



building a foundation for life  
**CHRISTCHURCH**  
SCHOOL

## Researched Based Developmental Approach

*\*The following is an overview of ages and stages of development.  
You may check out books for each age in our parent library through located in the LMTC.*



[www.gesellinstitute.org](http://www.gesellinstitute.org)

*The Gesell Institute has completed extensive longitudinal research of more than 10,000 children on developmental Ages and Stages. The mission of the Gesell Institute is to educate, guide, and support parents, teachers, and others, in the understanding of child growth and development so that all children may be nurtured, encouraged, and empowered as they grow and learn.*



## Ages and Stages of Growth

### **2 YEAR OLD-SMOOTH (5, 10 and 16 years)**

- Height of language
  - good receptive
  - poor expressive
  - some early talkers---some not until 3 or older
  - 3-4 words-sing song manner---me go down, me go bed
  - likes simple songs and rhymes
- Thoughts can be expressed
- Ability to use tools---spoons, glasses, etc.
- Beginning to help with dressing and undressing
- Gentle temperament
- Exploring through touching, handling, clasping, etc.
- Can kick a ball
- Block building is vertical
- Both hands work together
- Sand, water, clay, finger painting---messy
- Joy of movement---gait is still short-stepped
- Can crudely imitate a circle
- Prefer solitary play but want friends around (parallel play)
- Toilet training is beginning---can tell you when they need to go

### **2 ½ YEAR OLD-BREAK UP (5 ½ and 11 years)**

- Terrible twos
- Difficult little person---demanding, explosive---emotions take over
- Difficult to force them to do anything---extremes in emotions
- Being in charge of even a small part of world helps her feel secure
- Loves role playing, water, sand, mud, toys that can be taken apart and put back together
- Clay is excellent medium---will roll endlessly
- Routines are imperative---things done same way, same order, etc.
- Short sentences by some, "me want that"
- Very bossy
- Needs a great deal of support and consistency
- Avoid taking them anywhere---hire baby sitters to get away from them





### 3 YEAR OLD-SORTING OUT (6-6 ½ and 12 years)

- High social time---high degree of smoothness, self control
- In play group more interested in children than activities (we and us)
- Understands consequences so you can bargain with them
- Likes to cooperate and do thing right
- Likes block play---builds structures
- Loves running around and good at it
- Can have fun with language – ex. rhyming
- Can change behavior according to environment (act differently at grandparent's house than at home)
- Stammering and stuttering
- Fears-dark, masks, clown
- Doesn't understand the passage of time
- Concerned if another child gets hurt or is upset
- Good time to start a pre-school program
- Waiters and watchers



### 3 ½ YEAR OLD-INWARDIZING (7 and 13 years)

- Fear of unexpected---don't like new things
- Vision is changing---depth perception is off---difficulty going up and down steps
- Likes to hold things close for security
- Separation problems---fearful if mother leaves---must physically see her
- Whining is at its height (high whinny voice)
- Doesn't want to be the center of attention---don't look at me
- Difficulty crossing midline
- Shows imagination, inventiveness, and a real capacity for play
- Friends are important---moving out of just parallel play
- More imaginary companions than any other age
- Can ride a tricycle without bumping into things---may try to throw and catch
- Pencils and crayons are shifted from one hand to another
- Frequent verbal disputes with other children---will seek adult help
- Loves to play with language, whisper secrets, make up new words
- Can be verbally demanding and tries to control others with language
- Some enjoy listening to a story for as long as twenty minutes
- May find school difficult---can get upset by changes in routine, etc.

