Child Development Essay, Research Paper

Physical development during the preschool years has

the most obvious aspects of changes. Children generally

become slimmer as the lower body lengthens and some of

the fat accumulated during infancy is burned off. The

Kindergarten children no longer have the protruding

stomach, round face, disproportionately short limbs, and

relatively large head that are characteristic of a toddler.

By age 6, the proportions of a child’s body are not very

different from those of an adult. As their bodies grow

slimmer, stronger, and less top heavy, and as their brain

maturation permits greater control and coordination of

their extremities, children between the ages of three and

six are able to move with greater speed and grace, and

become more capable of focusing and refining their activity.

The result is an impressive improvement in their various

motor skills. Gross motor skills, involving large body

movements such as running, jumping, climbing, and throwing

improve dramatically during the preschool years. For example

a 3 year old can be quite clumsy, falling down quickly, and

sometimes bumping into stationary objects when running

around, but by age 6, the child can be both skilled and

graceful. Most 6 year olds can ride a tricycle more the less

a bicycle, go across the monkey bars on a school playground,

In addition, throw, catch, and kick a ball. Most of them can

even ice skate, ski, and roller-blade, activities that

demand balance and coordination. Most young children

practice their gross motor skills wherever they are, whether

in a well equipped nursery school with climbing ladders,

balance boards, and sand boxes, or on their own, with

furniture for climbing, side walk curbs for balancing, and

gardens or empty lots for digging up which are typical

skills in a three year old. Generally preschool children

learn basic motor skills by teaching themselves and learning

from other children.

Fine motor skills, involving small body movements,

especially those of the hand and fingers, are much harder

for preschoolers to master than gross motor skills. For

example such things as pouring juice from a pitcher into a

glass without spilling, cutting food with a knife and a

fork, and achieving anything more artful than a scribble

with a pencil are difficult even with great concentration

and effort. Preschoolers could spend hours trying to tie a

bow with their shoelaces, often producing knot upon knot

instead. They experience these difficulties because they

have not yet developed the muscular control, patience, and

judgement needed for the exercise of fine motor skills as do

most 6 year olds. For many 3 year olds, having short fat

fingers can result in frustration and destruction causing

them to burst into tears when they cannot button there

sweaters, or mash a puzzle piece into place when they are

unable to position it correctly.

In children’s artwork for example, 3 year olds often

just plunk, their brushes into the paint, pull them out

dripping wet, then pushes them across the paper without much

forethought or skill, by age 6, most children took care to

get just enough paint on their brushes, planned just where

to put each stroke and stood back from their artwork to

examine the result. Older children also show an

eagerness to practice their skills, drawing essentially the

same picture repeatedly. Such mastery of drawing skills

is related to overall intellectual growth.

Cognitive development is intimately related to the

development of speech. Words not only help the toddler to

say what they are thinking and later to say what they are

feeling but also help them to think. Three-year-olds can

notice the differences a horse and a dog, between various

toys, or between beloved and feared people. The ability for

the toddler to sort into categories and describe things and

people, to put names to their characteristics, and to use

words to compare them, however, enormously increases the

possible complexity and consistency of this kind of

thinking. Toddlers have to grow up. They have to learn that

they are separate people with individual ideas and

preferences that will sometimes clash with those of others,

Nevertheless, to feel happy about this, they also have to

learn that arguments about socks do not put the love between

themselves and their parents at risk.

Toddlers do not understand that other people have

feelings; they certainly do not see others as having

feelings like their own or as being affected by there

behavior. That is why they cannot be good or bad on purpose,

Alternatively, be taught that biting people is wrong by

being bitten themselves. The beginning of pretend play show

the beginning of this kind of understanding, and as the

language for feelings simultaneously develops children of

perhaps 3 years old gradually learn to put themselves in

other peoples shoes. Pretend play demonstrates important

developments in children’s thinking, with repercussions in

there socialization. Toddlers like to play alongside other

toddlers. As imaginative play and the ability to understand

the feelings of others develop, real companionship becomes

both possible and desirable. They need to see that taking

turns, playing by the rules and every aspect of a do-as-you-

would-be-done-to approach do actually work to make life

easier, pleasanter, and more fun for all.

