

## Developmental Issues for Quick Learners Birth through Adolescence

### Things to remember:

#### 1) *Temperament + Experience = Personality*

(Temperament = inborn sensitivity to environment, intensity of emotional response, baseline global mood, regularity of biological cycles, attraction to or withdrawal from novel experiences—from genetic & intrauterine environmental influences)

- Memory is the way past events affect future function (Siegel, 1999, p. 24)
- The increased probability of firing a similar pattern is how the [neural] network “remembers” (Siegel, 1999, p. 25)
- Neurons that fire together at one time will tend to fire together at other times (Hebb, 1949)

#### 2) *Prevention is much more effective and healthy than cleaning up emotional dysfunction*

<i><b>Erikson's Development Stage</b></i>	<i><b>Potential Issues</b></i>	<i><b>Suggestions for Teacher/Parent/Caregiver</b></i>
<b>Birth-Age 2:</b>  <b>Attachment</b> —implicit encoding that the child does not recall but that affects all relationships  Extreme brain growth & development  Language development	Temperament manifests itself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unusually high sensitivities</li> <li>➤ Child sleeps little</li> </ul> Type of attachment is strongly related to implicit memory  Asynchronous Development Lack of appropriate sensory/social stimulation inhibits growth  Late talkers are not uncommon in gifted (but not overly common, either); children understand language much earlier than speaking it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accommodate sensitivities to loud noise &amp; other hyperstimulation</li> <li>➤ Find ways to help child play/relax without sleeping if necessary</li> <li>➤ Encourage appropriate levels of independence</li> <li>➤ Provide a safe environment with predictable schedule; cuddle &amp; talk to child frequently throughout the day</li> <li>➤ Note milestones, particularly language development &amp; critical thinking for possible future reference; analyze differences compared to norm; provide enrichment &amp; sensory stimulation at child's ZPD</li> <li>➤ Rotate toys, play different genres of music, read daily to child, play recordings of stories in other languages (e.g., Chinese, German), take “field trips” to expose children to new environments and other people to develop socially</li> <li>➤ Use correct grammar when speaking; include sophisticated words</li> <li>➤ Avoid stimulation with technology and TV</li> </ul>
<b>Age 3-Kindergarten</b>  <b>Development of Will &amp; Purpose</b>	Evaluation of self & others begins Perfectionism may begin  May delay toilet training consciously May be “shown off” in social situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Personal examination of perfectionism issues by adults; remediation if necessary; avoid telling children they are “smart” and instead encourage hard work, effort &amp; perseverance; do NOT expect perfection but DO encourage independence (e.g., dressing)</li> <li>➤ See Perfectionism handout</li> <li>➤ Avoid undue pressure on young children, especially if they are shy</li> </ul>

	<p>Teacher may not recognize child's skill levels Lack of challenge</p> <p>Lack of opportunity for enrichment</p> <p>Gender identity begins</p> <p>Frequently high energy perceived as ADHD—many times a misdiagnosis for gifted/advanced learners, especially boys</p> <p>Early Entrance to Kindergarten</p> <p>Development a “feeling vocabulary”</p> <p>Sex-role stereotyping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ All adults in the child's life should communicate frequently regarding developmental progress (or lack of) in all areas of development</li> <li>➤ Provide enrichment, encourage curiosity, answer child's questions with accurate information in language that child can understand</li> <li>➤ Children who perceive themselves as very different from others their assigned gender may be feeling uncomfortable or may be very assertive about their feelings &amp; wishes to wear different clothing, etc.; support them and avoid jokes about gender non-conforming individuals &amp; groups</li> <li>➤ Find ways for child to be active in positive ways, ensuring that s/he eats/drinks enough and regularly to sustain high energy needs to avoid “energy crashes” and angry outbursts when hungry</li> <li>➤ Research shows positive growth for those ready, including boys; avoid “redshirting” boys for kindergarten (Kerr &amp; Cohn, 2001)</li> <li>➤ Model using words to describe your feelings, including anger, disappointment, frustration, contentment, happiness, etc. Encourage them to use such words and describe their feelings regularly</li> <li>➤ Expose children to various jobs without stereotyping; include various cultures, ethnicities, etc.; be alert to stereotyping on TV, games, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Elementary School:</b></p> <p><i>Industry vs. Inferiority</i></p> <p><i>Competence in School, Sports, Friendships</i></p>	<p>Lack of academic challenge → <b>acting out</b>  Lack of opportunity for enrichment → <b>turning off</b>  Slow pace of curriculum → <b>off</b></p> <p>“Underachievement” may begin, especially if lack of support for academics at home or because of peers, or because of “performance mindset”</p> <p>Perfectionism may increase; potential for OCD</p> <p>Isolation—feeling “different” from peers Bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Grouping &amp; acceleration work; use them to promote cognitive growth and social growth with like-minded peers; agemate grouping does not work well for highly advanced children, especially in Math &amp; LA</li> <li>➤ Allow children to read quietly until others are done</li> <li>➤ <b>Provide respectful activities/work that require effort &amp; critical thinking; provide additional strategies when student shows effort but is not successful</b></li> <li>➤ Watch for withdrawal, boredom; provide more stimulating activities (girls, especially, may not complain, but some boys also will not)</li> <li>➤ Perfectionism may increase; potential for OCD—get professional help</li> <li>➤ Not unusual for advanced learners to develop friendships with older students or students of opposite gender; encourage friendships</li> <li>➤ Use a Sociogram in your class to determine existing relationships and give insight to promoting positive friendships for “outsiders”</li> </ul>

