

# Middle School Developmental Project Grades 6-8

Developmental stages for ages 11-15

Jeff Batten, Kathleen Carswell, Harrison Do, Glenn Estacio,  
Melanie Forte, Portia Harmon, Anita Jarrett, Will Lamb

# Overview: 11 year olds

*“It’s past time for recess. We’re missing our recess! .... Same teams as yesterday? No way! .... The arguments continue. They use up ten full minutes of their precious recess time making up teams. No one seems to mind.”* (C. Wood, 2017)



<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Electrified, lots of energy</li><li>● Engage new experiences with outward boldness yet inward tentativeness</li><li>● Devoted to classmates and peer groups</li><li>● Practice art of social debate and negotiation</li><li>● Love being physically active, especially outdoors</li><li>● Focusing on improving skills, especially in sports</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Adolescence begins</li><li>● Self-conscious about changing bodies</li><li>● Bones grow faster than muscles → aches &amp; pains</li><li>● Emotional sensitivity</li><li>● Relationships with peers and adults → topsy-turvy</li><li>● Cliques and bullying</li><li>● Staying up late &amp; difficulties waking in the morning</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ More collaborative work related to real-life experiences</li><li>➤ Projects and service learning activities incorporated into assignments</li><li>➤ Addition of footnoting, creating bibliographies using scientific notation</li><li>➤ Rather learn new skills than improve old skills</li><li>➤ Need solid connections to trusted adults</li></ul>	

# Developmental Overview: 11 year olds

Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Language & Literacy Development	Self Concept & Identity Development	Peer Relations, Social, & Moral Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restless and energetic</li> <li>• Need lots of food, physical activity, and sleep</li> <li>• Need quiet breaks during day</li> <li>• Girls may experience early adolescent growth spurt and sexual maturation</li> <li>• Boys begin rapidly growing taller</li> <li>• May struggle with clumsiness</li> <li>• Motor skills such as throwing, catching, and kicking improve</li> <li>• Like to measure their individual bests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rather learn new skill than improve old skill</li> <li>• Difficulties making decisions</li> <li>• Defensive about mistakes</li> <li>• Better at abstract thinking and deductive reasoning</li> <li>• Enjoy challenge of reasonably hard work</li> <li>• Better able to write about plot, character development, and style</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for writing</li> <li>• Can solve complicated math word problems</li> <li>• Use probability and statistics with real-world problems</li> <li>• Use calculators and computers as problem-solving tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imitate adult language</li> <li>• Show interest in language, music, mechanics → need opportunities to explore new interests</li> <li>• Can do week-long reading assignments</li> <li>• More interest in nonfiction books related to interests</li> <li>• Reading bibliographies and scientific history → make timelines</li> <li>• Read to younger children</li> <li>• Willingness to practice writing, although revisions often a struggle</li> <li>• Like journaling, cartooning, poetry writing</li> <li>• Favorite writing topics: blood and gore, fantasy, science fiction, love and romance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like independence</li> <li>• Self-absorbed</li> <li>• Imaging self in adult roles</li> <li>• Sensitive</li> <li>• Enjoys arguing and debating others</li> <li>• View self as either “in” or “out” in peer groups</li> <li>• Adults need to respect independence</li> <li>• Adults need to be close, but not too close</li> <li>• Communication at a distance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impulsive</li> <li>• Often talk before thinking</li> <li>• Need time to talk with peers</li> <li>• Heavy social media use</li> <li>• Behaves best when away from home</li> <li>• Need adult empathy, humor, and sensitivity about body changes</li> <li>• test limits and rules</li> <li>• Moody</li> <li>• Inclusion/exclusion issues important</li> <li>• Worry about who is in/out</li> <li>• Prefer team sports</li> <li>• See world from different points of view</li> <li>• Use of class meeting, peer mediation, and cross-age tutoring can be very effective</li> </ul>

# Overview: 12 year olds



“I am not a nut. I am a pioneer” - Betty Miles in *The Real Me*.

