For younger learners, 8 to 10 minutes of oral teaching will be all their attention will hold. Requiring students to sit and listen longer is futile. Teachers should then change to activities that offer hands-on, learner-generated ideas. All learners benefit when teachers schedule listening activities interspersed with movement activities.

Children focus longer while standing. When attention lags, let he children stand, move around, or play an action game. Movement stimulates the release of positive brain chemicals, thus increasing good feelings and awareness. Music and singing also encourages the release of these chemicals. Music may be use while students work on projects. Use this fact when planning activities.

Teachers of children of all ages must use care in teaching children. Self-esteem and emotional, as well as physical, safety enhance learning. Tender care encourages learning. Make your class a non-threatening environment in which all children may experience success. Positive feedback is a powerful influence on learning. Positive experiences create a positive learning environment as well as a positive attitude toward what is being taught and those who teach. Security, hope, and nurture are necessary for successful learning.

Positive feedback is a powerful influence on learning.

The brain, and thus the child, is always paying attention. It is up to the teacher to use exciting, attention grabbing techniques at the beginning and the end of each task. Information must connect to previously learned material. Children will give attention first to information to which they connect emotionally. They benefit through thinking about, talking about, and using information we wish them to learn. When children are encouraged and given opportunity to act upon information, they learn.

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Recent reviews of how the brain works reinforces the use of activities, hands-on experiences and opportunities to respond to, to act upon information directly related to the teaching concept and the desired outcomes. It is very encouraging to know that we have been actively encouraging teaching methods and techniques which are now being proven the most effective ways to help children learn. The opportunity is ours to use what we know to help children learn about God through meaningful and lasting learning experiences.

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Brain Research & Development

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The brain is marvelous beyond our understanding. It performs functions too fast to imagine. It receives, transfers, and records information. It stimulates movement, generates emotions, and controls functions over which we have not control. As the Psalms say, "We are wonderfully made."

We now know more about the brain and its development, thanks to modern technology. We are aware that there has long been a debate about what affects the development of the brain and what determines intelligence. We now know that nature (heredity or genetics) and nurture (environment and experiences) contribute to intelligence.

Even before birth, the brain is affected by environmental stimulations, care, surroundings, and interaction with human beings. Nutrition, good health and safety are the foundations needed before learning may occur. Human development is the result of interaction between both nature and nurture. Early care and nurture have a decisive and long-lasting impact on children's development, their abilities to learn, and their capacities to regulate their emotions.

The brain has a remarkable capacity to change, but timing is important. The first few years of life are important to brain development. The brain is not fully developed at birth. Parents and caregivers have an important role in helping to continue the development. Bonding, touch, and interaction are necessary.

The brain is constructed so that it benefits from good teaching and experiences. Enriched environment and experiences help to make brain connections and reinforce memory. Negative experiences such as anxiety and fear may prevent learning and brain development.

The quality of care and the security of a child affect emotional development and the regulation of behavior control. Emotions take precedence over other functions of the brain, including attention, memory, decision-making, and problem solving. Security and bonding with a major caregiver are important. What babies learn depends on the care they are given and the experiences they encounter. Children need teachers who use gentle words. Words carefully chosen, nurture hope, encourage, foster dreams, raise spirits, and reflect your love and model God's love.

Emotions take precedence over other functions of the brain...

The brain is designed for continual learning. The messages travel from one brain cell to another. Each time a child receives a message, that message is stored in the brain. When related information is recorded, it strengthens that memory. Good nutrition and activity contribute to the working of the brain. Learning, playing, good nutrition and playmates all contribute to an enriched environment and, therefore, to learning.

During the first years multiple connections are made at enormous rates. After the first two years, the brain never again learns as much or as quickly. Babies need to be held gently, cuddled, touched, and talked to often. This relieves stress and increases bonding which is necessary for emotion well-being and for positive behaviors for life. Pictures of simple, colorful objects give needed visual stimulus. Talking, singing, and mimicking baby's sound stimulate language development. Responding to a baby's needs leads to security.

Toddlers, twos, threes, fours and fives experience enormous brain growth. Brain growth takes place through experiences. Children need gentle teaching through guidance, choices, and conversation connected to their actions. When we give the child opportunities to act out situations, to role-play, and to help, we foster feelings of importance and belonging and develop caring in the child.

Much of the research supports the activities we have been encouraging teachers to use with preschoolers and children. Art contributes to cognitive thought and development. Puzzles develop hand and eye coordination to prepare for reading. Blocks help develop problem solving and thinking skills. These enriching experiences lead to more neuron connections and to storing information into long-term memory.

Great teachers create an environment in which each child may be successful.

Children come to us at different levels of development, with different learning styles, and with varied experiences. We must accept and love them as they are. Great teachers create an environment in which each child may be successful. We must plan and prepare to teach them just where they are.

The more senses the learner uses the more powerful learning will be. Facts to be learned should be presented in context of a story rich in meaning, interest, and related to their lives and prior learning. They need activities in which they may use the information they have gained. Unique learning experiences create permanent learning.

Students may have preferred learning styles; yet, they all benefit from using visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles. Many parts of the brain work together in multipathways connections to help us do simple tasks. Each hemisphere has special functions; yet, both hemispheres work together at all times. Nothing is a function solely of one hemisphere.

We need to plan our teaching to both sides of the brain, left for verbal and analytical thinking and right for artistic and emotion expression. Efforts must be made to help children determine how the information being taught may be used in their lives. As we teach the Bible, we must make applications to the everyday life of children. When learning relates to prior information, it moves faster through the brain and the connection is stronger.

...determine how the information being taught may be used in their lives.

An enriched environment helps children learn better and keeps their interest high. As teachers we need to create a learning environment that will stimulate interest and maintain attention. Plan your room and learning experiences so that the child's attention is focused in your desired learning outcome. Be careful that the environment does not create sensory overload by having too many pictures, books, posters, and supplies that give a cluttered fleeing (or look) to the room.

Make your classroom a place where activities using sensory memory get information to the brain. For the best learning to occur, start with experiences; then move to verbal and visual information. Move from concrete to verbal explanations. Give opportunities to retell, act out and role-play the truths being taught. Make connection to prior learning. New information must relate to prior learning and be relevant to the child's experiences.

When children are active, they are more alert and learn more. Plan active experiences before and after teaching the Bible passage. Make experiences rich, multi-modal, and related to real life. Vary activities by alternating action with quiet or restful activities and instruction with discussion. Give students the opportunity to summarize and share through role-play, reporting, drama, or illustrating what has been learned. This variation of ways to use information contributes to repeated connections in the brain, strengthens learning, and aids in recall.