#### **4 YEAR OLD-EXPANSION (8 and 14 years)**

- Exuberant---no one races, and hops with more gusto than a 4 year old
- In tune with nature and his/her environment
- Has to know what's happening
- Loves stories about monsters, ghost, dinosaurs, popular super heroes, princesses
- Likes to brag---my dad is bigger than yours or I am the smartest
- Needs change of activity frequently
- Bursting with motor activity-racing, jumping, hopping, climbing, etc.
- Learning occurs best when the gross motor system is involved
- Likes variety---very imaginative---fantasy reaches, not much into reality
- Should not be placed in highly structured situations
- Attention span is about ten minutes
- Often can't discern between fact and fiction---lots of make believe (not lying)
- Name calling, toilet language, likes to play in the bathroom
- Needs firm reasonable limits and lots of time to play
- Four letter words begin
- Loves language and sometimes seem like they are brilliant because of this
- Nightmares
- Needs to go to the bathroom - Right Now
- Big movements at the easels---don't like projects they have to model exactly
- Eyes are not converging with ease---cannot focus on a near point
- Eyes do not sweep laterally across the page
- Mind is like mercury - moves from one idea to the next, changing topics or roles quickly
- Tends to go to extremes
- Laughs too loudly, exaggerates
- Vision is focused on the distance---sees activity across the room and may be unaware of child they step on as they run toward it
- A delightful age if parents and teachers understand and accommodate



#### **FOUR ½ YEAR OLD (9 and 15 years)**

- Opposition, uncertainty and unpredictability
- Emotionally quiet uncertain---quickly goes from laughter to tears
- Can be persistently demanding---often obnoxious---sticks out tongue and makes faces
- Easily upset. Constant need for reassurance---what's under the bed?
- Superheroes are to protect them
- TV can scare
- Trying to figure out what is real and what is not - could that really happen?
- Death is frightening---lots of questions
- Favorite color is black
- Modest
- Passion for small places
- Lots of talk - fantasy is dropping out
- Still have short attention span---need gross motor activities
- Fine motor skills are coming more under control
- Better at handling frustration
- Interested in gathering new information and perfecting old skills



### **FIVE YEAR OLD-SMOOTH (2, 10 and 16 years)**

- Mind and body are working together
- Cooperative, calm and self contained
- Responds well to encouragement
- Independent---more dependable---and confident
- Positive---“how do you feel?” - “good”
- Token of what they will be as an adult
- Most infantile speech is gone
- “Am I doing it right?”
- Horrendous tattlers because they want you to know they know the rules
- Most have fair amount of precision and with pencil and crayons
- Manipulate materials
- Vision begins to converge and hold---more focal
- Need to be reassured by teachers
- Like group experiences, games, murals, etc.
- Attention span is 15 to 20 minutes
- Morals are forming - great sense of right and wrong
- Motor development is even
- Dramatic development is practical---play house and school
- Very careful to attempt only what they think they can achieve
- Give manageable jobs they can do well
- Controlled pencil grasp promotes skill and interest in writing letters and numbers
- Keen interest in name writing
- Quiet age when language blossoms – love to talk - can talk and work at the same time
- Questions they ask are more relevant---will listen to others
- Can count to ten spontaneously
- Calm and untroubled time for many

### **FIVE ½ YEAR OLD-Break-up (2 ½ and 11 years)**

- Begins to sense some inconsistencies— tries to go both ways
- Red shirt, white shirt, which center to go to, etc.
- Body posture begins to tighten up
- Can be hesitant, dawdling and indecisive
- Can become over demanding and explosive
- Eyes shine when things are going right
- Anxious to please mother---blames her if things aren't right
- Confusion in spatial orientation---misidentifying right and left
- More difficult to sit for long periods
- Frequently too hot---take coats off on playground
- Activity breaks
- Reversals are common---don't know or can't yet correct---ask "which way does it go?"
- Printing less neat---can make reading and writing tasks harder
- Not a time to evaluate writing---overly firm pencil grip



### **SIX YEARS OLD – SORTING OUT (3 and 12 years)**

- Time of action – system is undergoing real changes in large muscle and bone growth
- Teething- pencils, fingers, collars in mouth – molars are coming in
- Crying, humming or chewing
- Action to reduce tension in the body – fall off of chairs, stand up without knowing it
- Have a great need to move around
- Pencil becomes an extension of the fingers
- Like fixed routines
- Easily upset if hurt or criticized by teacher or other adults