## Strengths

- Gregarious
- Eager to grow academically & socially
- Empathy toward others
- Searching for identity
- Enjoy talking with adults outside of the home
- Deeply invested in purposeful schoolwork
- More aware of current events
- Can take on more responsibility & respond with pride

## Challenges

- Confusion
- Spend many hours texting or talking with friends
- Unpredictable and hard to read
- Spent a lot of time in front of mirror concerned about looks, clothing, hairstyle
- Bouts of being moody, introverted, childish

- Collaborative projects that culminate in a visual product
- Reports with beautiful illustrations or pictures
- Historical skits with elaborate costumes and props
- Community service projects

# Developmental Overview: 12 year olds

Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Language & Literacy Development	Self Concept & Identity Development	Peer Relations, Social, & Moral Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oxygen-hungry brains</li> <li>• Very energetic</li> <li>• Needs lots of exercise</li> <li>• Need more sleep</li> <li>• Need more snacks</li> <li>• Growth spurts</li> <li>• Stay up late, sleep late</li> <li>• Frequently tired</li> <li>• Awkwardness due to growth spurts</li> <li>• Understand idea of exercise and training but do not always follow through with routines and practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased ability to plan, organize work, and set short term goals</li> <li>• Appreciate the need to plan and set goals</li> <li>• Will take advice from teachers they trust</li> <li>• Better able to think abstractly and about complex moral issues</li> <li>• May begin excelling at a particular subject or skill</li> <li>• Can better integrate learning, especially if school uses cross-disciplinary teaching models where students and teachers work together on projects</li> <li>• Modeling how to work together with peers important</li> <li>• Leadership qualities abound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like word play and telling more sophisticated jokes</li> <li>• Like to try out new vocabulary</li> <li>• Enjoy conversations with adults and peers, sharing own ideas and opinions</li> <li>• Enjoys the latest slang and pop music</li> <li>• Continue reading trade books</li> <li>• Enjoy book series</li> <li>• Reading more newspapers, news, and other current events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult personality begins to emerge</li> <li>• Try out different personalities</li> <li>• Trying to “find oneself”</li> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Like to appear self secure</li> <li>• Want to make their own money through jobs</li> <li>• Both playful and serious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New friendships</li> <li>• Enthusiastic and spontaneous</li> <li>• Empathy toward others</li> <li>• More reasonable and tolerant</li> <li>• Care more about peers’ opinion than of teachers or parents</li> <li>• Can think abstractly about complete moral issues</li> <li>• Able to see both sides of an issue, but still argues for one point of view</li> <li>• Find current events, history, and civics highly motivating</li> <li>• Appreciates teachers who listen to and respond to their (reasonable) suggestions for changes to routines</li> <li>• Will pursue social interaction both in and outside of school</li> <li>• Need significant adults other than parents and teacher</li> </ul>

# Overview: 13 year olds (Wood, 2017)

“Today I am a teenager. I don’t know what I’m feeling right now.” - The Diary of Latoya Hunter: My First Year in Junior High-by Latoya Hunter



## Strengths

- High energy
- Keen sense of humor and silliness
- Ready for more freedom balanced by more responsibility

## Challenges

- Mood sensitivity
- Likely to challenge parents, teachers, and classmates alike
- Puberty
- Changing friendship dynamics
- Have a tendency to hibernate and isolate
- Often have strong opinions of teachers, both positive and negative

- Use textual references to document and defend their points of view
- Spelling-Functional for most (those with ongoing spelling difficulty appreciate spell checkers)
- Begin learning more sophisticated algebra than simple equations with one unknown

