**Developmental Profile**

**First Grade**

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This spring for seven weeks I will be working with children in first grade at Marlborough Elementary. The ages range from six to seven. Along with the age range the developmental levels of the children range. There are ten students in my classroom. Each student is an individual and has a different level of development within cognitive, language/literacy, social/emotional and physical development.

Piaget felt that “children between the ages five-seven develop cognitive development the most” (Copple, 2009. P. 271). “Children older than seven vastly think differently than children younger” (Copple, 2009. P. 271). Children between the ages five and seven are beginning to think about things differently and solve various problems. Children age seven and eight can typically reverse direction such as left and right so this may take place if at all in the later part of first grade. Children of primary grades are less egocentric however; a seven year old may believe that because he did not score soccer goal means he is not a good athlete he may hold onto that despite the evidence to the contrary (Copple, 2009. P. 271).

Vygotsky believed that children are ready to focus their attention to learn (Copple, 2009. P. 271). They can retain information on purpose and be able to compare the process of their own learning with teacher expectations. Primary grade children have enhanced their ability to classify, sort and organize materials. Around ages seven-ten children are beginning to understand their own capacity. Children under age nine greatly can use memory strategies but they must be introduced by the teacher. This could be as simple as the teacher stating that you will need to remember this or introduce graphic organizers and memory strategies. Around the age of six or seven children are beginning to understand and consider decisions and fairness. Teachers can promote cognitive development by providing children with challenges that they can meet. During the younger primary years children’s brains continue to develop.

“Changing cognitive capacities at this age are in part the result of processes such as lateralization, wherein the two hemispheres of the brain start to function more efficiently as learning occurs. Brain lateralization further improves with maturation of the corpus callosum (the tissue connecting the two halves of the brain), and this speeds mental processing of information.” (Copple, 2009. P. 271)

Children in primary grades increase their language and literacy development through reading and listening to reading. A huge shift takes place after kindergarten. Children were originally focusing on listening, speaking, and emerging reading skills this transition to ‘real’ reading and written self expression. (Copple, 2009. P. 281) At age six children’s vocabulary will double by the time they reach age eight. Children are learning to understand parts of words and to apply that understanding to other words. Children’s receptive vocabulary is expanding during age six not just by listening by reading and their expressive vocabulary expands (Copple, 2009. P. 281). Around age six binocular visions is well established. Binocular vision is when the eyes have developed the ability to work together. This aide in the children participating in reading and focusing closer on work. They have improved ability to track left from right. Large print is still necessary because at this age children are beginning to develop and experience nearsightedness or farsightedness. Teachers may notice that children cover one eye to focus. (Copple, 2009. P. 261)

Children in primary grades are increasing their knowledge of how their behavior affects others, their roles in society, and the importance of showing empathy. Peer relationships grow and strengthen. Children flourish in environments that they feel comfortable and safe in. Teachers need to create a classroom community to support that. Peer groups age’s six to eight are important, but children tend to come and go from peer groups. Bullying in schools is very prevalent during the primary school years. Teachers need to be proactive in creating a classroom community that supports children’s independence. By age six children fully understand that their gender is a permanent characteristic; it cannot be changed by the clothes you wear or the toys you choose to play with (Copple, 2009. P. 265). Children are developing their self-concept and self esteem. Children develop self-esteem through adults helping them develop confidence with in skills such a literacy, mathematics, language and social skills. Teachers need to create environments that promote self esteem and positive self image. Teachers should create a harmonious, cooperative, minimized competition which in turn will enhance children’s want to learn. (Copple, 2009, P. 264-271).

During the primary school years physical growth has slowed but it is still steady. Children encounter growth spurts. Children have improved their gross motor skills which allows for more fine motor development. “The average 6-year-old in the United States weighs about 45 pounds and is just over 3 ½ feet tall (Craig & Baucum 2002).” On average children grow two to three inches a year and gain three to five pounds a year. Access to nutrition can be a factor within that statement. Children have a better coordination, balance and movement skills. However, the younger primary grade children still have slow reaction time. Gender skills between sexes are mostly insufficient. Children during the primary school years become more interested in team sports which not only develops their physical abilities but their cognitive and social awareness such as following the rules and cooperation. At the primary school age children are becoming more aware of the skills and comparing themselves to their peers. Teachers can promote gross motor development through including gross motor activities throughout the entire curriculum areas. Children need opportunities to move freely during recess and not just in organized games. Teachers can incorporate large muscle movement activities throughout various curriculum strands, circle time, reading, mathematics, etc…

Fine motor development increases throughout the primary school years. Children’s writing becomes more precise and controlled. Towards the end of first grade (between the ages seven and eight) children’s fine motor development is very precise and intricate. Teachers can promote fine motor development through writing, play dough, cutting activities, drawing, etc… (Copple, 2009, P. 260-264).

As teachers we can support cognitive, language/literacy, social/emotional and physical development throughout curriculum. We need to plan learning experiences and our classroom accordingly to help support the development of children.

**References**

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.) (2009) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs serving Children from Birth to age 8.* (3rd Edition). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.