

# Child's Developmental Stages:

A Challenge to Relevancy and Curriculum  
Development in Children's Church



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- *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Matthew 19:14).*
- *Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:26-28).*

## Development

- **Development:** Changes that occur in an individual over time
- Areas of development
  - **Physical growth**
  - **Intellectual:** Thinking
  - **Social:** Interactions with others
  - **Emotional:** Understanding and regulating feelings
  - *Spiritual:* Understanding and relationship with God

## Assumptions of Development

- All individuals of all ages have the capacity for positive developmental change in response to the environment
- Individuals develop at different rates
  - Age does NOT determine a child's developmental level
- Development is orderly
  - New skills and abilities build on already known skills and abilities
  - Instruction CANNOT require students to learn something if they have not mastered prerequisite skills
- Development takes place gradually
  - Parents and teachers have to be patient with pupils

## Periods of Development

- **Prenatal:** Nine months of pregnancy
- **Infancy and Toddlerhood:** Birth through 2 years
- **Early Childhood:** 2 to 6 years
- **Middle Childhood:** 6 to 11 years
- **Adolescence:** 12 to 18 years
- **Young Adulthood:** 19-30 years
- **Middle Adulthood:** 31-60 years
- **Old Adulthood:** 61+ years

## Early Childhood (3 to 6 years) Physical Development

- **Gross motor skills:** Large movements
  - Lay, Crawl, Walk, Run
- **Fine motor skills:** Coordination of small muscle movements
  - Writing, Drawing
- **Supporting Physical Development**
  - Provide proper nutrition
    - ✦ Children with proper nutrition have more energy, are more eager to explore new environments, and are more alert
  - Provide adequate healthcare
  - Provide opportunities for children to be active and practice motor skills

### Early Childhood Intellectual Development

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- Characteristics of early childhood intellectual abilities:
  - **Unidimensional reasoning:** Focus only on one dimension of a problem
  - **Egocentrism:** Belief that everyone sees and experiences the world the way that child does
  - **Private speech:** Children's use of language to plan and direct their own behavior, particularly in difficult tasks
  - **Representational skills:** The ability to represent objects with symbols or models
  - Very curious

### Early Childhood Intellectual Development

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- However, young children still have difficulty:
  - Paying attention
  - Remembering things
  - Systematically applying strategies to solve a problem
  - Knowledge in general

### Early Childhood Social and Emotional Development

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- Young children are learning:
  - To regulate their emotions
    - Recognize and label their feelings
    - Accept their feelings
    - Appropriate responses to feelings
  - Empathy and prosocial behavior
    - Friendships, sharing, helping, cooperation
  - Skills for controlling their behavior
  - Controlling their anger and aggression

### Play

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- Which statement do you agree with more?
  - Play distracts young children from the real work of learning.
  - Play is the means by which young children learn.

## Types of Play

- **Constructive Play:** Use objects to build or construct things
  - Learn rules that govern physical reality
- **First Pretend Play:** Use toys to symbolize real objects
  - Learn the ability to use symbols
- **Substitute Pretend Play:** Use objects to stand for something altogether different
- **Sociodramatic Play:** Play in cultural roles together with other children
  - Learn language and social skills
- **Rule-Governed Play:** Play by rules and formal games
  - Learn to follow rules and transition into more systematic thinking

## Benefits of Play

- Assists in physical development
- Enables children to develop social skills
- Helps children control their emotions
- Allows children to build more elaborate ideas about the world
- Allows children to develop abstract symbolism.
- Enhances children's language skills
- Helps children become better at problem solving
- Helps children become more creative

## Early Childhood

- **Instruction in early childhood:**
  - Use concrete materials to help children see and experience what is to be learnt
  - Use hands-on activities to help children be actively involved
  - Give children many and varied experiences to help keep interest and attention
  - Allow children to talk out their thinking
  - Allow children plenty of time to play
  - Young children make plenty of mistakes. Be gentle in correcting them
  - Read and/or tell stories with children. Discuss the stories
  - Model appropriate behaviors

## Early Childhood

- Young children are gifted learners, but they should not be expected to learn in the same manner as older children
  - Lecture method is completely ineffective in early childhood

### Middle Childhood (6 to 11 years) Intellectual Development

- Middle childhood children are:
  - Learning to focus their attention on what is important
  - Improving their memory skills
  - Improving their thinking speed
  - Increasing their general knowledge

### Middle Childhood Intellectual Development

- However, they still have difficulty with:
  - **Abstract Thought:** Ability to think about things that are not directly experienced
  - Focusing on multiple aspects of a problem
  - Systematically solving problems

### Middle Childhood (6 to 11 years)

- To foster intellectual development:
  - Use concrete objects to demonstrate lessons
  - Use **analogies:** Relate what is taught to something similar that is well-known
  - Tell stories to demonstrate concepts
  - Ask students for their relevant experiences
  - Give students many examples and practice activities to develop their skills
  - Ask students questions beyond what has been directly taught
  - Make students explain their reasons for their answers: *Why?*
  - Answer questions with questions

### Middle Childhood Social and Emotional Development

- Peer relations are becoming more central
- **Bullying** (more powerful person attacks a less powerful person over time physical and/or verbally) becomes more common
- Effects of media become more prominent in social development, particularly violent films/video games
- Fear and anxiety is a common problem (ghosts, bad dreams, injury, death)
  - ✦ Nigerian children express more fears than Kenyan and Western children (Ingman, Ollendick, & Akande, 1999)

**Middle Childhood  
Social and Emotional Development**

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- **Social skills to be learnt in middle childhood:**
  - Respect rules
  - Resolving conflict positively
  - Communication Skills
    - Active Listening, Nonverbal Skills, and Polite communication skills

**Adolescence (12 to 18 years)  
Intellectual Development**

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- **Adolescents are learning:**
  - Think abstractly
  - Systematically plan solutions to a problem
  - Apply appropriate strategies to learning
- **To foster intellectual development:**
  - Make lessons relevant to students' lives
  - Give students choices when appropriate
  - Discuss the relevance of lessons to big life issues

**Adolescence  
Social and Emotional Development**

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- **Adolescents are developing their identity**
  - Who am I?
  - Education/Career choices
  - Spiritual identity
  - Purpose in life
  - The two primary considerations in the development of identity are:
    - Has the adolescent explored various identities?
    - Has the adolescent committed to an identity?
- **Risky decision-making is a key problem among adolescents**

**Teach using *Developmentally Appropriate Practice***

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- **Developmentally appropriate practice:**  
Focusing instruction on the developmental level of the pupil
  - Curriculum, teaching methods and classroom environment should be based on an in-depth understanding of child development and learning.

## Developmentally Appropriate Practice

- **Characteristics of DAP:**
  - Focus first on the developmental abilities of students, NOT on what must be taught.
  - Learning is viewed as an active process
  - Play is essential in active learning
  - Provide an environment to foster all aspects of children's development: physical, intellectual, social, emotional, *and spiritual*
  - Parents are actively involved in the educational process

## 7 Principles of Development to Inform Teaching

- All areas of development are important to education and are interrelated
- Individuals learn best when they have secure, consistent relationships with adults
- New development must build on prior abilities, skills, and knowledge
- Early experiences have profound effects on later development and learning
  - Nursery and primary school teachers are the most important teachers in the entire school system!

## 7 Principles of Development to Inform Teaching

- All people, particularly children, learn best when taught with a wide variety of strategies
- Play is an important tool for developing language, thinking skills, and social skills
- Development advances when children are challenged just above their current mastery and have many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills