Brain Development

- 85% of a child’s brain development takes place by age five.
- Synapses are created with astonishing speed in the first three years of life.
- For the rest of the first decade, a child’s brain has twice as many synapses as an adults’ brain.

| Birth | 6 yrs | 14 yrs |
Things to Ponder about Gender Differences…

- Difference is not in brain structure, but in the sequence of development
- Systemic vs. Empathetic
- Significant differences in the way girls and boys learn
Structuring Activities with Differences in Mind

- Rough and Tumble Play
- Emotions

- *Examples...*
  - Map
  - Choir

- Do you notice differences in the way boys and girls react to your programming?
- Are there ways you could structure your activities differently to accommodate differences in learning preferences?
Children develop through generally predictable sequences of steps, and reach developmental milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, move and communicate.

*Be aware—don’t compare*
Pre-school/5 years

Physical Development

- At this age, children *enjoy being active* and are good at climbing, sliding, swinging and dancing. A child might also be learning to skip. He can stand on one foot for a short time and can hop forwards on each foot separately. If he’s has had some practice, he can catch a medium-sized ball.

- Children will also have good control in writing and drawing, and can stay in the lines when coloring.
Physical Development...

- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Hops; may be able to skip
- Can do a somersault
- Uses a fork and spoon and sometimes a table knife
- Can use the toilet on her own
- Swings and climbs
Pre-school/5 years

Social/Emotional Development

- At this age, children are becoming more independent and in control of their behavior. There will be fewer arguments and few tantrums. Children are beginning to understand what it means to be fair and to follow rules in a game. But you can still expect that it might be too much to cope with sometimes, so he might cheat, get upset or not want to play every once in a while.
Social/Emotional Development for Pre-K/5K

- Wants to please friends
- Wants to be like friends
- More likely to agree with rules
- Likes to sing, dance, and act
- Shows concern and sympathy for others
- Is aware of gender
- Can tell what’s real and what’s make-believe
- Shows more independence (for example, may visit a next-door neighbor by himself [adult supervision is still needed])
- Is sometimes demanding and sometimes very cooperative
Speech/Language Development

- Most five-year-olds have a good understanding of their native language, although your child might still have difficulty explaining complicated events or ideas, and might leave out important bits. He can have the same difficulty understanding complicated directions, so you’ll need to be careful to explain things in a clear, straightforward way.

- By now, a child can speak clearly and have a conversation with you about everyday subjects. She can say her name, address, age and birthday. She might ask the meaning of words and can describe the way some items are used – for example, ‘A knife cuts’.

- Your five-year-old can tell stories and give short talks to children at school – for example, in ‘show and tell’. He loves listening to stories, reciting or singing rhymes and songs, and hearing jokes and riddles.
Cognitive Development

- Speaks very clearly
- Tells a simple story using full sentences
- Uses future tense; for example, “Grandma will be here.”
- Says name and address
- Counts 10 or more things
- Can draw a person with at least 6 body parts
- Can print some letters or numbers
- Copies a triangle and other geometric shapes
- Knows about things used every day, like money and food
Playing and learning

- Five-year-olds enjoy a wide range of play options, so having a variety of dress-ups, props and puppets can be great learning tools.
- Provide children with opportunities to do cutting, drawing and coloring, sorting objects, matching shapes and letters, and enjoying music. It’s important to keep reading stories to her too.
- Children this age like to ask questions and seek information; you can be a guide, resource and teacher for a child.
What you can do...

Discuss a great cow book and complement it with fun cow–related activities. Bring cow equipment in for a demonstration. Look at different feed, include a cow craft and cow snack.

Read birthday books have birthday cake and play Pin the Tail on the Donkey. Celebrate everyone’s birthday!
When you think about the preschoolers and early school agers you work with—what do you feel is missing from your programs?
Middle Childhood (6–8)

Physical Development

- School-age children usually have smooth and strong motor skills. However, their coordination (especially eye-hand), endurance, balance, and physical abilities vary.
- Fine motor skills may also vary widely. These skills can affect a child's ability to write neatly, dress appropriately, and perform certain tasks.
- There will be big differences in height, weight, and build among children of this age range. It is important to remember that genetic background, as well as nutrition and exercise, may affect a child's growth.
Middle Childhood (6–8)

Speech/Language Development

- Early school-age children should be able to use simple, but complete sentences that average five to seven words. Children use more complex sentences as they grow.

