

** Parents often approach me with questions about what is common and developmentally appropriate for their child's age. In collaboration with the school counselor at St. John, I researched and compiled information about 4th graders. Be aware that children move through these stages at different rates, some sooner, some later. I hope this is helpful! – Jennifer Moyer-Taylor, St. Joseph School Counselor*

Your Fourth-Grader

Common Cognitive, Social and Emotional

Developmental Behaviors of Fourth Graders*

Classroom:

- A stronger interconnectedness in their brain structure means improved abilities in planning, problem solving, information processing, and long-term memory. This upgrade enables them to realize that authority figures are not always "right" — an important epiphany, but it sometimes doesn't make parenting, teaching or friendships easier.
- Takes pride in finished work, attention to detail but may jump quickly between interests.
- Likes to negotiate – this is the age of “Let’s make a deal.”
- Fairness issues increase; can be deadly serious about competition. Competition should be presented in a light-hearted and humorous way.
- If help from adults is offered too late, child may feel neglected; if offered too soon, child may feel insulted.
- Setting expectations is important; may be quite sensitive when they fail or are criticized (real or imagined); are their own worst critics.

Social Behaviors

- Much more friendship-focused; often busy evaluating the behavior and fairness of others, determining who is a “good sport” and who is a “bad sport.” This friendship-fixated behavior is absolutely normal. Your child's brain is developing a unique "self" at this age, with thinking patterns based on individual neural pathways.
- Frontal lobes have now developed to the point where they have more impulse control and a better grip on their anger; encourage your child to advance in emotional maturity by steering them toward healthy friendships that encourage ethical values.
- More likely to complain about things; sees adult inconsistencies and imperfections.
- May write notes to the opposite sex (such as “I love you” or “I hate you”).

Communication style

- Baby talk sometimes re-emerges.
- Loves vocabulary, language play and information.
- Use of hyperbole.
- Age of negatives: “I hate it,” “I can’t,” “boring,” “yeah, right.”
- “Dirty” jokes.

**You're the best judge of your child's development and what is "normal" for him or her. Just when you think you've figured out your child, something changes. You may find strategies that once worked no longer have any impact on him or her. Don't worry, this is normal. Information compiled by Jennifer Moyer-Taylor, St. Joseph School Counselor and Denise Rousso, St. Anne School Counselor. For permission to customize, copy and circulate, please call Jennifer Moyer-Taylor at 206-329-3260 X220 or email at jmoyerta@stjosephsea.org. Copyright 2012.*

Help! My Child Is Bossy

By Dr. Lisa Hunter, Child Psychologist

QUESTION:

My daughter is very bossy. Her teacher told me that she tells the other kids in her class what to do and how to complete their work. When the teacher calls her on this behavior, she gets upset, but does not change her behavior. At home, I have seen her be bossy with friends. How can I help her be less overbearing?

ANSWER:

There are several things you can do to help your daughter be less bossy. First, I'd recommend talking with her about how to be a good friend. During this conversation you should point out ways she is and is not a good friend (i.e., when she bosses her friends around). Once you've established that bossing her friends around is not nice, you can discuss some alternate ways she can interact with her friends (e.g., making suggestions instead of demands, cooperating and listening to the ideas of others)

Chances are this conversation alone will not change your daughter's behavior. Afterward, it will be important to remind her about how to be a good friend and praise her whenever you notice her doing so. When you catch her being bossy, immediately remind her about being a good friend by either whispering in her ear or pulling her aside in a way that does not embarrass her in front of her friends. If she is bossy toward you, point out her behavior and ask her to repeat her request in an appropriate manner.

In school, I'd recommend a similar approach. You and her teacher can talk to her about how to be a good friend in school. Her teacher can praise her when she demonstrates "good friend" behavior and let her know, without embarrassing her, when she does not. It may also be helpful for her to experience some consequences for her bossy behavior (e.g., time out) to learn that it is not acceptable.

Advice from Great Schools' experts is not a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment from a health-care provider or learning expert familiar with your unique situation. Great Schools recommends consulting a qualified professional if you have concerns about your child's condition. If you have any questions or concerns about your child, consult your pediatrician.

Your 4th Grader References

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