### **SEVEN YEAR OLD – INWARDIZING** (3 ½, 13 and 19 years)

- Quiet down period – very pulled in with a slower tempo
- Filled with inner tension – sometimes act like they have emotional problems
- Takes in more than they give out – great watchers
- Likes to please adults (should I start now?)
- Laborious working style – makes small figures and cover as he writes
- You can reason with a 7 year old
- Becoming more dependable
- Cautious about new things
- Very self critical – height of erasers – need for perfection
- Developing and individual sense of humor



### **EIGHT YEAR OLD – EXPANSION** (4 1/2 and 14 year olds)

- Need running shoes to keep up with them
- Hear them sleep
- Burst into the room with or without opening the door
- Like to be praised, but not excessively
- Feelings are easily hurt – don't joke about their shortcomings
- Often will change the rules if they are not winning
- Self competitive
- Need firm limits
- Rough and tumble play
- Tend to talk, read, write and move in high gear





**NINE YEAR OLD – FITTING TOGETHER (4 ½ and 15 year old)**

- Highly competitive – adults need to set limits
- Worries a lot – school failure
- Grabs at impossible work loads – self motivated
- Peers are becoming very important
- Read to learn – not learn to read
- Graffiti
- Like to plan in advance
- Wants all blame fairly appropriated
- Likes to repeat things over and over again if enjoyable
- Marked fatigue because they don't know when to stop
- Realistic, reasonable and fair-minded
- Lots of physical complaints but make remarkable recoveries
- Father still has some influence
- Critical of parents with a deaf ear to mother
- Open communication important – adults need to really listen





### **TEN YEAR OLD – SMOOTH** (2, 5, and 16 years old)

- Golden end of childhood
- Enjoy teachers, parents and siblings
- Gathering strength for impending storm of adolescence
- Fairness issues are important and generally can be solved
- Works well in groups
- Increased ability to abstract
- Quick to anger, quick to forgive
- Good age for cross-age tutoring
- Enjoy community service projects
- Enjoy being noticed
- Language to reward their efforts is important
- Highly productive with school work – thrive on getting work done
- Ability to abstract continues to develop
- Integrates spelling, dictation, penmanship easily
- Usually truthful – developing more mature sense of right and wrong
- Responds well to positive corrections
- Enjoy! - for there is a storm brewing

### **ELEVEN YEAR OLD – BREAKUP** (2 ½, 5 ½ and 17 years old)

- Beginning of adolescence, especially for girls
- In groups, boys on one side, girls on the other
- Boys are watching girls change and are wondering when something is going to happen to them
- Parents and teachers begin to face challenges in every area – cleaning up room, bedtime, parties, assignments, homework, classroom rules
- Girls, in particular, are beginning to experiment with sex
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol is common
- Saving face is extremely important - don't correct in front of peers but wait until you have time alone
- Constant motion and restless – need for exercise and breaks
- Moody and sensitive – often don't know why
- Oppositional, test limits
- Height of cliques – need to belong – gangs for boys – beginning of deep, long lasting friendships women have
- Constant use of cell phones
- Ability to abstract deepens
- Deductive reasoning advances
- Likes to be treated like a grown up
- Be reasonable with discipline – look at the infraction, not at how they acted to you
- Adults must keep a sense of humor
- Relies on adult input, but on their own terms
- Often do best away from home
- Parents and teachers struggle, because just a little while ago they were easy to get along with

## **TWELVE YEAR OLDS – SORTING OUT (3, 6 and 18 years old)**

- Ability to be totally responsible and totally irresponsible at the same time – can be annoying and infuriating to adult
- Confusing age – not child and not adult
- Greatest need is to be with friends – parents and adults take a back seat
- Minutes turn into hours on the telephone
- Hours are spent in front of the mirror
- School is the place to be but not always for the intended purpose
- Can become deeply vested with their peers in such things as research projects, environmental issues, drama, etc.
- Changeable, unpredictable and hard to read – sometimes like to be with a group and other times want desperately to be alone
- Need opportunity to discuss and modify rules – but adults must be consistent and maintain ultimate authority clearly and calmly
- High appetite: eat anything and constantly
- At home may seem drawn in – important to get teacher's view
- Are very curious about sex and drugs – parents are role models. Discussions in younger years extremely important.
- Adult personality begins to emerge
- Peer vocabulary (slang) important
- Can set realistic goals in the short term
- Sarcasm emerges
- Can see both sides of an argument
- Identity crisis – not child, not adult
- Understands concept of time