# Developmental Overview: 13 year olds (Wood, 2017)

Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Language & Literacy Development	Self Concept & Identity Development	Peer Relations, Social, & Moral Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lots of physical energy</li> <li>● Skin problems are common; hygiene becomes more important</li> <li>● Most girls are menstruating and have reached almost full physical development</li> <li>● Most boys are showing first signs of puberty (they will reach full development at fourteen or fifteen)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continued growth in abstract reasoning-making assumptions, developing hypotheses</li> <li>● Tentative, worried, and unwilling to take risks on tough intellectual tasks</li> <li>● Likes and dislikes become more pronounced; for example, may love math and hate English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read fiction and nonfiction involving social issues through assigned and leveled reading groups, sometimes with choice titles</li> <li>● Extensively study literary elements-plot, character, mood, setting, and theme-and talk meaningfully about these elements in class</li> <li>● Read aloud to the class from articles they have found or the teacher provides; use sources dealing with social topics, such as conformity, crime, and homelessness, and springboards to discussion and deeper understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some are very interested in and influenced by popular culture, while others march to the beat of their own drum</li> <li>● Sometimes shut down and answer adults' questions with a single word, but might be just as likely to respond with loud, extreme language</li> <li>● Very concerned about personal appearance, but unconcerned about the neatness of their personal environment, such as rooms at home or lockers and desks at school</li> <li>● Like to challenge intellectual as well as social authority, often for the sake of argument</li> <li>● Interested in issues of fairness and justice; want to serve others</li> <li>● May need more support than twelves of older teens when working in groups; tend to argue or complain about fairness, and often prefer solitary activity or working with a single partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pay close attention to peers, who mirror what's in and what's out</li> <li>● Moody and sensitive; may shut down and withdraw, or suddenly flare up in anger</li> <li>● Their feelings are easily hurt; and they can easily hurt others' feelings; frequent meanness may stem from being insecure or scared and from not wanting to be left out</li> <li>● Girls tend to focus on close friendships or cliques; boys tend to travel in small groups</li> </ul>

# Overview: 14 year olds (Wood, 2017)

“When there are many worlds you can choose the one you walk into each day.” Brown Girl Dreaming-by Jacqueline Woodson



<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funny, creative, highly energetic, and often very loud</li><li>• Show definite growth in their ability to self-evaluate, to be more aware of their own gifts and challenges</li><li>• Communicate more easily with other teens than they did just a year ago</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They may not always be good at following directions, but they're great at inventing new ones</li><li>• Challenging adult authority becomes an almost visceral reaction, one that may be accompanied by eye-rolling, hair tossing, and other scornful expressions that serve as distancing gestures</li><li>• Easily embarrassed by activities that may cause them to appear uncool in the eyes of their peers</li></ul>

- Use language as a tool for different purposes (for example, to tell a story versus advertise a product); enjoy presenting in class more than younger ages
- Spelling-Functional for most; use of spell checkers is helpful when writing on computers
- Read and use graphs, particularly circle and bar graphs, to make a point or summarize an argument

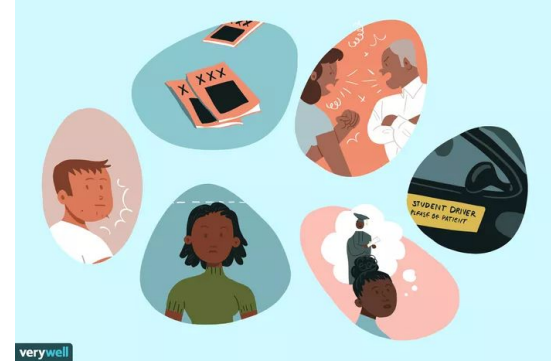


# Developmental Overview: 14 year olds (Wood, 2017)

Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Language & Literacy Development	Self Concept & Identity Development	Peer Relations, Social, & Moral Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very energetic; need as much physical release as possible through brief periods of physical activity outdoors or a stretch/brain break in the classroom</li> <li>• If given time to re-energize, often perform and behave better in the afternoon</li> <li>• Need lots of exercise, snacks, and sleep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond well to academic variety and challenge, especially if given opportunities to propose and help plan and organize the challenges</li> <li>• Enjoy and do well with lengthier projects if assignments are “chunked” with clear timelines</li> <li>• Intrigued by research and putting together research reports in the proper format; sometimes, interest in form takes precedence over depth of content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use literary themes to support their quest for identity; especially affected by coming-of-age novels from different historical periods</li> <li>• Sample many genres, such as song lyrics, poetry, drama, short stories, and novels</li> <li>• Study how literary elements interweave-for example, how characterization can advance the plot of a story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crave adult connections even while fighting for their own identity; need adults to listen and negotiate rules and requirements, but set clear boundaries and deadlines</li> <li>• Adult personality continues to mature</li> <li>• More willing to admit an error and try something a second or third time</li> <li>• Very aware of problems in the larger world and invested in learning more and finding solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn well in small discussion or cooperative learning groups; benefit from working with a wide variety of group mates in their different classes</li> <li>• Enjoy talking about current events, both formally in class and informally with peers</li> <li>• Respond Often say “I’m bored” to mean “I don’t understand,” or say that work is too easy when they find it plenty challenging; this is “face-saving’ behavior typical of this age</li> </ul>

