

Eight-Years-Olds: Growth Patterns

PHYSICAL

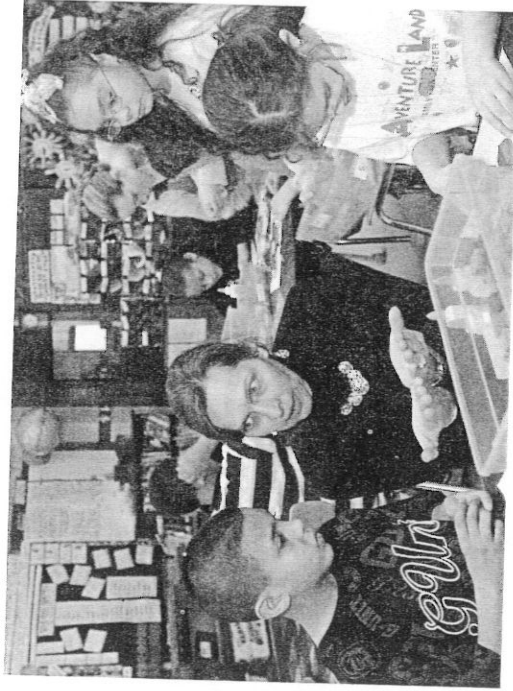
- Full of energy; do things in a hurry
- Need physical release through time to play outdoors
- Somewhat awkward
- Visually, focus well on both near and far objects

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

- Enjoy socializing and sharing humor
- Love group activities and cooperative work, preferably with peers of the same gender
- Adjust well to change; bounce back quickly from mistakes or disappointments
- Form larger friendship groups than at seven

LANGUAGE

- Like to talk, explain ideas, and use rapidly expanding vocabularies
- Tend to exaggerate
- Listen well, but they have so many ideas that they may not always remember what they've heard



COGNITIVE

- Have limited attention span but do become engrossed in the activity at hand; love to socialize at the same time
- Industrious, impatient, and full of ideas; work quickly and often take on more than they can handle
- Can use geometric solids, math counters, rulers, balance scales, and other manipulatives to explain their thinking and problem solving in concrete ways
- Beginning to master handwriting, handcrafts, computers, and drawing

Eight-Year-Olds in the Classroom

VISION AND FINE MOTOR ABILITY

- Better control of eyes and hands enables children to copy from the board and learn cursive writing; they love to practice writing but often produce sloppy work
- Pencil grasp should now be the same as an adult's; if not, they may still need a pencil grip placed on their pencil to help correct their grasp

GROSS MOTOR ABILITY

- Often experience a growth spurt; restless and need lots of physical activity; short exercise breaks (even in the classroom) help concentration
- Love group games on the playground; gravitate toward same-gender activities, so the teacher should lead whole-class games such as tag and soccer
- Play hard and tire quickly; benefit more from several short play breaks than one long one

COGNITIVE GROWTH

- Very industrious, but often exaggerate their own ability and have trouble knowing their limits; more short assignments, rather than a few long ones, build confidence through success in small doses
- Enjoy responsibility, although they do not always successfully complete tasks
- Care about both the process and the product of school work; want their peers' approval as much as their teacher's

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COGNITIVE GROWTH

- Usually organize work well, though tend to be sloppy; some need the teacher's help with organizational strategies
- Show increasing interest in rules, logic, how things are put together, how things work, the natural world, and classification
- Can handle increasingly complex tasks but tire easily; may give up but soon want to try again

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR

- Work best in groups at tables or at pushed-together desks; teachers should change groupings frequently throughout the year
- Prefer working and playing with peers of the same gender
- Respond well to class projects and traditions that build a sense of unity and cohesion
- As they develop a growing sense of moral responsibility beyond themselves, they become more interested in fairness issues and may argue about them
- Like stories that concern fairness and justice
- Enjoy studying other cultures

Eight-Year-Olds: Curriculum

READING

Provide opportunities for children this age to:

- Work in groups reading trade books (which are good for children at all ages) or in core reading programs keyed to their ability levels and organized around their interests
- Begin reading independently and doing simple independent assignments (such as making book covers, conducting interviews, and building dioramas); teachers should design these projects specifically to spur children's interest in reading and to let them show their comprehension
- Be read to from books with lengthier chapters and more advanced themes

WRITING

Expect from these children:

- *Writing*: Quite lengthy stories with increasingly descriptive language; interest in diverse kinds of writing such as poetry, newspaper articles, and cartoons; fascination with the "breakfast to bed" story line—tendency to provide more detail than any reader (except the author) would care to know; beginning understanding of the importance of making drafts and revising
- *Spelling*: Increasing ability to spell correctly; readiness to learn compound words, dictionary use, and alphabetical order; skill development to a level that makes lingering phonetic mistake patterns and real difficulty in spelling more obvious

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WRITING

- *Writing Themes*: Adventure and "breakfast to bed" stories, animals, sports with friends and heroes, unicorns and other mythical beasts, stories based on cartoons, poetry about nature and the seasons, nonfiction writing that shows learning from concrete science and social studies investigations
- *Handwriting*: Good posture, good pencil grasp, and fluid movement of arm and hand across the page; readiness to learn cursive handwriting and to practice extensively; although easily frustrated, enjoyment of writing practice and motivation to become competent

THEMATIC UNITS

(Social Studies, Science, Current Events)

Favorite themes for children this age:

- Our neighborhood, our community (interdependence)
- Community institutions (bank, newspaper, radio)
- Long ago or far away (but not both)
- Topics in nature (trees, rocks, animals, etc.)
- Cultural and racial diversity

MATH

Provide opportunities for children this age to:

- Solve math problems using all four operations, as well as borrowing and carrying
- Study fractions by measuring, weighing, and doing some pencil and paper tasks
- Explore geometric patterns constructed with pencil and paper
- Use games as a way to practice math strategies