

THE SCHOOL-AGE CHILD



School-age children need a considerably different setting and curriculum than the usual preschool day care environment. After school programs for school-age children must be designed to meet the developmental needs of these children.

Most children follow a fairly predictable pattern of growth and development. By being aware of the pattern, educators can better plan for activities and learn which corresponds to a child's physical, mental, social, emotional, and vocational needs.

Following is a summary of predictable growth and development for the target age group for this project, the 6-11 year old. Please remember this is a general pattern. Children are individuals and as an educator you will need to allow for individual differences.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (grades 1,2,3) AGE 6-8

Physical Development

1. Growth rate is slower than during infancy and early childhood--it is slow and steady.
2. Childhood diseases are most likely to occur.
3. Heart size is rapidly increasing. The brain reaches adult weight.

4. Begins to lose baby teeth and acquire permanent ones.
5. Sexual organs grow at a slower rate than the rest of the body.
6. Muscular coordination and control is uneven and incomplete. Large muscles (e.g. arm and leg) are easier to control than small muscles. Activities involving speed and energy are desired and beneficial. Intense activity may bring on temporary exhaustion. Need 10-12 hours sleep per night.
7. Manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination continue to develop.
8. Boys weigh from about 45-65 lbs. and girls 40- 60 lbs. Normal rate of increase is 3 to 6 lbs. per year.

Mental Development

1. Good deal of baby left.
2. Cannot read and write to any level of sophistication at the beginning of this stage but may be quite self-assured in these areas by the end of this stage. Basic understanding of numbers is formed.
3. Able to form concepts similar to those of an adult-- e.g. "dog" becomes an abstract category that includes many shapes, color and sizes. Concrete concepts from the preceding age level are grouped into classes (abstract concepts).
4. Almost all new learning involves the use of language.

5. The child acquires the ability to think through former actions and situations.
6. The vocabulary may reach 8,000 words by the end of this stage.
7. Activity is largely in terms of immediate goals. He deals largely in the here and now. Interest span is short — about 20 minutes.
8. May have a sense of pitch adequate for the reproduction of familiar songs.
9. Comprehends value and uses of money.
10. Wants to produce well-made objects and hence the period is often referred to as the “eraser stage.”
11. Learns best if physically active while learning.

Social Development

1. Peer influence grows during this stage.
2. Most have a “best friend” and often an “enemy.”
3. Friends are likely to be of the same sex. By the end of the period, activities are likely to be sex separated.
4. Unstable gangs and groups begin to appear.
5. Concerned about being liked by their peers. Learning relate to others begins.
6. Sensitive to personal criticism—does not know how to accept failure.
7. Tattling may be a common way to attract adult attention or to help verify standards.
8. To win, to lead or to be first is learned early.
9. Child may feel that he must be “love-worthy” with his peers.

Emotional Development

1. Strong desire for the affection and attention of parents.
2. Good and bad are in terms of acts approved or disapproved of by parents.
3. Tension may be released through physical activity.
4. Common fears such as ghosts, witches, creatures in dark places and man in the wood are gradually replaced by fears of school, social relationships, and economic security.
5. Fear of losing parents is dominant.
6. Shyness may be present until the child has experienced some success.
7. Positive view of self continues to develop with successful experiences.
8. Ability to emphasize (access the feelings of others) develops,
9. Distinguishes people into in-groups and out-groups but does not discriminate in terms of race and social standing unless adults intercede.
10. Experimental and exploratory behavior should be as part of development.
11. Inner control (conscience) is being formed.

Vocational Development

1. Fantasy state—assumes the role of an adult in fantasy. “Dreaming” is concerned with the ends or results of work.
2. Occupational exploration often becomes a matter of role-taking in play.
3. Concept of self as student, boy or girl, and friend emerges.

4. Sex role behaviors are being developed.
5. Value of “work” is being learned.
6. Independence in the youth community (school, church, youth organizations) begins to emerge.

LATE CHILDHOOD

(Grades 4, 5, 6)

Ages 9-11

Physical Development

1. Growth in weight and height continues at a steady rate. Near the end of this period children who reach puberty, experience a growth “spurt” and enter early adolescence.
2. Small muscles develop rapidly during this period making enjoyable such activities as hammering, sawing, playing musical instruments and other physical activities requiring small muscles.
3. By the end of this period the child may be as coordinated as an adult although lapses of awkward behavior are common.
4. Eyes reach maturity in both size and function.
5. Energy abounds—parents often worry about insufficient rest (require 10-11 hours of sleep and over-stimulation is possible in active competitive activities).
6. Body changes (hips widen, breasts bud, pubic hair appears, and testes develop) indicative of approaching puberty may appear.
7. The range of height and weight widens. Boys weigh from about 60-90 lbs. and girls 55-90 lbs. Height varies from about 50-60 inches.

Mental Development

1. Reading becomes an individual experience, abstract thought is possible and plans can extend over several weeks.
2. Activities can be evaluated with considerable insight.
3. Attention span increases. Concentration for 30 minutes is possible. Activities that provide variety and interest may hold attention for hours.
4. There is a need for self-expression and self-directed activities to develop intellectual skills.
5. There is a need to know and understand the “why” of things.
6. Ability to deal with abstractions continues to develop.
7. Moral concepts deal with behavior as actions and correspond close to adult associates.

Social Development

1. Importance of the peer group increases. To be accepted by the peer group is reward.
2. Peer group often becomes a gang, club or secret society.
3. Prejudices can develop during this period.
4. Independence from adults becomes important.
5. “World View” expands from home to neighborhood and local community.
6. Sibling rivalry is common.
7. Ready for discussion on sex—often to correct information from the peer group.

8. Discusses and evaluates others—develops a concept of “fair” or “unfair” as related to actions of others.
9. Both cooperation and limited competition are enjoyed. Cooperation is more difficult to learn than is competition.
10. Sex role identification continues to develop to the point of excluding the opposite sex.

Emotional Development

1. Indications of a growing independence occur—disobedience, backtalk, and rebelliousness.
2. Withdrawal, depression and cruelty may be indications failure to develop emotionally.
3. Common fears are the unknown, failure, death, family problems and non-acceptance.
4. Concept of right and wrong continues to develop.
5. Sense of humor develops during this period.
6. Concept of self is enhanced by feelings of competence.
7. Serious emotional disturbances can result from rigorous competition set up by adults.
8. Ready to face consequences of their decisions if their mistakes are not too serious.

9. Strong attachment to their own sex and show antagonism toward opposite sex.

Vocational Development

1. Occupational considerations and preferences are based on personal abilities and capacities as well as interests.
2. The occupation they expect to enter has less prestige than the one they hope to enter.
3. Selection of junior high courses is a vocational related decision.
4. Self-image as “worker” begins to emerge.
5. Desire for part-time employment.
6. Girls tend to consider occupations that will put them into contact with nice people, including potential husbands, while boys tend to consider occupations on the basis of the nature of the work. Most girls plan to enter nursing, teaching or secretarial work, boys want to enter one of the professions.

REFERENCE RESOURCE:

Pierrick, Wilfred and Howard Swonigan. Growth and Development Booklet: Youth Ages 0-18, Cooperative Extension Programs, University Extension. The University of Wisconsin.