Children engage in pretend spontaneously as a way to learn and try life out.

PLAY in spiritual instruction is used to help the child “**feel**” the story.

Get inside the skin of the characters of the story.

Through taking part in story play, a child learns how a particular person felt in a specific situation and why they reacted in a certain way. Story playing is more valuable for its **ACTIVATION OF EMOTION** than its influence on factual recall.

Educators recognize that affective learning occurs when emotions are stirred. The whole subject of story play is associated with emotions—feeling and responding.

The teacher needs to lead the way with the emotions of the story.

Start out slow if your children are not accustomed to directed classroom play.

Examples: Play-based teaching

**EASY (Storytelling)** You tell the story, followed by the children telling the story.

Animal fur: John the Baptist

Sheep wool: sheep

Straw: birth of Jesus

Bread: Feeding the multitudes

Boat: fold one from paper, plastic one

Water: Noah, fishing,

Creation: Seeds, small plants, flashlight, dirt, fruit, vegies

Noah: small animal or bird

Incorporate feeling into your stories:

Sleeping – Shepherds

Sick

Excited

Angry

Happy

Sad

Crying

Afraid

Confused

**Story Play Examples:**

Christmas story

Jericho (boxes, kettles, whistles

Goliath (paper balls and play sword)

Anything on the water: Red Sea, Storm on Galilee, Peter walking on water, Paul shipwrecked Use a bed sheet

Jonah Sheet over the table.

Noah Turn a table over and put in soft animals

Daniel and the Lions (Sheet over a table)