



TIPS AND TRICKS FOR GROWING UP WILD WORKSHOPS

The following are suggestions from your fellow Ohio Project WILD/PLT Facilitators who have lots of experience in doing programs with pre-school children. You can use these tips in your workshops and in your own programming.

How Preschoolers Think

- Thought processes don't always seem logical to you and once they've come to a conclusion.....it's difficult to reverse their thinking. For example, they may say "If an apple is red, then a green fruit is not an apple."
- They think everyone sees the world the way that they do.

What Can They Learn?

1. Knowledge.....they can tell a story
2. Comprehension.....can tell you the main point of the story
3. Application.....how it applies to real life. But they are not so comfortable with the next steps of analysis and synthesis.

It's good to have plan B and C ready, because they often finish things faster than you think, or things may be too difficult for them and you need to be flexible and move onto something else.

Preschoolers are not miniature adults.....they are kids with their own sets of needs and abilities.

They are so honest, literal, and logical.

When possible, test out your ideas, crafts, activities etc. on your preschool kids, grandkids, neighbors etc. Only by being around and working with this age of kids will you see how they react to things and what they are capable of doing.

"They always surprise me with how much they know. To sum them up in four words: curious, joyous, imaginative, and fun!!"

By Mary Warren, ODNR-Division of Wildlife, Magee Marsh WA

Children Under Six:

- They think differently than we do: Things you think would be obvious or concrete may not be at this age.

- Everything is about me: No a bad thing, it's just they are not as equipped to think of others.
- They can do it themselves: They want to do it on their own, their way, whether it's right or wrong.
- They are learning about everything all at once, all the time: Lots of stimuli each day that they must make sense of, we take it for granted, everything just makes sense, but they have a limited understanding of the world around them, so there is much to make sense of.
- They make sense of their world through play: Play is very important to preschool-aged children. They can act out various scenarios and learn about others and themselves. Imaginary friends may come into play, and they ramble on or talk to themselves as they play, but it helps them make sense of things.

By Kristen Marks, Centerville-Washington Twp Parks

1. Always tell them what you expect, i.e. "When I am talking, you should listen, etc... What does it look like when you are listening?"....
2. They learn by repetition. Review things that have been discussed. If they forget, don't get angry; just go back to the topic. Some kids may even need shown HOW TO PLAY! Sounds odd, but it is true.
3. Lessons should incorporate movement. Act out vocabulary. Be sure the movement is appropriate for the space. (They tend to run into each other.)
4. Include quiet activities, if possible, after an exciting one. And don't expect immediate settling; for example..... "And all the animals went to sleep....."
5. Don't be afraid of them!!!! If they seem timid and quiet (especially at first), get them engaged. Set limits in a positive manner. "No" is OK.
6. Expect the unexpected! Be prepared to switch the conversation temporarily or, if the comment does not involve the lesson, keep them on task.
7. Do not expect them to sit for 15-20 min. without fidgeting. Instead, use alternating activities, from active to passive, active to passive.....
8. Be prepared for more, but be ready to accomplish less, especially with 3-4 yr olds. Don't be too rigid in the plans. If the children aren't engaged, it is time to switch gears, try something else.
9. Some activities are best done as a group, some activities as centers or stations.
10. If the children are misbehaving or not interested, look first at yourself. Ask yourself: What can I do differently? Have they been sitting too long? Is my word usage too abstract? Etc.
11. Lessons should either be concrete, or linked to something they can relate to. "What do you do in winter?" as a lead in to comparing us to animals.
12. Always try to incorporate "touchy-feely" items or props. Just because it doesn't breath and move does not mean it won't grab their interest. Things as simple as a pine bough, or a feather, or nuts, are things they probably have never held in their hands.
13. When you tell them not to do something, tell them the converse: What should they be doing instead?
14. Don't be afraid to correct them if they say something that you know for sure is totally false. Part of the goal in EE is to educate the general public (of which they will become) and make them aware of the world outside.

By Josh Dyer, Crawford Park District

Early Childhood “Cut-Sheet” Activity--Read Directions Before Cutting!

1. Make copies of this sheet if necessary. You will need one sheet per 2-3 people in your group. Keep an uncut sheet as your answer key.
2. Cut out each cell of the table below.
3. Put set of column headings and column items into an envelope.
4. Ask participants to work in teams of 2 or 3 and arrange column items under appropriate column headings.
5. When all groups are done, discuss as a large group.
6. A note about answers: As with everything in early childhood, this exercise is intended to describe general characteristics of learners as a group, not as individuals. Therefore, some items may correctly fall into both columns. Refer group to page 22 of the *Natural Wonders Guide for Early Childhood Environmental Educators*.

What You Need to Know About Children Under 6	What You Need to Know About Children Over 6
When in doubt, they make it up.	The World is opening to them.
They make sense of their world through play.	They are opening to the World.
They are learning about everything at once, all the time.	There is a “way” for everything.
They can do it themselves!	They can do it themselves!
Everything is about “Me!”	Talk, talk, talk.
They think differently from us.	Looking for recognition through productivity.