Chapter 8 Class Notes

Middle Childhood: Nine-, Ten-, Eleven-, and Twelve-Year-Olds

I. Nine-, Ten-, Eleven-, and Twelve-Year-Olds
   a. Stretch of years from age eight to early adolescence is usually an enjoyable and relatively peaceful time for all concerned
      i. Spontaneous behavior is gradually channeled into more goal-directed efforts as children begin making the transition from a state of dependence to one of greater independence
         1. No longer young children, but not yet capable adults
         2. This tension contributes to struggles with self-concept, self-esteem, and desire for complete autonomy
   b. Middle years are marked by a hunger for knowledge and understanding
      i. Most children have adjusted to being at school for six or more hours each day
      ii. Language usage becomes more sophisticated and adult-like
      iii. During this period, children also develop an increasingly complex ability to:
           1. Think in the abstract
           2. Understand cause and effect
           3. Use logic for solving problems and figuring out how things work
      iv. They comprehend that things really are the same in spite of being used for alternative purposes or seen from a different perspective
   c. Changes in physical growth and development vary greatly from child to child during this period
      i. Girls typically experience a growth spurt (height and weight) during this period that is significantly greater than that of boys
         1. Research finds that girls as young as eight or nine may already be experiencing hormonal changes associated with puberty
      ii. Some older children may begin to experiment with new behaviors, such as:
          1. Wearing alternative clothing and hair styles
          2. Quitting a favorite sport or musical instrument
          3. Forming associations with a “different crowd”
          4. Dieting
          5. Experimenting with substances
      iii. While families may find this phase quite distressing, it is an important process that helps children determine what will ultimately be right for them
          1. Despite frequent protests and rejections, children still want and need their family’s continued trust and support
2. Maintaining an ongoing dialogue with children about subjects, such as personal health, substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, smoking) and sex education (typical development, pregnancy, protection from sexually transmitted diseases) is important because many of their decisions can have serious, long-term consequences.

3. When adults treat these issues in an open and non-threatening manner, it conveys understanding and compassion to children.

4. Also fosters their sense of self-esteem and enhances the likelihood that children will continue to seek adult input in the future.

II. Nine- and Ten-Year-Olds

a. Most nine- and ten-year-olds have entered a phase of relative contentment
   i. Sometimes described as the calm before the storm of adolescence
   ii. Nine-year-olds may still display some emotional highs and lows
      1. These outbursts gradually mellow by age ten
      2. Home and family continue to serve as sources of security and comfort
      3. Hugs and kisses are still offered as signs of affection for family members
   iii. Most nine- and ten-year-olds also find school enjoyable
      1. Eagerly anticipate classes and meeting with friends and are disappointed if they must miss out on school activities
      2. Teachers are respected and their attention is highly coveted
      3. Small homemade gifts and offers of assistance are made in the hope of pleasing one’s teacher
   iv. Although children’s attention span is longer, they still need frequent opportunities to move about in the classroom and to participate in vigorous outdoor activity

b. Growth and physical characteristics
   i. Rate of growth is slow and irregular
      1. Girls begin to experience growth spurts far more dramatic than do boys
      2. Boys are more alike in size
   ii. Assumes a slimmer shape as fat accumulations begin to shift
   iii. Growth of various body parts occurs at different rates
      1. Lower half of body grows faster
      2. Arms and legs appear long and out of proportion
   iv. Brain increases significantly in size
      1. Almost reaches adult size by age ten
   v. Height increases approximately 2 inches (5 cm) each year
      1. Increases may be greater during growth spurts
vi. Gains approximately 6 1/2 pounds (14.3 kg) per year

vii. Loses remaining baby teeth
    1. Overcrowding may occur when larger, permanent teeth erupt into a yet small jaw

viii. Girls may begin to experience prepubertal changes (e.g., budding breasts, appearance of pubic hair, rounding of hips, accentuated waistline; darkening of hair color)
    1. Boys are less likely to undergo any sexual changes for another year or two

