

Developmental Characteristics and Interests of School-Age Children

Transition Years Grades K-1 (5-6 years)

Physical

- Enjoy long periods of free play
- Developing eye-hand coordination
- Enjoy small group cooperative games
- May require rest after high energy play
- Improved body coordination; yet still can fall easily

Social-Emotional

- Eager to receive adult praise
- Enjoy dramatic play
- Eager to engage in new activities/adventures led by involved adult
- Eager to identify with older children
- Enjoy exploring new materials and equipment
- Can be easily frightened by novel or strange events
- Prefer play in small groups
- Like responsibilities they can handle
- Learning to cooperate with others, but may at times display selfish behavior

Cognitive

- Understand language better than they speak
- Are interested in present; vague concepts of past/future
- Eager to learn
- Ask many questions
- Define things by their use
- Developing a sense of humor
- Communicate best within a small group of peers
- May need guidance of adult when starting a new task

Middle Years Grades 2-3 (7-9 years)

Physical

- Enthusiastic about games
- Experiencing improvement in both gross and fine motor skills
- Possess a high activity level
- Practice to most variations of movement for physical activities
- Enjoy games that allow for comparison of skills
- Enjoy games that allow for self-improvement

Social-Emotional

- Have a strong drive toward independence
- Develop a strong sense of loyalty to friends
- Need to belong to a group
- Play with and are friends with same-sex peers
- Like to take on responsibility
- Live in a world of games, rituals and humor inhabited only by children
- Like to have a best friend
- Have a rigid sense of right and wrong
- Need help accepting peers who are different or left out of a group

Cognitive

- Like to talk; use language to express feelings/tell stories
- Developing a sense of time
- Enjoy collecting things
- Enjoy problem-solving games like treasure hunts
- Can plan and carry out projects with adult support
- Becoming more self-directed in activities
- Better able to understand and appreciate differences of opinion

Pre-Adolescent Years Grades 4-6 (10-12 years)

Physical

- May be careless about their clothes, room and body cleanliness
- Girls may have sudden growth spurt and beginning signs of puberty
- Enjoy physical activities that master specific skills
- Enjoy competitive games
- Possess a high activity level
- Enjoy games that allow for comparison of skills
- Enjoy games that allow for self-improvement

Social-Emotional

- Enjoy small, peer-dominated group discussions
- Like to join organized groups
- Are anxious to grow up
- Are intensely loyal to their peer group
- Form a close one-on-one friendship
- Have a growing desire to assert individuality and independence
- Can be daring and competitive
- Can be critical of peers and adults
- Are self-conscious of their abilities

Cognitive

- Ask many questions and want thoughtful answers
- Can often understand other points of view
- Developing strong interests, hobbies and collections
- Engage in daydreaming
- Enjoy problem-solving games and puzzles, etc.
- Enjoy rule-based games
- Are beginning to develop view about social/global issues
- Beginning to enjoy humor by telling jokes and understanding sarcasm.

Early Teens Grades 7-8 (13-14 years)

Physical

- May appear awkward as result of rapid physical growth
- Experiencing the beginning of puberty
- Differ greatly in rate of maturation
- Need to become familiar with changing body with strong drives
- Tend to tire easily
- Have a high activity level and appetite
- Enjoy cooperative games and competitive sports

Social-Emotional

- Sensitive to their appearance
- Establishing a personal moral code
- Unsure of their place in society
- Depend on their peer group to develop identity
- Critical of their parents and home
- May adopt extremes and fads in clothing, speech, handwriting and mannerisms
- Form close one-to-one friendships
- Enjoy small, peer-dominated group discussions
- Have a strong desire to assert individuality and independence

Cognitive

- Capable of high level of abstract thought
- Beginning to think about their future life roles
- Need time and freedom to engage in self-reflection
- Are able to postpone gratification
- Can plan ahead and organize tasks with little or no guidance from adults
- Beginning to develop views about social issues