During the preschool years, however, as cognitive power

increase, the pace and scope of language learning increase

dramatically. By age 3, children typically demonstrate

extensive grammatical knowledge. They not only put the

subject before the object, explaining “I eat apple” rather

than using any of the possible combinations of the three

words. Language accomplishments during early childhood

include learning 10,000 words or more by age six. Children

appear to increase their vocabulary so rapidly by connecting

unfamiliar words through their context to a mental map of

familiar terms. Young children also show marked growth in

They are understanding of basic grammatical forms. Children

of age 6, however, have difficulty with abstract words and

often misunderstand, or overegularize, grammatical rules.

Preschool children are surprisingly capable of learning

everything from math to grammar to social insights, but

their actual learning depends on the somewhat guided

participation they experience, as well as, on the

opportunities they have to manipulate objects, learn

language, and interact with children. For children of every

background a quality preschool program advances learning,

while a poor-quality program, one that provides little more

than physical care and supervision is of little benefit

intellectually. It is apparent that in terms of self-

confidence, social skills, and social roles, much

develops during early childhood. Cognitive growth permits

children a greater appreciation of psychological roles,

motives, and feelings, deepening their understanding

of themselves and others. At the same time their social

world becomes more diverse with the introduction of new

social collaborates such as in preschool or in the

neighborhood and in richer roles for familiar partners such

as parents, siblings, and long time playmates. The play

years are filled with examples of an emerging self concept,

as preschoolers repeatedly explain who they are and who they

are not and assiduously note which possessions are theirs.

During the play years, children gradually begin to perceive

themselves not just in terms of their physical attributes,

or they are characteristic behaviors or abilities, but also

in terms of their dispositions and traits, seeing

themselves, for example, as friendly, shy, happy, or

hardworking. By the late preschool year’s children possess a

self-concept that may include a recognition of certain

psychological tendencies. Nevertheless, preschoolers

psychological understanding of themselves and others is

still very limited. They do not grasp the complexity of

personality or the variability of a person’s competencies:

they do not appreciate, for example, that a person can be

mean to people but kind to animals, or can be good at math

but poor in reading. Preschoolers also do not clearly

distinguish the different psychological causes of actions or

skills, believing, for example, that ability is self

controlled and can always be changed through effort.

As time passes, however, preschoolers become

increasingly aware of, and concerned with, how others

evaluate their behavior, gradually, they begin to

spontaneously appraise their behavior with the same

standards as adults do. The typical three year-old believes

that he or she can win any race, skip perfectly, and count

accurately, and make up beautiful songs. In many situations,

for example, young children will respond with disappointment

or shame when they fail at a task, such as tying there

shoes, when they cause some mishap, such as spilling a cup

of juice, even when no adult is present. Preschoolers

eagerly take on new tasks and play activities and feel

guilty when their efforts result in failure or criticism.

Their readiness to take the initiative reflects

preschooler’s desire to accomplish things, not simply to

assert their autonomy as they did as toddlers. Thus, in a

nursery school classroom, the older preschoolers take the

initiative to build impressive block towers, whereas the

three year-olds are more likely to be interested in knocking

them down. The enthusiasm of older children to learn and

master many things derives, in part, from their growing

sense of membership in the larger culture and a desire to

acquire the skills of a citizen and worker as well as a

family member.

Peer relationships are another important relational

influence during the play years. In addition to providing an

arena for developing their social skills, peer relationships

help preschoolers learn about friendship. Playing with other

children requires preschoolers to take responsibility for

maintaining social interaction through sharing and

reciprocity. These features are evident whether the play is

rough and tumble or sociodramatic play- the latter also

permits children to explore social roles, examine personal

concerns, and learn to cooperate. Self-concept emerges,

usually wit a positive slant. Children boldly initiate new

activities, especially if they are praised for their

endeavors. As they are social and cognitive, skills develop,

children engage in ever more complex and imaginative

types of play, sometimes by themselves and, increasingly,

with others.