

Classroom Tips GRADES 3-5 (Upper Elementary)

Thank you for volunteering to share your time and experience with JA students. The following information might help you prepare to speak to students in grades 3-5, ages 8-10.

General Student Profile

- Elementary students are expressive and talkative and like to explain things and participate in conversation, but still enjoy listening to stories and interesting or relevant information.
 - Speak directly, but don't be afraid to be a bit animated and draw them in to your story.
 - Elementary students enjoy language and word play, new vocabulary, and descriptive language. Playing with similes, puns, jokes, and riddles helps keep them engaged.
 - Ask for physical response to your questions—"raise your hand if anyone has heard of..." or "thumbs down if you wouldn't like to..."—to keep them involved.
- Students in this age range are concrete thinkers. They tend to be logical, literate, and direct.
 - They appreciate facts and details, but keep them to a minimum.
 - Be prepared to answer specific questions. It is okay to tell them you don't know the answer or aren't comfortable sharing something.
- Eight- to ten-year-olds begin to understand that others may think and feel differently than they do and are highly concerned about fairness and equality.
 - Do not be surprised if you find yourself in a discussion about legal or moral issues or whether or not something was fair. Be as neutral as possible, then steer the conversation back to the topic at hand.
 - You can use redirecting tactics, like "that's true, but today we are talking about..." or "Perhaps that is a topic you could take up with your parents or teacher later."
- Elementary students share a sense of group identity, and are concerned about what others think. They tend to be critical of self and others and may be either hesitant to share for fear of being judged, or very outspoken to have their voices be heard. Avoid drawing negative attention to individual students.
 - Acknowledge the student that always has his or her hand up with an "I know you know, let's hear from someone else" response, and call on the quieter students as well.
 - When asking thought-provoking questions, allow students to express their ideas by sharing in pairs or small groups instead of (or before) telling the whole class.
- Third through fifth graders, being very relational with peers and adults, enjoy group activities and competition, but due to their critical nature, need lots of encouragement and look to leaders for approval.
 - By being friendly but still maintaining an air of authority, you can easily relate to this age group.
 - Let them know you like them and enjoy being with them. Offer lots of authentic encouragement when they are doing well. A few thumbs-up and high-fives go a long way.

Planning Suggestions

 Organize

- What are the most important ideas you wish to communicate? Write them down. Try not to overwhelm young learners with too much information.
- Plan for small chunks (5-8 minutes) of lecture or story telling with questions and visuals to keep their attention.
- Prepare props, visual aids, and student instructions or activities.
- Invent a problem students can solve or team-building exercise they can be involved in or consider planning some skits, dialogues, or pantomimes to increase engagement.

 Connect

- Introduce yourself. Be honest and respectful, and be yourself.
- Be relational. Share a little bit about your life or career.
- Ask students to share what they already know about your company or your speaking topic.
- Respect students' backgrounds, heritage, and culture. Be aware of their need to fit in.
- Be positive; offer affirmations (thank students for participating, answering questions, etc.)
- Make eye contact.

 Check In

- Make sure students understand an idea before moving to the next one.
- Ask for their thoughts and opinions.
- Allow time for students to process questions before answering.
- Listen to what students have to say. Refrain from criticizing or rejecting wrong answers.
- Be flexible! Expect the conversation to stray from the topic at times.

 Reflect

- Leave time at the end of your presentation to reinforce the three things you want students to remember most. Use an anagram or other mnemonic device if possible.
- Use physical responses (hands raised, thumbs up, etc.) as true and false answers to review main points or concepts.
- Ask students to share something they remember from the program. Tossing a ball or other small object and having the receiver respond keeps the ideas moving and gives everyone a chance to participate.
- Answer last-minute questions.