

★ EASY REMEDIES FOR THE BLAHS

Kids in the fourth- thru sixth-grades are at an awkward stage. They're in-between. They can't decide whether they want to be grown-up or stay little awhile longer. And they're at a turning point in their faith life, too.

They're losing interest in church and Sunday school. Most have been coming to church all their lives, and to them it's just the same-old, same-old. Kids this age are checking out of the church scene. The children whose parents force them to come to church are often unruly or bored.

Want to know how to cure their "I-don't-care" attitudes and build a thriving group of fourth- thru sixth-graders? Give them control.

- **Turn their class into a club atmosphere.** Allow the group to elect officers and make rules. You may even suggest that they meet once or twice a month during an afternoon or evening. Have them decide on a unique name for their group.
- **Have them organize service projects.** These projects appeal to the emerging idealism in children this age. The options are endless for how they could help others. Here are just a few ideas:
 - Adopt the nursery room, clean it, and even do minor repairs. Provide toys through an advertised toy drive within the parish. Earn money to provide treats or diapers for small children.
 - Baby-sit during church meetings. Plan activities for the younger children to do and even bring snacks.
 - Sponsor a special meal for parents. Prepare the meal, provide entertainment, serve, and clean up.
 - Make and deliver handmade gifts to shut-ins. Make pink or blue flannel caps for infants in hospitals.

- **Start a puppet or clown ministry.** Make or buy puppets. Train your kids in puppetry, build a portable stage, and go on the road. Perform at nursing homes, at retirement villages, or for the nursery or parish. *Puppets: Ministry Magic* by Dale and Liz VonSeggen is an excellent resource.



Clown ministries are fun for kids this age. They love to dress up and put on all that makeup. They can mime or speak the parts of a skit. Or you can have a narrator for the skit as the clowns act out their parts. Check out *Clown Ministry* and *Clown Ministry Skits for All Seasons* by Floyd Shaffer.

- **Plan special fun activities.** Kids could have a slumber party in the church building with movies and a talent show. Let them make their own pizzas or giant submarine sandwiches.



Upper-elementary kids can organize activities to invite their friends to, such as a skating party, a bowling tournament, a hike, a picnic, or a canoe trip. (Provide plenty of adult supervision.) Kids can also earn money and plan a trip to an amusement park, a zoo, or another fun spot in your area.

- **Make them teacher for a day.** Let children "teach" the lessons. Select groups of two to four children to work together. Send home copies of the next week's lesson for them to prepare. Or let them spend the last few minutes of class time preparing for the following week.

Put some thought into the programs you offer this age group. Let them serve. Let them flourish. Provide them with fun activities and hands-on lessons. You'll be surprised at the contribution your fourth- through sixth-graders can make, as well as the personal and group growth your class will experience.