c. Motor development
   i. Throws a ball with accuracy
      1. Writes, sketches, and performs other fine motor skills with improved coordination
      2. This period is marked by continued refinement of fine motor skills, especially notable among girls
   ii. Uses arms, legs, hands, and feet with ease and improved precision
      1. Boys tend to excel in large motor activities requiring strength and speed
   iii. Runs, climbs, skips rope, swims, rides bikes, and skates with skill and confidence
   iv. Enjoys team sports, but may still need to develop some of the necessary complex skills
   v. Likes to use hands for arts and crafts, cooking, woodworking, needlework, and building or taking apart objects, such as a clock or telephone
   vi. Draws pictures in detail
      1. Takes great joy in perfecting handwriting skills

d. Perceptual-cognitive development
   i. Develops ability to reason based more on experience and logic than intuition (Piaget’s stage of concrete operational thought)
      1. Still sees some situation as either/or, with “yes” or “no” answers, but is beginning to think in less concrete, more creative ways
      2. Understands abstract concepts if real (concrete) objects can be seen and manipulated
   ii. Likes challenges in arithmetic, but does not always understand mathematical relationships involved in complex operations, such as multiplication or division
   iii. Learns best through hands-on learning
      1. Prefers to research information in books or online, conduct science experiments, build models, or put on a play rather than listen to teachers’ lectures that produce the same information
   iv. Enjoys time at school
1. Finds it difficult to sit still for periods longer than thirty minutes
2. Forgets all about school as soon as it is over
v. Likes to use reading and writing skills for nonacademic activities:
   1. Compiling grocery lists
   2. Composing scripts for puppet shows
   3. Drawing and labeling neighborhood maps
vi. Shows improved understanding of cause and effect
vii. Continues to master concepts of time, weight, volume, and distance
viii. Traces events based on recall
     1. Able to think in reverse, following a series of occurrences back to their beginning
ix. Prefers reading books that are longer, descriptive and have complex plots
e. Speech and language development
   i. Talks, often nonstop and for no specific reason
      1. Sometimes used as an attention-getting device
   ii. Expresses feelings and emotions effectively through words
   iii. Understands and uses language as a system for communicating with others
   iv. Uses slang expressions commonly expressed by peers in conversation
   v. Recognizes that some words have double meanings
   vi. Finds humor in using illogical metaphors (play on words) in jokes and riddles
   vii. Shows advanced understanding of grammatical sequences
      1. Recognizes when a sentence is not grammatically correct
f. Social-emotional development
   i. Enjoys being with friends
      1. Seeks out friendships based on common interests and proximity (neighborhood children or classmates)
      2. Is verbally critical of the opposite gender
   ii. Has several “good” friends and an “enemy” or two who may change from day to day
   iii. Begins to show more interest in rules and basing games on realistic play
      1. Rules should be kept simple so everyone enjoys the game
   iv. Responds with name-calling and teasing when provoked
      1. Less likely to use physical aggression than previously
      2. Understands that such behavior can affect others’ feelings
      3. May still depend on adults to settle some disputes
v. Begins to develop moral reasoning
   1. Adopts social customs and moral values
      a. Understands honesty, right from wrong, fairness, good and bad, respect
   vi. Develops attachments to teachers, coaches, club leaders; may see them as “heroes”
      1. Often goes out of way to please and gain their attention
   vii. Acts with considerable confidence
      1. Knows everything and can do no wrong
   viii. Takes criticism as a personal attack; feelings are easily hurt
      1. Has difficulty at times dealing with failure and frustration

   g. Daily routines
      i. Eating
         1. Appetite may fluctuate depending on amount and vigor of activity
            a. Eats more with increased activity
            b. Prefers to eat when hungry rather than at prescribed times
         2. Eats at any time of day, yet may still be hungry at mealtime
            a. More open to trying new foods
            b. Many children enjoy cooking and helping with meal preparations
         3. Prefers certain favorite foods, usually pizza, French fries, tacos, ice cream, and cookies
            a. Has few dislikes but is less fond of cooked vegetables
         4. Battles over posture and table manners (elbows on the table; slouched in chair; fisted grasp of forks and spoons) but usually displays good manners at friends’ houses
      ii. Toileting, bathing, and dressing
         1. Shows limited interest in personal hygiene
            a. Often needs reminders to bathe, wash hair, brush teeth, put on clean clothes
         2. Requires coaxing to bathe, but once bath is started, may not want to get out
         3. Shows some interest in appearance
            a. Wants to dress and look like friends
            b. School clothes take on an important role in self-identification
         4. Manages own toileting needs without reminders
            a. Seldom gets up at night unless too much liquid is consumed before bedtime
      iii. Sleeping
         1. Seems unaware of fatigue and the need for sleep
2. Requires nine to ten hours of sleep to function throughout the day
   a. Wakes up in time for school without much coaxing if getting enough sleep
   b. Insufficient sleep has been linked to increased weight gain
3. Girls may have more bedtime rituals and take longer to fall asleep than do boys
4. Nightmares and fears of the dark may redevelop
   a. Some children experience sleepwalking, waking up in the middle of the night, or bed-wetting
   b. Parents should not criticize children who develop these problems and should seek professional help if they persist

