

Teaching Tips For Upper Elementary Students

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Understanding the Child

- Children at this age are active, talkative, and sometime silly. They don't want to be treated like "little kids."
- They enjoy competition, love attention, and seek praise. They especially want to share their own personal experiences.
- They don't like to be singled out and embarrass easily in front of their peers.

Understanding your Role

- Teachers are much more than teachers. They are nurses, counselors, problem solvers...you get the picture. Be prepared to react positively to all types of situations.
- You are a role model of behavior, attitude, and interest. What you show the students will reflect directly back to you.
- Students at this age don't want to be treated like babies, but still enjoy many of the things that primary students do. For example, student this age still like stickers, candy or any type so reward for a job well done.
- Along with teaching, you will also need a system of managing behavior. Management is of the toughest job to master in education. Set clear expectations and discuss consequences if the expectations are not followed.

Communicate at Their Level

- Students at this age level aren't "little adults" even though they may look it. You need to keep in mind proper work choice when discussing content. At this age they understand some higher-level concepts but may become confused when you speak to them as though they are high school/college level students.
- Don't have a "talkathon" with them. Students at this age can handle listening to content for 15-30 minutes at most. After that you need to get them up and moving.
- Keep in mind that some students have limited background knowledge in certain topics. For example, don't take for granted that every child has seen a rotting log in a forest.

Engage Students in Participation

- Enlist students' opinions whenever possible.
- Ask questions periodically during the lesson.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for student choice in the way they learn and in the ways they are allowed to demonstrate what they know. That will encourage them to take more ownership of their learning. Acquaint yourself with the Howard Gardner's work in multiple intelligences and be open to project work that goes beyond the traditional.

Howard Gardner theorizes that humans possess various abilities that allow them to learn effectively if the information is presented in a way that matches that learning style. Currently there are 9 intelligences; linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential.

Allow Time for Cooperative Learning

- Involve all students by providing time for work in cooperative groups. Cooperative groups can have various outcomes but the main goal is for all students to participate. One way to insure this is to assign each group member a "job" for him or her to complete. For example, in a group of three students, one student is the recorder, one is the discussion leader, and the other is the reporter.
- Cooperative learning also gives students time to internalize the concepts by discussing them personally with a small group.

Make Sure Structures Are in Place

- Communicate clear, reachable expectations. Routinely explain your goals for them at the beginning of an activity, so students know what they have to do to achieve.
- Do whatever you have to do to help students meet your learning expectations for them. Students will be encouraged to make an effort if they know you are willing to work with them.

Meet Their Emotional Needs

- Ensure that learning is meaningful to the student. Whenever possible, make connections between the curriculum and their lives. Doing so will enhance their interest and make the learning (and teaching) easier.
- Teacher energy and enthusiasm can be significant to getting disinterested students engaged in learning. Nothing is quite as captivating as a teacher who is continually on the brink of new learning discoveries – students can't help being enticed to jump on board for the learning ride ahead!
- Listen! More than ever before students are in need of attention from adults and peers. Always make time to interact with students.

Turn Their Weaknesses Into Strengths

- Work with what you've got. You have to be realistic when working with children. Sometimes an activity works, sometimes it doesn't.
- Be realistic. One group that you teach may be drastically different than the next especially in regard to socio economic status.
- Be positive. If you are, chances are they will be too.