Normal Developmental Characteristics of Children Ages 5-7

Individual and culturally based beliefs affect our attitudes about challenging behavior. Most children don’t come to school knowing what teachers expect them to do. This could be due to the child’s lack of experience in group care settings or to differences in families’ and teachers’ expectations of children’s behavior. Studies show that parents and teachers sometimes have differences in their expectations about children’s behavior, which may influence children’s understanding about expectations in the classroom.

Culturally based beliefs affect our attitudes toward behavior (e.g., what skills we expect children to engage in independently at certain ages, how we expect children to interact with adults, etc.). The following shows normal developmental characteristics of children 5-7 years of age.

Physical and Intellectual Characteristics:
- Is full of energy and generally restless, e.g. foot tapping, wiggling, being unable to sit still
- Is clumsy due to poor coordination, has growth spurts
- Desires to learn
- Will learn or already know name, age, address
- Has marked awareness of sexual differences, may want to look at bodies of opposite sex (playing doctor or house) touches and plays with genitals less frequently
- Has unpredictable preferences and strong refusals
- Follows two-step directions
- Believes objects have feelings
- Focuses on part of a situation
- Cooperates and competes
- May develop stuttering when under stress
- Wants all of everything and finds it difficult to make choices
- Begins to have organized, continuous memories, most children learn to read and write
Social and Emotional Characteristics:

• Identifies with adults outside the family (teacher, neighbor, child care provider) but needs the security of home
• Friendships are unstable, is sometimes unkind to peers, is a tattletale
• Must be a winner, changes rules to fit own needs; may have no group loyalty
• In school, may develop problems if expectations are too high; has trouble concentrating; may fool around, whisper, or bother other children, often intrusive
• Learns by imitation
• Feels insecure as a result of drive toward independence
• Finds it difficult to accept criticism, blame, or punishment
• Child is center of own world and tends to be boastful
• Generally is rigid, negative, demanding, slow to respond; may exhibit violent extremes; tantrums
• If not the winner, makes accusations that others are cheating
• Is very concerned with personal behavior, particularly as it affects family and friends, blames others sometimes for own wrongdoing

Literacy and Language Characteristics:

• Pretends to read
• Enjoys being read to
• Retells simple stories
• Uses descriptive language
• Recognizes letters and sounds
• Begins to understand flow of print
• Begins to write
• “Reads” and retells familiar stories
• Understands parts of speech
• Articulates some phonemes
• Understands general rules of conversation