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Working with Children at Different Stages of Development

I. Introduction

Children of the same age may resemble each other in certain respects but they also differ from one another in many ways. A combination of physical, emotional and environmental forces plays a role in every child's growth. As a Senior Corps volunteer tutor, you can support students most effectively when you recognize important characteristics of their development.

I. Seven to Ten Year-Olds

In general, children in this age group:

- Are capable of prolonged interest
- Are eager to answer questions
- Want more independence while knowing they need guidance and support
- Exhibit wide discrepancies in reading ability
- Show interest in people; show awareness of differences; show a willingness to give more to others but also expect more
- Often idolize heroes, television stars, and sports figures
- Spend a great deal of time in talk and discussion



Recognize 7 to 10-year-olds' increasing independence by offering choices in your tutoring sessions. Providing choices promotes independence, responsibility for learning, and personal investment in the activity. The language you use when offering choices is critical. Avoid asking yes-or-no questions unless you're willing to accept *no* as an answer. If you decide to work on a phonics game in the session, present it to the child as a plan rather than a choice: *Now we're going to play a matching game* versus *Do you want to play this matching game now?* There are many instances when it is appropriate for you to decide the content and sequence of a lesson.

Choose your words carefully when offering praise or suggestions for improvement. Since seven- to 10-year-olds can be very critical of themselves and others, convey your support clearly and consistently. For example:

- *I can see you worked very hard on writing this story. Let's reread it together to hear how it sounds.*
- *You seem pretty tired this afternoon. Would it be helpful to take a short break and walk to the water fountain to help you wake up a bit?*
- *This is an interesting book but it may still be a bit of a stretch for you to read on your own. It's a good one to read with a grown-up right now and someday you will be able to read it independently.*



Positive and honest feedback is important and, as with children of all ages, it is best to give explicit praise to reinforce the child's good behavior or performance.

III. Eleven to Fourteen Year-Olds

In general, children in this age group:

- Need help with organization—thoughts, schoolwork, writing
- Have more interest in current events and social issues
- Love to argue and can begin to see more than one side of an issue
- Feel challenged rather than defeated by *reasonably* hard work
- Tend to be perfectionists; if they try to attempt too much, may feel frustrated
- Can be both playful and serious
- May have bad diet and sleep habits and, as a result, low energy levels
- Enjoy testing limits; may exhibit a know-it-all attitude
- Are very concerned with what others say and think about them



Eleven- to 14-year-olds are at a challenging crossroad. No longer children but not yet adults, they waver between a growing need for independence and a continuing need for support. Collaborate with 11- to 14-year-olds so they feel some control over what takes place in your tutoring sessions. While you still need to establish and maintain your role as the authority figure, you can accomplish this while giving students choices and asking for their suggestions about how you spend your time together. By this age, children may have experienced frustration with their academic experiences. Eleven- to 14-year olds often lack interest in subjects of classroom study and they may not get enough exposure to compelling books at the appropriate reading level. Ask your tutee to bring reading material that interests him and make time in each session to read it together—it may be a book, a magazine, a comic book, or even a shopping catalog. Make an effort to introduce new texts and ask librarians and teachers for assistance in your search. Show your enthusiasm for language, reading, and writing. Find ways to share your own reading material with your tutee—a newspaper article, a favorite book, or a piece of mail you received. Organize projects that integrate language skills in diverse ways, such as reading, writing, exploring computers and the Internet, storytelling, painting, sculpting, drawing, and writing descriptive paragraphs or stories to accompany the artwork.

Eleven- to 14-year olds may have diminished self-confidence, which hinders their willingness to take risks in their learning. Be supportive by honestly sharing some of your own challenges and successes. Cite examples from your own life or the lives of others.

Summer Creativity Camps!

Every summer, the SRYI holds two summer camps: Creativity Camp is for our 10-14 year old participants, and the Junior Creativity Camp is available for our 7-10 year old participants. During these camps (each run by an Alvernia faculty member), kids get to explore different themes such as “History Lives”, “Behind the Scenes”, and “Go for the Gold: the Beijing Olympics”.

The dates for this summer are:

Creativity Camp: June 21-July 2

Junior Creativity Camp: August 2-6

If you would like to work at any of these camps as a staff member, please contact either Meghann or Jess at 610-568-1527 or at 610-790-1923



SRYI participants at BCTV and the Constitution Center

Quotable Quotes

This semester, we introduced a Latin dance class on Wednesday afternoons. Naturally, some of our older boys were not excited about trying to demonstrate their “moves” for the whole program to see. Oscar decided that when Chris wasn’t looking, he would hide in the bathroom by standing on the toilet. However, Chris caught him and made him write out reasons why such behavior is disrespectful. Here is what Oscar wrote:

The “why I shouldn’t hide from Chris and stand on the toilet” reasons:

1. Chris would've thought I was lost, and then my mom would sue (holding Chris responsible)
2. I could be seriously hurt, and Chris would be responsible
3. I got the toilet dirty with my footprints
4. I think I'm breaking a rule
5. I might've broke the toilet
6. Chris was giving me a punishment anyways so its like a double punishment now—DOUBLE WHAMMY!
7. Chris would worry and probably get a heart attack. Then when I see him on the floor and I would be eternally and forever traumatized
8. I wouldn't like Chris having a heart attack

Thank you, Oscar, for your wise words and concern for Chris.



Our good friend, Oscar

Last edition of the SRYI Scoop for the academic year of 2009/2010! We'll see you next fall!



QUESTIONS??

COMMENTS??



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Be sure to check out our other tutoring resources on our website!

On the SRYI volunteer page you will find:

- ♦ Articles on different subjects regarding tutoring and working with children
- ♦ Information on working with English Language Learners
- ♦ Links to helpful websites about literacy, math, games, and other activities that you can use with your tutee.

<http://www.alvernia.edu/about/holleran-center/sryivolunteer.html>



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