

Developmental Profiles for Sixth Grade Students Age 11

Physical Development

- The degree of physical development of 11-year-olds varies. Girls are usually taller than boys, and the height and weight of individuals is unusually varied. Individuals are very aware of their own physical development and strong emotional feelings may be involved.
- Many girls enter pubescence (arriving at or having reached puberty).
- Menstruation may catch a girl unaware and unprepared.
- Acne blemishes begin at this point for some youngsters and are often a source of grief.
- A fair number of youngsters may try substances that are illegal such as drinking alcohol, gas sniffing, smoking, snuff, and even hard drugs.
- Some children may be experimenting with sex.
- The push to seem adult-like and to try prohibited "adult" things leads to an increase in accidents and self-inflicted injuries.
- Children who have not begun to develop adult bodies may feel anxious, inadequate, and upset.

Emotional Development

- This age child is often filled with ambivalence (i.e., simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings such as attraction and repulsion toward an object, person, or action). Change is a part of the age and that can be very distressing for some youngsters.
- Equally unsettling may be a lack of change when peers are obviously changing. It is a difficult path.
- Hormones provide some of the explanation for the mood swings and unsettled feelings.
- There is a probability that the child has been or is choosing to be exposed to much of the "adult" life-- including sex, drugs, and an illicit life style.
- Obsessive-compulsive behavior increases (worries, doubts, superstitious beliefs that are common in everyday life are taken to an extreme). Such beliefs can become excessive and interfere with daily living (e.g., constant need to wash hands).
- Rapid change of moods sometimes occurs. Hates and loves may quickly swing and be consuming and as quickly forgotten.
- Boy craziness is common in girls.
- The child this age usually does a great deal of manipulating.

Philosophical/Moral Development

- The child is still squarely involved in black and white reasoning (sees only the extreme sides of things).
- There is evidence that an individualized perception of life is being formed based on logic.
- There may be tension brewing between a desire to appear "good" while at the same time not wishing to be perceived by peers as being "goody goody".
- This is a vital time to explore choices and help the child steer through peer pressure, overstimulation and offers which are beyond the child's expertise and insight.
- "Hero-worship" is fairly common (sports figures, Hollywood stars, entertainers, etc.).
- Questions about religion, the nature of God and worship are often asked and become more important.

Social Development

- Referent sources (individuals a child wishes to "please") and relationships flip:
- Behavior toward adults: rude, disobedient, resists limits, and famous refrains:

- "You let him do it."
- "Everybody else does it."
- "All my friends are going."
- Behavior toward peers: wants a best friend, strong need for approval, wants to be seen as "in the know", cool words and profanity converse about sex, agrees to shoplift on a dare
- Wears clothes to identify with a group or image.
- Often acts more self-assured than he or she actually feels.
- Acute distress may occur if not able to socialize in the perceived valued way.
- May act out for approval.
- May become upset if peers "razz" or defame them.

Intellectual/Cognitive Development

- The child is still edging toward use of a formal operations paradigm (when mental operations can be performed without concrete objects and abstract thinking begins).
- Problem solving may become more intentional and logical.
- Students begin to state that they know things when they may not be certain. Frequently this is a signal that early adolescence is near.
- Grades and success are very important to the competitive student.
- Students who enjoy learning and school will become quite accomplished at the educational skills and will take pride in their abilities.
- This is a good time for cooperative learning techniques (use of small groups of students working together and helping one another on learning tasks with an emphasis on support among group members rather than on competition).