

## Common Characteristics of Children by Age Groups

### Grades 1 through 3

- They tend to bring lots of energy that we can use to carry the tour. However, it is an energy that is very quickly dampened by being talked at and not listened to.
- They are egocentric and enjoy things that relate to their world as they know it: at their scale and that refer to experiences and things with which they are familiar.
- They enjoy participation: can express themselves verbally. They will answer questions even if they don't know the answer and want to talk more than they want to listen.
- They are very interested in everything that is new to them (An electrical outlet is equally as fascinating as an elephant!).
- They have not yet developed a sense of historic time so they can only relate to past by comparing it to the present.
- They like to name things (tell us what it is) and find literal objects in artwork (like fishing poles in *Mirror Lake, Yosemite*)
- They like to classify things by pointing out types or amounts, or making simple comparisons of size, or bright versus dark.
- They have a very short attention span and require that you change venues quickly and will need a variety of looking strategies.

### Grades 4 through 6

- This is a time of social-emotional-biological transition. Enthusiasm is especially useful to maintain their attention.
- They are beginning to develop some sense of historical time.
- They can see beyond their own experience. They are becoming interested in children from other cultures and societies.
- Peer pressure is becoming more important. Because of this don't ever put them on the spot or embarrass them. It is better to let them consult among each other for an answer.
- They can process more sophisticated information but often can't always express their thoughts as quickly as they could in younger years. Be patient and help them get out their thoughts.
- They are not as rebellious yet as they will be in the adolescent years. They can still be excited and interested in learning. In fact they can be quite eager to explore and discover.
- They can make comparisons, make inferences and give interpretations, and to explore relationships like cause and effect.
- They are interested in understanding the "why", "what it was used for" and "how it was made" as well as what color and shape it is.

## **Touring Teens**

- Teens are often self-conscious and very sensitive to peer pressure. They don't wish to appear foolish or give a "wrong" answer.
- Are often reluctant to answer questions. . It is better to let them consult among each other for an answer.

### **How to handle this:**

- a) Ask non-threatening, interesting questions that won't put them on the spot. Use an appropriate vocabulary level, and readily understood terms. Be selective about the dates and historical facts that you include. Avoid condensation, put downs, patronizing, and talking down.
- b) Be warm. Avoid intimidation and create an atmosphere of discovery, wonder and fun.
- c) Ask the question. Allow time for reflection. Answer the question yourself. As the tour progresses, they may relax, warm up and - perhaps - respond more frequently and freely.