



DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF FOUR YEAR OLDS

- ✧ The developmental needs of 4 year olds are very different from the needs of 5 or 6 year olds.
- ✧ Many methods used to teach older children are not appropriate for 4 year olds.
- ✧ A strong parent-teacher partnership is essential for successful 4's programs.
- ✧ Teachers of 4 year olds need to take into account individual differences in temperament, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and previous school experiences.
- ✧ 4 year olds mean well and are motivated to get along with others. "Difficult" behavior is usually related to frustration, discouragement, or unrealistic expectations.
- ✧ Typical development throughout childhood includes periods of disequilibrium. At these times, children are ready to begin new stages of learning and growth but may be irritable, unsettled, or uncooperative. 4 year olds are less able to handle their own feelings of disequilibrium than children a few years older, and may need extra support and understanding.
- ✧ 4 year olds are still in Piaget's Preoperational stage. This stage of early childhood includes a very different type of thinking and learning from the next stage, Concrete Operations, which begins at age 5 or 6.



Some hallmarks of the Preoperational Stage:

- Just beginning to grasp some abstract and symbolic thinking
- More intuitive than logical
- Learning and figuring out the world through play and pretend
- Not yet very capable of manipulating information mentally or following complex directions
- Learn primarily through interaction with people and concrete materials
- Self-motivated to learn through exploration
- More exhausted by sitting still than by any other activity
- Thrive on novelty, but still need predictable routines as well
- Brain development tied in with body movement, so very physically active
- Collaborative learners: need to work and play with others in order to learn
- Development of self-control is still a work in progress
- Fascinated by books and writing, but many 4's are not yet developmentally ready to read or write independently, regardless of the amount of instruction.

RESOURCES:

Gesell Institute Of Child Development www.gesellinstitute.org
National Association for Education of Young Children naeyc.org
Positive Discipline <http://store.positivediscipline.com/teachers.html>