iv. Play and social activities
1. Maintains activity level that fluctuates between extremes of high intensity and almost nonexistent activity
   a. May virtually collapse following periods of intense play
2. Spends free time reading magazines, playing computer games, watching videos, listening to music, and talking with friends
3. Likes to form and join clubs with secret codes, languages, and signs
4. Offers to help with simple household chores, such as dusting and sweeping, vacuuming, putting away groceries, and washing the car
5. Develops new hobbies or collections based on special interests

h. Developmental alerts
i. Check with a health care provider or early childhood specialist if, by the eleventh birthday, the child does not:
   1. Continue to grow at a rate appropriate for the child’s gender
   2. Show continued improvement of fine motor skills
   3. Make or keep friends
   4. Enjoy going to school and show interest in learning (have children’s hearing and vision tested; vision and hearing problems affect children’s ability to learn and their interest in learning)
   5. Approach new situations with reasonable confidence
      a. Show a willingness to try
   6. Handle failure and frustration in a constructive manner
      a. Learn from mistakes
   7. Sleep through the night or experiences prolonged problems with bed-wetting, nightmares, or sleepwalking
i. Safety concerns
   i. Media exposure
      1. Be aware of online Web sites that children visit
         a. Check the nature of information available on these web sites
         b. Teach children Internet safety rules: not giving out personal information (name, address, telephone number) online
         c. Block websites that you don’t want children to access
      2. Know what video games children play, what movies they watch and what music they listen to in order to determine if they are being exposed to violence, sex, or drug culture
   ii. Firearms
      1. Educate children about the dangers of guns and other weapons
         a. Stress the importance of not picking up firearms and always alerting an adult if one is found
      2. Store firearms and ammunition separately and keep in locked storage
      3. Never leave loaded firearms unattended
   iii. Traffic
      1. Insist that children wear seat belts on every motor trip
      2. Review safe practices for crossing streets, getting in and out of parked cars, riding a bicycle, skateboarding, and otherwise acting responsibly around traffic
      3. Make sure children always wear helmets and appropriate protective gear when engaged in sport activities

III. Eleven- and Twelve-Year-Olds
   a. Primarily endearing individuals
      i. Curious, energetic, helpful, and happy
         1. Assist with chores around the house, sometimes even volunteering before being asked.
      ii. Language, motor, and cognitive skills are reaching adult levels of sophistication
      iii. By age twelve, children have developed a sense of confidence in their capabilities and approach tasks with renewed interest
         1. Their emotional stability is generally smoother, and they encounter fewer conflicts with family and peers
      iv. Eleven- and twelve-year-olds enjoy participating in organized sports and physical activity
      v. In general, their health is good, and they begin to understand that a healthy lifestyle is not only important, but also requires dedicated awareness and effort
         1. Also see themselves as invincible
a. Few children believe they will ever experience serious health conditions, such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), lung cancer, diabetes, or heart disease, despite engaging in risky behaviors (e.g., smoking, following a sedentary lifestyle, eating a high-fat diet).

