

Learning Styles

Think about the different ways in which you have been taught and how you learn the best. Every person responds to some methods of teaching better than others. In order to tutor most effectively, it's important to gain an understanding of different learning styles and to determine your tutee's learning style. Here are some possibilities.

Visual Learner

- Likes stories and descriptions.
- Uses mental pictures of events.
- Takes notes and is a list maker.
- Usually is a quiet person who becomes impatient when lengthy listening is required.

- **Some teaching tips:**
- Use graphics, charts and diagrams.
- Provide written instructions.

Auditory Learner

- Needs to hear the subject to understand it.
- May have trouble reading and/or writing.
- Likes to talk more than listen.
- Thinks in sounds.
- Is easily distracted by sounds.

- **Some teaching tips:**
- Use tapes for reading and class notes.
- Have discussions or interviews.

Kinesthetic Learner

- Prefers hands-on learning.
- Has difficulty sitting still, fidgets.
- Remembers things that were done, not what s/he saw or heard.
- Learns better when physical activity is involved.

- **Some teaching tips:**
- Use a chalkboard.
- Make models.
- Do lab work or role playing.
- Use computers.
- Take breaks.

Student Development

Although students in Northfield come from many different backgrounds and have varied skill levels, all students in a particular age group have certain things in common. Here is some general information about students' personal development based on their age.

Characteristics of Students in Grades K-3 (Ages 5-8)

Interest in Learning

- Acquiring basic skills in reading, counting and writing
- Learn the most from working imaginatively and creatively on something they enjoy
- Beginning to sort out real from the unreal on the basis of practical experience
- Still have private worlds of fantasy and wonder
- Although errors may be made, they can mentally review a sequence of actions and see some probable result
- Eager to learn; deserve honest answers to questions
- May surprise adults at times with their insight, but may have different conclusions in different situations
- Can express themselves through art media, but generally not able to interpret symbols
- Developing ability to reason, to talk things over and to adjust plans
- Excited about going to school; fearful of not knowing as much as they should
- Eager to try new activities, but frustrated by attempting things beyond their capabilities
- Want to be in on group planning
- Investigate, experiment, explore, collect anything and everything
- Live primarily in the now; have relatively little sense of time

Physical Development

- Active, full of energy, find it difficult to sit still
- Slow physical growth; tire easily
- Loss of baby teeth to permanent teeth
- Subject to childhood diseases
- Aware of physical limitations to what they can do
- Try hard to acquire skills in handling their bodies
- Proud of what they can do physically

Self-Image

- Self-image based primarily on what they think others think of them
- Proud of their own accomplishments
- Have established some self-identity
- Eager to please adults they admire
- Become more independent of home and parents
- Need security without being smothered
- Able to adapt in new situations with some degree of self-confidence
- Usually definite in their likes and dislikes; what they want and do not want

Relationship With Others

- Trying out new ways to get along with others
- Dependence and loyalty shifting from parents to teachers
- Imitate adults in attitudes and actions
- Sensitive about feelings-their own and the feelings of others
- Beginning to develop a sense of right and wrong in attitudes and actions toward others
- Feel hurt but dismiss quarrels rather quickly
- Want a best friend though relationships may shift frequently
- Aware of individual differences in physical appearance
- Still seek acceptance and encouragement primarily from parents and teachers
- Enjoy team games at about 8, but like to argue about rules; persistent in "my way is right"
- Belonging to a group is becoming increasingly important

Characteristics of Students in Grades 4-6 (Ages 9-12)

Interest in Learning

- Have a much longer attention span and can concentrate longer
- Increased ability to make decisions and take initiative
- Interested in current events
- Increased skills in reading and expressing ideas in writing; learning to think abstractly
- Beginning to challenge adult thinking; aware that adults are not always correct or right
- Neglect activities that bore them; devote time and effort passionately and exclusively to activities that interest them
- Can reason deductively by accepting an event as being the effect of a law or circumstance
- Tend to be perfectionists, often resulting in frustration
- Are disturbed by differing opinions and standards among people they value

Physical Development

- Growing steadily and physically active
- Differ widely in physical maturity – girls likely to mature earlier than boys
- May be maturing sexually and having questions about their bodies and/or emotional urges related to sexual development
- May be aware of the other sex but uncertain what their relationship should be
- Becoming increasingly interested in improving personal appearance

Self-Image

- Becoming more independent from adults; having personalities of their own
- Experience periods of moodiness
- Often frustrated when they do not measure up to their own or others' expectations of them
- Values of peer group generally accepted over those of adults
- Concerned about how they measure up to peer group "standard"
- Want to make their own decisions
- Often mention what they would like to be when they grow up
- New awareness of personal appearance
- Want hard tasks to perform; want to be useful
- Are fairly responsible and dependable

Relationship With Others

- Continue to experiment with ways of relating to others, especially peers of both sexes
- Have increased concern about right and wrong, such as lying and cheating
- Developing more responsibility for forming and keeping friendships
- Interested and informed about people from around the world
- Feel strongly about unfairness, injustice, and social evils
- Consider belonging to a peer group a high priority

Characteristics of Students in Grades 6-12 (Ages 12-18)

Learning Abilities

- Increasing ability to use logical thought processes
- Increasing capacity to reason
- Ability to deal with the hypothetical and abstract thought
- Able to solve abstract problems through systematic experimentation
- Thinking becomes more scientific

Physical Development

- Mature sexually and may have questions about their bodies and/or emotional urges related to sexual development
- Interest in improving their physical appearance

Self-Image/Identity Formation

- A time of trying and experimenting with new and different roles
- A greater concern about who they are and who they are becoming

- Struggle with “role confusion,” which stems from the doubts they have about who they are and can result in confusion and even panic
- Struggle with sexual identity, which can cause many insecurities
- Try to integrate roles from their many different experiences in order to develop an identity
- Development of strong idealism

Relationship With Others

- Subject to peer pressure; concerned with “fitting in”
- Seek acceptance from classmates rather than parents and teachers

Possible Characteristics of Your Tutees

Here are some specific characteristics you might find in the people you tutor.

Your tutee(s) may...

1. Believe they cannot succeed in school.
2. Be easily distracted.
3. Lack self-confidence.
4. Have poor attendance.
5. Be troubled by problems outside of school that affect their performance in school.
6. Have few role models who have gone to college.
7. Be labelled as “underachievers,” “trouble-makers,” or “at-risk.”
8. Have suffered from poor teaching or neglect in earlier grades.

Information for grades K-3 and 4-6 was adopted from the San Francisco School Volunteer Office