# Overview: 15 year olds

“There's a good chance, however, that your 15-year-old will think she's ready to take on the world now. And she may insist she already knows everything.” - Amy Morin, Very Well Family



## Strengths

- Thinking about the bigger picture their future
- Appreciate siblings more than parents
- Thinking about living separate from parents
- Often have a few close friends
- Hone reasoning and problem solving skills
- Introspective exploring self in relation to ideas, ideals, and opinions of others

## Challenges

- Know-it-all attitude
- Don't talk to adults as much
- Embarrassed by family contact
- Rebellious
- May start dating
- May begin driving, but not all are socially/emotionally mature enough for responsibility

- Projects that focus on big picture topics relevant to their lives
- Educational video games that hone reasoning skills
- Blogging or other writing projects allowing students to express themselves

# Developmental Overview: 15 year olds

Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Language & Literacy Development	Self Concept & Identity Development	Peer Relations, Social, & Moral Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant changes to appearance with onset of puberty</li> <li>• Boys voices drop and begin growing facial hair</li> <li>• Girls often have reached their full height, while boys continue to grow</li> <li>• Boys especially can exhibit awkward movement getting used to growing bodies.</li> <li>• Boys develop muscles quickly during this age</li> <li>• Sometime less energy (due to growth spurts) which may be interpreted at laziness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasoning and problem solving skills much better</li> <li>• Argumentative, debate</li> <li>• Understand more abstract concepts</li> <li>• Big picture thinking</li> <li>• Begin thinking about their future</li> <li>• Identify career aspirations</li> <li>• Can explain reasons for choices and understand right/wrong</li> <li>• Detail oriented, at times a perfectionist</li> <li>• More defined work habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer to communicate via text or other social media</li> <li>• Talk/text to friends all night</li> <li>• Uses exaggerated language to express scorn</li> <li>• Reading and social experiences important for vocabulary development</li> <li>• Communicate in adult-like manner and can carry on conversations</li> <li>• More involved stories and vocabulary development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insecurity about changing appearance</li> <li>• Begin imagining their future (college, career, life)</li> <li>• Independence from parents</li> <li>• More aware of and stressed about grades, relationships, and other teenage issues</li> <li>• Sometimes confused about own competence and potential.</li> <li>• Is sensitive about limitations</li> <li>• Have specific hobbies they enjoy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More interested in peers than adults</li> <li>• First relationship and sexual encounters</li> <li>• Respect for rules when linked to privileges</li> <li>• Craves guidance from outside the home</li> <li>• Some appear content to be alone, whereas most like being with friends</li> </ul>

# Physical Development Examples



<https://sites.google.com/site/classroomcharacteristics/developmental-characteristics-of-middle-school-students>



<https://www.feedfond.com/12-year-old-developmental-milestones/>

# Cognitive Development Examples



<https://www.feedfond.com/12-year-old-developmental-milestones/>

# Language and Literacy Development Examples



<https://www.feedfond.com/12-year-old-developmental-milestones/>



<https://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/child-development-stages-ages-13-16-4543>

# Self Concept and Identity Examples



<https://www.feedfond.com/11-year-old-developmental-milestones/>

# Peer Relations, Social, and Moral Development Examples



<https://www.feedfond.com/12-year-old-developmental-milestones/>



<https://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/child-development-stages-ages-13-16-4543>



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