- A 6-year-old child normally can follow a series of three commands in a row. By age 10, most children can follow five commands in a row.
Middle Childhood (6–8)

Cognitive Development

- Have a solid sense of time. They understand seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, seasons, and sometimes years
- Begin to show a preference for learning style. For example, some children like hands-on activities, such as a science experiment with color. Others like to work independently and quietly, such as practicing printing
- Can solve simple math problems using objects (such as counting beads)
- Consider issues and problems using only one factor at a time
Playing and learning

- Having independence from family becomes more important now. Friendships become more and more important. Physical, social, and mental skills develop quickly at this time. This is a critical time for children to develop confidence in all areas of life, such as through friends, schoolwork, and sports.
What you can do

- Kids love the Rainbow Magic series, so why not let them put on their own wings and come to a book-themed party. Each child can create their own fairy persona and participate in fairy-themed crafts and games. Maybe even try building a fairy house for the garden.

- *Kids pair up with senior citizens, sharing childhood stories and creating books to commemorate them.*
What might you do differently in your work with school age children?

Programs?
Communication?
Engagement?
Environment?
How they communicate

- **School–age kids begin to view the world in complex ways.** They start to look at causes and begin asking more challenging questions.

- **Between the ages of 6 and 11, kids become purposeful.** They think in advance about what they want and often have a plan for how to get it.

- **School–age kids alternately feel dependent, resistant or even rebellious toward their parents.** They become insulted if their parents treat them in ways they consider babyish, even though at other times they still want to be babied.

- **School–age kids question, doubt and criticize their parents.** This questioning is normal, and it means they are becoming critical thinkers.

- **School–age kids begin to tailor their communication styles to their surroundings.** Younger kids usually communicate with one style no matter where they are or who they are with. As school–age kids spend more time away from home, they often develop new patterns of speaking based on what their friends are saying or what they hear on television.

- **School–age kids may become private about their thoughts.** No matter how positive a relationship a school–age child has with his parents, he may now begin to shut them out as his life outside the home begins to compete with his home life.
How you can communicate

- **Speak to the child in a mature fashion.** You might say, "I expect you to begin your book report. What time would you like to work on it?" instead of "How many times do I have to tell you to do your book report?!"

- **Show the child respect.** One way is to ask the child for help in understanding her and her needs.

- **Ask the child specific, rather than general questions.** Instead of asking a question such as "How was school?" you might ask, "Did your teacher give you comments on your science project?"

- **Listen to the child without contradicting her.** Instead of saying "That's ridiculous," you might simply say, "Hmm," or "Really." Then, ask specific questions based on the situation your child has described.
How you can communicate with them…

- **Repeat what you heard the child say, but in a more mature way.** You can reflect her statement in the form of a question, implying, "Am I getting this right?" In this way, you are respecting your child's intelligence, making her feel understood and encouraging her to tell you more.

- **Laugh a little and admit your mistakes.** You can also ask the child for help in figuring out what to do. Kids love to hear parents/adults admit they were wrong. You might say, "Am I making a mess of this? Should we try to figure it out a different way?"

- **Ask the child to help set her own limits.** Don't be afraid to say "No" when your child (or you) needs it. However, within reason, your child can make some rules, too. For instance, you might ask her to propose a reasonable time to begin her homework.

- **Keep talking even if the child won't talk to you.** They are often simply trying to establish their independence.
12 Principles of Child Development and Learning

1. All areas of development and learning are important.
2. Learning and development follow sequences.
4. Development and learning result from an interaction of maturation and experience.
5. Early experiences have profound effects on development and learning.
6. Development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities.
7. Children develop best when they have secure relationships.
8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
9. Children learn in a variety of ways.
10. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation and promoting language, cognition, and social competence.
11. Development and learning advance when children are challenged.
12. Children’s experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning.

http://www.naeyc.org/
Problem Solving Skills

- **Ages 4+**
  - **Perspective-taking**
    - Awareness and sensitivity to people’s feelings

- **Alternative solution thinking**
  - Ability to offer multiple solutions to an interpersonal problem

- **Consequential thinking**
  - Ability to recognize impact of one’s behavior upon others, in light of what might happen next

- **Ages 8+**
  - **Mixed emotions**
    - Ability to feel opposite ways about the same thing: e.g., “I feel sad that my grandmother died, but relieved she is no longer suffering.”

