

Ages and Stages

Sara Pollaro
EED278
September 18, 2011

Introduction

Ages and Stages encompass children from birth through early elementary. Each stage has its own unique set of triumphs and challenges. The largest leap in growth is in the infant/toddler group. A newborn goes from helpless, to being able to feed, speak, walk and start to interact with the world around them. The older Ages and Stages such as preschool, kindergarten and early elementary are areas of rapid growth and development of refined processes started in infant and toddlerhood. Each child is unique and develops at their own individual pace, Ages and Stages is a study of these processes.

Infants/Toddlers

Cognitive:

Infant: An infant will go from exploring objects with mouth and playing with fingers and toes by four months. By eight months, they can make noises to voice pleasure or satisfaction, and focus on toys hidden out of sight. By twelve months they are interested in picture books, can clap their hands and start to say first words.

Toddler: A child at this many children start showing preferences for certain objects and toys. They can point to eyes, nose and ears and enjoy listening to short stories and rhymes.

Language:

Infant: At four months of age an infant is starting to coo and babble. By eight months of age the infant babbles as if they were talking. They “babble talk” to people, animals and objects.

Toddler: A child at this age may know 200 to 300 words. This is the age that children start to imitate singing and can say “please and thank you” when asked to do so. Sentence structure can consist of one word pointing to using 2-3 word sentences.

Physical:

Infant: An infant at four months can roll from front to back and can grab onto a rattle or a finger. The baby starts to push their head and chest up when lying on their stomach. An eight month old can sit up,

may get first tooth and they can sit unsupported. They can drink from a cup with help and start eating finger foods. They are developing fine motor skill using finger and thumb to pick up objects.

Toddler: They can walk and run fairly well but still fall occasionally. They can roll a large ball and eat with a spoon reasonably well. A child at this age can walk, pick up a toy, and continue walking while maintaining their balance. They are shy around strangers and spend a great deal of time just watching and getting into everything.

Social/Emotional:

Infant: At four months of age an infant may cry to communicate pain, fear or discomfort. They smile all the time and love to be held and cuddled. By eight months of age, they respond to their own name and still show a fear of the unfamiliar person or place. They love to be tickled and touched. The eight month old smiles at their own reflection in a mirror and they are becoming aware that the world is larger than just themselves.

Toddler: A child at this age may become upset when a parent leaves their sight. They can recognize themselves in photos and learn through imitation of others. They have a favorite word at this age, "NO." They have difficulty with the concept of sharing; toddlers by nature are very self-centered.

Preschool

Cognitive:

At three years of age, a child is starting to understand the concept of "now" and later. Time sequences start to have meaning such as morning and night. They can match objects and pictures in a story or on paper. A preschooler may be able to count three or more objects, rearrange them and know that it is still the same number. They can sing and carry a simple tune and repeat favorite phrases. They can draw circles and squares. They are starting to become analytical in their drawing instead of scribbling randomly.

Language:

Between the ages of three to four years, language is 75% or more understandable. At this age, children also can talk in simple three to five word sentences or they may speak in fairly complex sentences. The child may have some difficulty choosing the right word, or may substitute another word that means the same concept to them. They also like to listen to some of their favorite short stories over and over.

Physical:

Preschool children are physically starting to outgrow some of the baby roundness and take on a more adult like upright stature. They are bundles of energy that never stay still. Everything must be climbed on, jumped off of or gone around. They can jump, run, kick and throw when given the opportunity. They have all of their baby teeth and they sleep through the night

Social/Emotional:

At this age, children are still engaging in parallel play. They are starting to interact with other children, but still have trouble sharing or cooperating with instructions. This is the age that children may show a marked preference for a specific adult. The child can wander off and play feeling safe as long as the chosen adult is in sight. This is the age when small children can start to understand compromise.

Kindergarten

Cognitive:

At this age, children can understand sequencing, such as first, middle, last. Their minds grasp the concept of drawing proportionally. This means that animals and people look like what the child intended. This age heralds a longer attention span than when the child was four years old. At this age, the child still loves to hear and tell phantasmagoric tales, but they are better at distinguishing between fantasy and reality. Their reasoning and thinking skills are at a higher level, but still tend to be illogical at times. The questions of a five year old may be fewer, but they are more specific and meaningful.

Language:

Between the ages of four to five, children learn to use compound two stage sentences to tell about their worlds. They can follow two unrelated directions at a time. Most children have learned their name at least by this age, if not their phone number. They enjoy singing favorite and learning new songs, rhymes and making up nonsense words as an active part of their vocabulary. They can identify a few or more shapes, colors letters and numbers. The five year old really enjoys their own nonsensical stories and telling jokes, especially knock-knock jokes. Speech is more fluent and non-stop. Their vocabulary has tripled from when they were three years old. They have a good concept of story and can explain sequencing.