	<p>If learning disabilities, high intelligence may mask abilities</p> <p>Gender non-conforming face issues in schools</p> <p>Career investigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide Zero Tolerance for bullying at school &amp; home; educate about bullying; communicate with children about their social (and anti-social) relationships frequently; use Bibliotherapy as possible support (<i>My Secret Bully, Some of My Best Friends are Books, etc.</i>)</li> <li>➤ Import &amp; export children if necessary to encourage relationship building with like-minded peers (robotics, chess, drama, playdates)</li> <li>➤ Friendships may be few but intense, especially for girls</li> <li>➤ Unconditional acceptance of students, even if they are not like others</li> <li>➤ Significant disparities in test scores or performance may be indicative of learning disability; have student tested by psychologist; investigate materials and develop supports for 2E (Twice Exceptional) learners</li> <li>➤ Bibliotherapy may be helpful for 2E &amp; gender non-conformance</li> <li>➤ School restroom &amp; sports issues for transgender students</li> <li>➤ Provide books that portray men &amp; women in various career roles that do not use sex role stereotypes</li> <li>➤ Provide mechanical items, math puzzles, &amp; opportunity for adventure and novelty to boys and girls</li> <li>➤ Provide engaging speakers from different professions/careers</li> <li>➤ Provide sex education early on</li> </ul>
<p><b>Middle School:</b></p> <p><b><i>Identity vs. Role Confusion (ages 13-19)</i></b></p>	<p>Identity formation is a major issue Pressure to conform is intense &amp; persistent; being different can cause isolation, bullying, lack of self-esteem causing possible depression/anxiety</p> <p>Career investigation/exploration continues; multipotentiality develops</p> <p>Perfectionism continues; increased potential for eating disorders and procrastination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Allow students to experiment with various identity models while still providing unconditional love &amp; respect; continue support to encourage sense of personal worth, independence &amp; integrity</li> <li>➤ Students of color, LGBTQ, 2E students, etc. need extra support</li> <li>➤ Encourage self-actualizing efforts at school, listen carefully, offer gentle advice when appropriate</li> <li>➤ Critical for girls to get positive attention &amp; feedback from fathers</li> <li>➤ Provide bright high school/ college student/grads to discuss issues they dealt with in making decisions regarding school, friends, careers</li> <li>➤ Encourage career exploration through biographies, adult friends of the family, “take your child to work” days, etc.</li> <li>➤ Talk to boys &amp; girls re: “falling in love with an idea” to support career development</li> <li>➤ Confront teen with your concern; get professional help for adolescent</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use bibliotherapy &amp; videography to support students</li> <li>➤ <b>Provide respectful activities/work that is challenging and requires effort &amp; critical thinking; provide additional strategies when student shows effort but is not successful</b></li> </ul>
<b>High School:</b>  <i><b>Identity vs. Role Confusion (ages 13-19)</b></i>	<p>Identity formation continues</p> <p>Multipotentiality may confuse vocational preparation</p> <p>Perfectionism increases potential for eating disorders and body dysmorphia, academic procrastination</p> <p>Substance abuse may begin as an effort to self-medicate for boredom, anxiety, depression</p> <p>Suicide more common for gifted males who have been/are: abused, reluctant to seek help, isolated, gay or bisexual, dealing with mood disorders</p> <p>Pregnancy and early childbirth &amp; marriage can disrupt career and life potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide rites of passage into manhood/womanhood</li> <li>➤ Provide sensitive, respectful emotionally deep role models for teens</li> <li>➤ Encourage girls to take science &amp; math to increase career options later in life</li> <li>➤ Support &amp; encourage interest in academics &amp; careers, especially when student initiates interest</li> <li>➤ Accompany teen to workshops, fairs, etc. for college planning, financial aid, etc.</li> <li>➤ Help teen seek out one or more mentors to explore careers</li> <li>➤ Help student prioritize interests &amp; activities to avoid sleep deprivation and poor nutrition</li> <li>➤ <b>Provide assignments that are interesting, challenging and require effort &amp; critical thinking; provide additional strategies when student shows effort but is not successful</b></li> <li>➤ Help teen get professional help; support them emotionally</li> <li>➤ Familiarize yourself with characteristics of bipolar disorder, depression &amp; existential depression; be ready to seek help if you observe these in students, especially in young men</li> <li>➤ Do not be afraid to confront teen about potential suicidal thought or plans; seek professional help immediately; learn behaviors common to suicide and depression</li> <li>➤ Re: romantic relationships—encourage teen to seek those in which both parties can hear and be heard, are respected &amp; valued</li> <li>➤ Provide prophylactics and medical exams as appropriate</li> </ul>