

How do kids learn?

Improve your teaching with basic learning philosophies and techniques.

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What events or moments do you remember from school?

How did they expect you to learn new things?

How did you learn to play a sport, drive a car, use a computer, cook a meal?

How many of you have children?

Can you remember those moments when they came to you with questions?

Did you ever try to teach them something and they weren't interested?

These are very small moments of opportunity when the pump is primed.

Some parents ignore them. Others launch into a physics lecture.

We try to force kids into “learning mode” in classes.

This is why parents must be ready to help teach Biblical concepts whenever the moment arises - at home, in the car, at the mall, during worship.

This is how we learn...

You have to do something, that you want to do, with the help of someone who knows how.

Four main concepts

1. We learn by doing things
2. We learn when it's relevant to us
3. The Velcro Principle
4. God made us different

We learn by doing things

- People don't learn by sitting and listening to someone talk.
- We learn when we're actively engaged in meaningful activities.
- Children are naturally curious creatures and want to try things.

We learn by doing things

- Give them opportunities to talk, write, express themselves, collaborate, build, investigate.
- Bring in adults from the congregation to interview or show them interesting things.
- Take them on field trips around the building to show and explain "churchy stuff".
- Let them help with different ministries.
- Build a model of the temple or tabernacle.

We learn by doing things

- Have them research scripture that supports various issues you are discussing.
- Develop a script and produce a play or video based on a Biblical topic or life issue.
- Show them how to read maps of the area.
- Show the holy lands in Google Earth.
- Show them authentic musical instruments.
- Develop a congregational survey.

We learn by doing things

- Publish their work so the church can enjoy it.
- These activities offer opportunities for intergenerational relationships.
- Many of these activities also teach them real-life skills: computer software, photography, video, writing, story-scripting, collaboration.
- These are the experiences they will remember forever.

We learn by doing things

Any examples or ideas you've tried?

We learn when it's relevant to us

- Learning requires doing something *meaningful for the learner*.
- No matter how important you think your topic is, if they don't connect personally, they won't remember anything.
- You can't force this. Lollipops won't make it work either.

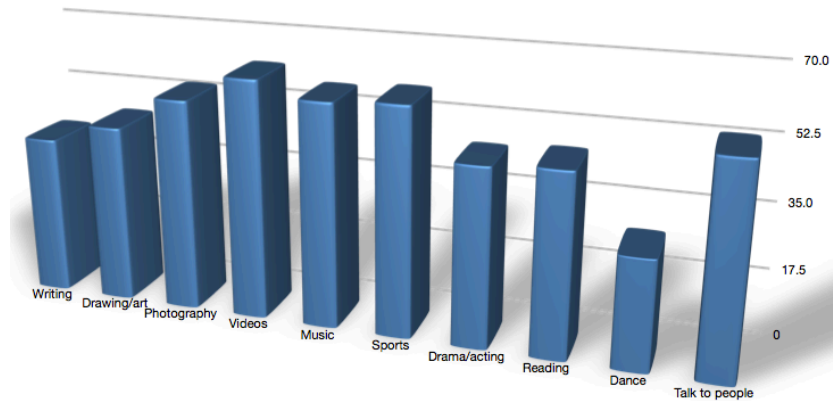
We learn when it's relevant to us

- How do you tap their interest? Try to connect Biblical issues and topics to their life. Make it real, make it personal.
- You learned to play ball or cook because you wanted to figure it out - not because it was in the lesson plan that day.

We learn when it's relevant to us

- Let them express what's on their mind, issues from school, home, etc.
- Ask parents what they're dealing with.
- Let them bring in their favorite Christian music, books, movies, etc.
- Interest survey (art, computers, music, etc)
- Have them write what they think about church, what's confusing, things they don't understand.

We learn when it's relevant to us



4th grade interest survey

We learn when it's relevant to us

Gentleness	Praise (3)	Bible (2)
Missions	God	Jesus (2)
Awesome	Spiritual	Sacrifice (2)
Happiness (2)	Peace (2)	Love (2)
Belief (3)	Faith	Trust
Spirit	Minister (2)	Baptist
Joy (2)	Patience	Deep
Peaceful	Family (2)	Sympathetic
Parables	Forgiveness (2)	Prayer (2)
Glory	Holy	Lamb
Giving	Heaven	Friends
Church	Selflessness	Gospel
Humbleness	Holy Spirit	Angelic
Passion	Thanks	Fish (Christian)
Commitment	Fellowship	

(#) indicates multiple groups came up with same word

4th grade "What does worship mean to you?"

We learn when it's relevant to us

Any other ideas on how to connect personally?

The Velcro Principle

- Basic learning is getting something new to stick to something relevant you already know.



- This means you need to find out what kids know and where they are.
- This connection then needs to be practiced and developed.

The Velcro Principle

- Be careful talking over their heads.
- What's a narthex? Pulpit? Offertory? Redemption?
- Lots of Biblical terminology and concepts are "not real" to them.
- We tend to assume they should know what these terms mean.
- But - don't mistake this for lack of ability.

God made us different

- Everywhere in life we have choices - foods, clothing styles, hobbies, even churches to attend. Why is this?
- So why do we sit a bunch of kids (and adults!) in neat rows and expect them to learn the same thing in the same way? This doesn't work.

God made us different

- Everyone processes information and connects in different ways.
- Each kid leaves your class with a different understanding due to individual experiences, beliefs, abilities, and so on.

God made us different

- Obviously there's a reason God did this.
- Use a variety of activities and experiences in your classes.
- Use this to help them begin to discover the particular gifts God gave each of them.

God made us different

- Interest survey - what do they like to do? Music, art, computers, sports, writing, etc.
- Develop activities that tap each of these areas of interest.
- Bring in adults to share their careers and related skills (*choose carefully - some folks are boooooorrrriiiiing*).
- Let them do things as much as possible - don't just show stuff all the time.

God made us different

Any examples or ideas you've tried?

The four concepts

1. We learn by doing things
2. We learn when it's relevant to us
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Age-specific issues *Elementary*

- These kids are fascinated by the world around them. They want to touch things, figure things out, build and create stuff.
- They have a very objective, concrete view of life. Sense of fairness and justice. "It's not fair!"

Age-specific issues

Elementary

- Early elementary ages can't handle abstract concepts - much of our Biblical conversation has abstract, almost fantasy-like descriptions and meanings.
- Hands-on activities is the key. Not crafts - help them build a manger or model of the temple, produce a video, interview adults involved in church ministries. Lots of exciting options - even for young kids.

Age-specific issues

Middle School

- Social and personal issues are a major factor - but this opens opportunities to connect Biblical concepts to their lives.
- Don't do school-like activities - they get far too much of that in school.

Age-specific issues

Middle School

- Their behavioral changes are from biological development - not because they just want to be difficult.
- They need lots of personal interaction and guidance from solid adult role models.
- Give them more responsibility, ownership, and active participation in class and church.

Age-specific issues

High School

- High-stakes school pressure rules the day for these kids.
- They need opportunities to talk things through, figure out what life is about.
- Life skills are not taught in school - find ways to prepare them for Christian-based relationships, finances, career choices, and so on.

Age-specific issues

High School

- Connect them with experts in the church to try different skills, careers, ministries.
- Get them involved in the church - missions, music, outreach, etc.
- 90% of all kids leave the church and never return. This may be your last opportunity.

Who's your ultimate role model for teaching?

Jesus, of course.

Jesus the master teacher

- No quizzes, worksheets, asking people to raise their hands to answer questions.
- He didn't teach using fancy words and long lectures.
- He used real-life imagery and analogies to connect his points with everyday life.

That's it.

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