Physical:

A child between the ages of four to five years still need 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night, and may still take a nap after school. They may start to lose baby teeth and anticipate the tooth fairy coming for a monetary visit. They can dress themselves (mostly) and be able to use a fork and knife. Fine motor coordination is rapidly developing. Hand dominance is established and reinforced when coloring and beginning writing. Also at the age, large motor development leads to the mastery of running, jumping, hopping on one foot, walking in a straight line and being to steer and pedal a tricycle.

Social/Emotional:

This is an interesting age, children like to make their own decisions, but they still seek approval from an adult figure. They like to make themselves feel more grown up by boasting about themselves to younger children who are less capable. They start to form cliques of best friends, but this changes from hour to hour. They are more in command to sharing and taking turns, but can still be uncooperative or bossy if they fear that another child is getting more than they are. They like to try new things or activities, if introduced by a trusted adult. They also start to notice (but not be empathetic) that other children may have emotions separate from themselves, such as fear or anger.

School Age

Cognitive:

This is the age that psychologists, Erik Erikson, one of my favorite theorists, states that children are coming out of the “initiative stage” of thinking and into the “industrious stage.” Here a child can start to analyze what, when and why things that they do or things that happen to them in the environment around them happens. Children at this age are starting to be interested in sorting and categorizing objects and interesting assortments of different collections. Children at this stage come home at the end of play with pockets or backpacks full of interesting rocks, metal, bits of glass, plants, paper and an infinite variety of treasures. At this stage, children also have a finite sight of future events, when working on a project; they are more inclined to keep working on a project than seeing an ending point. This tends to be the time of “concrete ideas.” If a child has not been exposed to it, seen it, tasted or smelled it, they have a hard time imagining that it even exists. This is the time children of this age learn by watching and imitation.

Language:

Children from this stage forward have the ability to speak and express themselves at a rapid level. This development is enhanced by verbal interchange and emulation from peers and at school. This rate of language development is important for success in school. Children talk and talk and talk to each other about themselves, friends and their families. Even during recess and while at play, the children in this age group are practice using the words and increasing their language that will only grow and increase from here on out. Many children, at this stage, start to understand time, seasons and days of the week. They still love silly rhymes, riddles, and jokes, but these take on more intricate verses. Their attention span is longer, they can pay attention to detail in language and they become more involved in stories. They are learning letter sounds and starting to put together words, by six most children have a rudimentary grasp of words or combinations of words.

Physical:

Children in early elementary, ages 6 to 8 years are at a period where the rapid growth of toddlerhood and preschool is slowing down, but still maintaining a steady pace. Children are learning to master small muscle coordination that enables them to hold a pencil to print letters, or large muscle coordination to run and play tag, soccer or ball. Kids in this age group are learning how their bodies work and mastering physical coordination. Children in this age group are learning at a rapid rate, they are wonderfully curious and need activities to hold their interest.

Social/Emotional:

This is a BIG stage in development for this age group, as children are away from their home base for longer periods of the day. At this stage in development, children are just learning how to become friends, by the end of this period there is separation between boys and girls. The opinion and approval of peers and others is very paramount at this point. Somewhat like toddlers, children in this age group tend to be wrapped up in themselves; it is hard for them to empathize with others their age. It is hard for them to imagine what others are feeling, this is where Dramatic Play is so important, through self-directed and adult directed play based interactions, they can experience how others act and feel about a given situation. This age is fascinating with the sophistication level of games and rules that children develop. There are usually elaborate and intricate rules that may or may not be adhered to.

Conclusion

Understanding the different needs of each age and stage of childhood development bring a unique perspective into how as a parent or caregiver, we can best nurture the child as a whole to meet this exciting time of growth. At no other stage in life is so much development achieved on a physical, linguistic, cognitive and social/ emotional level. Parents and caregivers alike can benefit from the understanding that all children learn and grow at differing rates.

Citations

Chaille, C(2008). *Constructivism across the curriculum in early childhood classrooms: big ideas as inspiration*. Boston: Pearson.

Karks, J, & Meyers-Wells, J. (2007). *Ages and stages of child and youth development: a guide for 4-h leaders*. Retrieved from http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/extension/documents/children_families/AgesStages.pdf

Longo, M, Reschke, K, & Barber, C. (2002.). *University of Ohio extension: ages and stages for caregivers*. Retrieved from <http://ohioline.osu.edu/asc-fact/>

University of Illinois Extension: *Ages and stages: a guide to babysitting*. (2011). Retrieved from <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/babysitting/age-school.html>