b. Growth and physical characteristics
i. Height and weight vary significantly from child to child
   1. Body shape and proportion are influenced by heredity and environment
   2. Birth length is tripled by the end of this period
ii. Girls are first to experience a prepuberty growth spurt, growing taller and weighing more than boys at this age
   1. May gain as much as 3.5 inches (8.75 cm) and 20 pounds (44 kg) in one year
   2. This period of rapid growth ends around age twelve for girls; boys’ growth rate is much slower
iii. Bodily changes mark approaching puberty: widening hips and budding breasts (girls), enlarging testes and penis (boys), appearance of pubic hair
iv. Menstruation may begin if it has not already started
   1. Some girls have vaginal discharge sooner
   2. May be upset if not progressing at the same rate as friends
v. Spontaneous erections are common among eleven- and twelve-year-old boys
   1. Pictures, physical activity, talk, and daydreams can trigger these events
   2. Some will begin to have nocturnal emissions (involuntary discharge of seminal fluid)
vi. Muscle mass and strength increase, especially in boys
   1. Girls often reach their maximum muscle strength by age twelve
vii. Posture is more erect
   1. Increases in bone size and length cause shoulders, collarbone, rib cage, and shoulder blades to appear more prominent
viii. Complaints of headaches and blurred vision are not uncommon if children are experiencing vision problems
   1. Added strain of schoolwork (smaller print, computer use, long periods of writing) may cause some children to request an eye examination

c. Motor development
i. Displays movements that are smoother and more coordinated
   1. However, rapid growth spurts may cause temporary clumsiness
ii. Enjoys participation in activities, such as dancing, karate, soccer, gymnastics, swimming, or organized games where improved skills can be used and tested

iii. Concentrates efforts on continued refinement of fine motor abilities through a variety of activities: model-building, rocket construction, drawing, woodworking, cooking, sewing, arts and crafts, writing letters, or playing an instrument
   1. Has now perfected all fundamental gross motor skills

iv. Requires outlets for release of excess energy that builds during the school day
   1. Enjoys team sports, riding bikes, playing in the park, taking dance lessons, going for a walk with friends

v. Has an abundance of energy but also fatigues quickly

vi. Uses improved strength to run faster, throw balls farther, jump higher, kick or bat balls more accurately, and wrestle with friends

d. Perceptual-cognitive development
   i. Begins thinking in more abstract terms
      1. Expanded memory ability enables improved long-term recall
      2. Now remembers stored information, so no longer must rely solely on experiencing an event in order to understand it
   
   ii. Succeeds in sequencing, ordering, and classifying because of improved long-term memory capacity
      1. These are skills needed for solving complex mathematics problems

iii. Accepts the idea that problems can have multiple solutions
   1. Often works through problems by talking aloud to oneself
   2. Develops solutions or responses based on logic

iv. Enjoys challenges, problem-solving, researching, and testing possible solutions
   1. Researches encyclopedias, the Internet, and dictionaries for information

v. Exhibits longer attention span
   1. Stays focused on completing school assignments and other tasks

vi. Develops detailed plans and lists to reach a desired goal

vii. Performs many routine tasks without having to think
   1. Increased memory sophistication makes automatic responses possible

viii. Shows more complex understanding of cause and effect
   1. Identifies factors that may have contributed to or caused an event: combining baking soda with vinegar releases a gas
2. Attaching a longer tail helps a kite fly higher in strong wind

e. Speech and language development
   i. Completes the majority of language development by the end of this stage
      1. Only subtle refinements are still necessary during the next few years
   ii. Talks and argues, often nonstop, with anyone who will listen
   iii. Uses longer and more complex sentence structures
   iv. Masters increasingly complex vocabulary
      1. Adds 4,000 to 5,000 new words each year, uses vocabulary skillfully to weave elaborate stories and precise descriptions
   v. Becomes a thoughtful listener
   vi. Understands that word statements may have implied (intended) meanings
      1. When your mother asks, “Is your homework done?” she really means you had better stop playing, gather up your books, and get started
   vii. Grasps concepts of irony and sarcasm
      1. Has a good sense of humor and enjoys telling jokes, riddles, and rhymes to entertain others
   viii. Masters several language styles, shifting back and forth based on the occasion
      1. More formal style when talking with teachers
      2. More casual style with parents
      3. Style that often includes slang and code words when conversing with friends

f. Social-emotional development
   i. Organizes group games and activities but may modify rules while the game is in progress
   ii. Views self-image as very important
      1. Typically defines self in terms of appearance, possessions, or activities
      2. May also make comparisons to much admired adults
   iii. Becomes increasingly self-conscious and self-focused
      1. Understands the need to assume responsibility for their own behavior and that there are consequences associated with one’s actions
   iv. Begins to think and talk about occupational choices and career plans
      1. Daydreams and fantasizes about the future
   v. Develops a critical and idealistic view of the world
      1. Realizes the world is larger than one’s own neighborhood
      2. Expresses interest in other cultures, foods, languages, and customs
Adapts dress, hairstyles, and mannerisms of popular sports figures and celebrities