- **Understanding motives**
  - Recognition of various possible reasons why people act the way they do: e.g., “He bullies because he thinks the kids will look up to him.”, “Maybe he’s bullied at home.”

- **Means-ends thinking – Sequential planning**
  - Ability to plan sequenced steps toward a goal, obstacles that might interfere with reaching that goal, and that it takes time to reach that goal.
Ask the children to read their scenario to themselves (or read aloud) and write down as many solutions to the problem that they can come up with. Remind them that we are not judging any of the solutions. Our goal is simply to come up with as many solutions as possible. Give the kids two minutes to write down ideas. If you see people are stuck consider using “That’s one way. The idea of this activity is to think of lots of DIFFERENT ways. Can you think of any others?”

Fifteen minutes before your first basketball game, your mom’s car won’t start. What are some solutions to this problem?

Call a friend to pick me up
Hitchhike
Stay home
Call the coach to see if he can give me a ride
Freak out and start bawling because I cannot miss my game
Call my grandpa to see if he knows what’s wrong with the car
Mental Health

- It is important to become aware of age-appropriate, typical behaviors that you can expect to see from children, as well as warning signs that may signal a need for additional help and support for a child to ensure continued healthy development.
Typical Behaviors for Pre–schooler/ 5 year–olds

- Is developing the ability to handle some frustration and is willing to wait his/her turn
- Wants recognition (is sometimes jealous)
- Attempts to get attention with noisy behavior
- Learning to show empathy for others
Typical Behaviors for School Age Children (5–8)

- May seek relationships with adults other than the parents
- Is self-conscious
- Plays using rituals, rules, secret codes—values winning, leading or being first
- Common fears including death, family problems, rejections, etc
- More ability to handle frustration and has increased patience
Warning Signs & Concerns

- Shows persistent aggressiveness
- Lacks bonding or is overly dependent on caregiver
- Feels anxious or worried more than peers
- Does worse in school or refuses/is reluctant to go
- Daydreams excessively; can’t get things done, has poor concentration and can’t make decisions
ACE Study

These early experiences affect the way we view ourselves and our world, the way we learn, how we cope with life’s stressors, and how we form relationships throughout our lives. Positive experiences in childhood often lead to healthy and productive adulthood. Unfortunately, negative experiences can lead to poorer mental and physical health, poorer school and work success and lower socioeconomic status in adulthood.

http://wichildrenstrustfund.org/files/WisconsinACEs.pdf
Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being

- Provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment
- Provide new experiences that include sensations tailored to the child’s development
- Provide consistent limits and expectations
- Appreciate the child’s uniqueness
- Help child set goals based on abilities and interests
- Never discourage a child who continues to make progress, no matter how slowly.
Developing Executive Functioning

- Working memory
- Mental flexibility
- Self-control

While executive function skills begin to develop shortly after birth, and dramatic growth in these skills happens between the ages 3 to 5, growth continues throughout middle childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.
Executive Functioning
Activities for 5–8 year olds

- These activities encourage children to focus attention, use working memory, and practice basic self-control skills.

  - **Card games/board games** that require remembering, fast responding, matching or strategy.
    - Go fish, Uno, slap-jack, checkers
  
  - **Movement/song games**
    - Copy songs such as “Boom chicka Boom”, songs that repeat such as “and complicated clapping games like Miss Mary Mac
  
  - **Quiet activities requiring strategy and reflection**
    - I spy and games such as 20 Questions
  
  - **Physical activities/games** that require attention, quick responses and fast movements.
    - Freeze dance (musical statues); musical chairs; Red Light, Green Light; Duck, Duck, Goose or Simon Says
Resources

- UW–Extension– county offices
- School District
- CESA
- Family Resource Center
- Pediatrician
- Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (chippewa co)
Questions?

References | Links of possible interest

- http://www.naeyc.org/
- http://developingchild.harvard.edu/
- http://parenting.uwex.edu/
- http://cdc.gov
- Dr. Leonard Sax
- Children’s Mental Health Alliance
- Nan Brein WI council on children and families

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