## **THIRTEEN YEAR OLD – INWARDIZING (3 ½, 7, and 19 years old)**

- Except at meals, hard to find around the house
- Often unfriendly, withdrawn and uncommunicative
- Don't like to cry in front of adults but will do so behinds close doors
- Firmly focused on the opposite sex – many are dating
- Nicer away from home
- Complain that people do not understand him/her
- Hair care is extremely important to boys and girls – drawn to the mirror like a magnet
- Have fewer friends but consider them their only bright spot - "If it weren't for my friends my life would be a complete disaster."
- Tend to be restless at home and school
- Eighty-five percent say they have tried alcohol or drugs
- Girls start to act aggressively toward boys so they will ask them out
- You can begin to reason with them with some success
- Considers everything mother does or says as ridiculous and doesn't want to be seen with her – less rebellious with dad
- Both boys and girls are beginning to think about careers
- Girls have 2 or 3 close friends
- Boys do not have strong knit groups – cluster in gangs
- A bit easier to be around the twelve year olds only because they are not as rude

## **FOURTEEN YEAR OLDS – EXPANSION (4 and 8 year olds)**

- A time of vigor, energy and excitement
- Demand everything and appreciate little
- Consider parents hopelessly antiquated
- Has many friends of both sexes; loves life
- Offended if not provided all the luxuries she wants
- Critical of the way people look, dress and act
- Fells nagged by parents – don't want advice – lots of debate about dating, homework, curfews
- Girls talk about boys constantly
- Boys aren't quite as interested – sports are important
- Outgoing, bouncy and bubbly outside of home
- Has incredibly full schedule
- Nearly all have done some drinking or drugs and sex is increasing
- Intermingles well – more respectful
- Whole area of social studies, including art history, most interesting
- More and more interested in how things relate
- Delightful age if understood by adults
- Spend most free time in social groups



## **FIFTEEN YEAR OLDS – FITTING TOGETHER (4 ½ and 9 year olds)**

- Changes from an outgoing and relatively happy 14 year old to a selfish, critical, rebellious and not very responsive 15 year old
- Thinks, feels and says all the wrong things
- “I can't stand my mother. We just don't get along. If only I could go live in a hotel. Who will pay the bills?” - “My father, of course.”
- Parents feel the same way – “I have to get away from him/her.”
- May be uncommunicative or argumentative with family and teachers and be life of the party with their friends
- Adults may be surprised and hardly recognize them in another setting
- Suggestions or comments by either parent are likely to be met with real scorn
- Dating is a big source of pleasure (or pain)
- Have very strong opinions about things
- Critical of way school is run – unfair grading practices
- Time of intense need for independence – for being their own person
- Many talk about careers and future plans with each other
- Discreet show of lack of concern, but monitoring constantly, is best way for parent and teachers to deal with them
- Respect adults who intellectually stretch them in a respectable way



## Sweet Sixteen

### **SIXTEEN YEAR OLD – SMOOTH (2, 5 and 10 years old)**

- A smooth and comfortable time for many
- Body posture relaxes
- More self assured
- More tolerant of the world in general – takes life as it comes
- Compared to 15 is truly sweet 16
- Often described by adults as more cheerful and positive
- Spontaneous humor can be amusing from an adult point of view
- Prefer friend's company to that of family
- More cooperative with teachers
- Can infer things from their environment
- Individual and community projects are successful
- Are ready for more responsibility
- Many are thinking of college or future
- Dating relationships are more serious