Recognizes that loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, and being a good listener are prerequisites to becoming a good friend
1. Spends more time now with peers than with family members

Handles frustration with fewer emotional outbursts
1. Is able to discuss what is emotionally troubling
2. Accompanies words with facial expressions and gestures for emphasis

Daily routines

Eating
1. Eats nonstop and is always hungry
   a. Boys in particular may consume astonishing amounts and combinations of food
   b. Boys require approximately 2,500 calories daily
   c. Girls need 2,200 calories daily
2. Has few dislikes
   a. Willing to eat less preferred foods now and then
   b. Shows interest in trying foods from other cultures
3. Needs big snack upon arriving home from school
   a. Searches cabinets and refrigerator for anything to eat
4. Makes connection between eating (calories) and gaining or losing weight, especially girls
   a. Monitor closely for signs of a developing eating disorder

Toileting, bathing, and dressing
1. Cares for most personal needs without adult assistance
2. Bathes often and willingly
   a. Keeps self clean
   b. Often prefers showers
3. May still need occasional reminder to wash hands
4. Brushes and flosses teeth willingly
   a. Bright smile is important for appearance
   b. Dental checkups are recommended every six months to monitor rapidly erupting permanent teeth and to treat existing cavities
   c. Many children already have several decayed or filled teeth
5. Takes pride in appearance
   a. Likes to wear what is fashionable or what friends are wearing

Sleeping
1. Needs plenty of sleep
a. Growth spurts and active play often leave children feeling tired
2. Heads to bed without much resistance but now wants to stay up longer on weeknights and even later on weekends and nonschool days
3. Sleeps less soundly than previously
   a. May wake up early and read or finish homework before getting up
4. Bad dreams still trouble some eleven- and twelve-year-olds

iv. Play and social activities
1. Shows less interest in frivolous play
   a. Prefers goal-directed activities: money-making schemes, competing on a swim team, writing newsletters, attending summer camp
2. Gets involved in organized groups, such as sports teams, 4-H Club, Scouts, or just spends time alone with a friend or two
   a. Never without something to do
3. Likes animals
   a. Offers to care for and train pets
4. Reads enthusiastically
   a. Enjoys listening to music, attending movies, watching the news, surfing on the computer, and playing video games
5. Enjoys and participates in outdoor activities, such as skateboarding, rollerblading, basketball, riding bikes, or walking with friends

h. Developmental alerts
i. Check with a health care provider or early childhood specialist if, by the thirteenth birthday, the child does not:
   1. Have movements that are smooth and coordinated
   2. Have energy sufficient for playing, riding bikes, or engaging in other desired activities
   3. Stay focused on tasks at hand
   4. Understand basic cause-and-effect relationships
   5. Handle criticism and frustration with a reasonable response (physical aggression and excessive crying could be an indication of other, underlying problems)
   6. Exhibit a healthy appetite (frequent skipping of meals is not typical for this age group)
      a. Excessive eating should also be monitored
   7. Make and keep friends

i. Safety concerns
   i. Machinery
1. Teach children how to safely operate small appliances and equipment
2. Provide basic first aid instruction for responding to injuries

ii. Sports
1. Make sure proper protective equipment is available and worn
   a. Check its condition periodically
2. Provide instruction or make sure an adult is supervising any competition
   a. Check safety of area and equipment

iii. Substance abuse
1. Be aware of warning signs associated with “huffing” (inhaling) hazardous vapors from common household products, such as hair spray, polish remover, aerosol paints, and fabric protectors
   a. Note any unusual odor on the child’s breath or clothing, slurred speech, jitteriness, poor appetite, bloodshot eyes, or reddened areas around nose or mouth

iv. Water
1. Provide and require children to wear approved flotation devices whenever fishing, skiing, or boating
2. Teach basic water safety and continue to supervise water-related activities