**Developmental Tasks of the 6th Grader**

**Types of Development**

Children grow and change in several different areas:

* **Physical.** These are the changes in your child's body that you can see – things such as growing taller and gaining weight.
* **Social/emotional.** These internal changes begin with early bonding. Eye contact, smiling, cuddling, and responding to your child's needs are all part of early emotional development and provide the foundation for close, trusting relationships. Stop and take time to listen to your pre-teen when they ask for your attention to develop in them the idea and feeling that they can come to you with anything – big or small.
* **Cognitive or brain development.** Your child’s brain grows rapidly during the first years of life, building neurons (brain cells) that he or she will use for life. New research shows the brain is not done developing until age 25. They will need your guidance and direction to keep them safe for some time to come.
* **Language/Communication.** Starting with your child’s first cries, he or she learns to communicate with you. Learning two languages really builds on those brain cells. By the time they are pre-teens and teens they may want to communicate with you less and less, but their body language, attitude, facial expressions are all still means of communication. Remember, they still want your attention when they want your attention and they need your attention. Research shows that speaking to children often, reading often, and giving encouragement all boosts brain development and intelligence.

### Developmental Milestones

Here is some information on how children develop during middle childhood:

##### **Emotional/Social Changes**

Children in this age group might:

* Start to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
* Experience more peer pressure.
* Become more aware of his or her body as puberty approaches. Body image and eating problems sometimes start around this age.

##### **Thinking and Learning**

##### Children in this age group might:

* Face more academic challenges at school.
* Become more independent from the family.
* Begin to see the point of view of others more clearly.
* Have an increased attention span.

**Frontline video link to the program: Inside the Teenage Brain**

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/video/flv/generic.html?s=frol02p392&continuous=1

### Positive Parenting Tips

##### Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

* Spend time with your child. Talk with her about her friends, her accomplishments, and what challenges she will face.
* Be involved with your child’s school. Go to school events; meet your child’s teachers.
* Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a sports team, or to be a volunteer for a charity.
* Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong. Talk with him about risky things friends might pressure him to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
* Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks like cleaning and cooking. Talk with your child about saving and spending money wisely.
* Meet the families of your child’s friends.
* Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage her to help people in need. Talk with her about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
* Help your child set his own goals. Encourage him to think about skills and abilities he would like to have and about how to develop them.
* Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk with your child about what you expect from her (behavior) when no adults are present. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help her to know what to do in most situations.
* Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make him feel badly about himself.
* When using praise, help your child think about her own accomplishments. Saying "you must be proud of yourself" rather than simply "I’m proud of you" can encourage your child to make good choices when nobody is around to praise her.
* Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
* Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with him about his homework.
* Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss concerns about your child and their academic, social, or emotional development. I am honored to be of service to the families of RL Stevens School.

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