



One of the most important jobs of a family is to help its children grow and develop into healthy, productive community members who value and respect their traditions and heritage. Children grow and change through several stages of development. Understanding these changes can help parents respond constructively to the needs of their children. Each stage builds upon the previous stage. Keep in mind that each child will develop at their own pace, so do not be disturbed if your child does not fit neatly into these stages. If you have concerns about your child's development, talk with your family physician, public health nurse or health aide.

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### ***Children in All Stages Need:***

- Adequate food, clothing and shelter.
- Security and stability in their family and community.
- Nurturing, affection (hugs and love) and encouragement.
- A range of learning activities.
- Consistent limits, rules and consequences.
- A sense they are valuable members of their family and community.



### ***Infancy & Preschool Children:***

- Are growing quickly
- Enjoy learning
- Develop language
- Are curious and enjoy new activities
- Are affectionate
- Enjoy being with other children
- Don't usually play cooperatively
- Are physically active
- Have short attention spans
- Prefer simple explanations

### ***Kindergarten thru 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Age Children:***

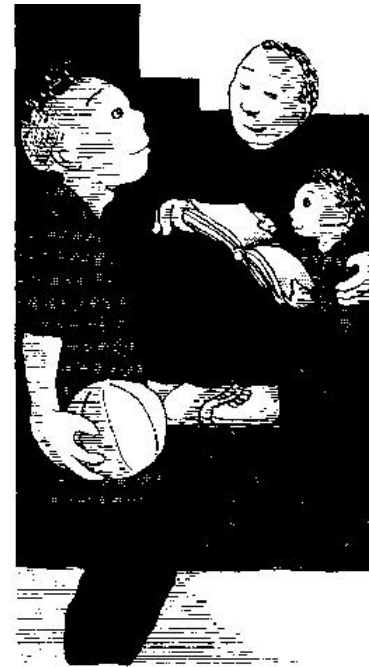
- Identify most with their parents and family
- Add the school setting to their lives
- Learn social skills - cooperation, caring for others
- Sometimes worry about being alone, in the dark, etc...
- Can understand, appreciate and follow rules
- Require support and encouragement as they take on new tasks and challenges





### ***Elementary School Age Children:***

- Relate more to school and community, although their family is an important influence in their lives
- Enjoy social aspects of school experience
- Can increasingly work and play cooperatively
- Appreciate praise from their parents and others
- Are influenced by outside role models
- May not understand how their actions affect others
- Are often sensitive to failure
- Appreciate increased responsibility and autonomy



A central goal of parenting  
is  
to develop capable people.  
- Stephen Glenn

### ***Middle School Age Pre-Teenagers:***

- May test limits with misbehaving at home or school
- Are experiencing physical growth and hormonal changes that frequently may make them moody, difficult to get along with or self-conscious
- Are capable of abstract thinking and reasoning
- Are able to consider many factors in making decisions
- Are more oriented toward the present than the future
- Can be uncomfortable about their social skills
- Actively seek autonomy and independence from parents
- Value appearance, peer group acceptance, and "grown up" behavior
- Feel indestructible and may take part in dangerous challenges

### ***High School Aged Teenagers:***

- Can consider the future as well as the present
- Are in transition to the adult world
- Value acceptance of close friends and other peers
- Seek individuality - a distinct identity apart from their family
- Seek responsibility, recognition, autonomy and financial independence
- Are involved in significant personal relationships
- Continue to establish a personal system of values
- Challenge established systems and ways of doing things
- May be very idealistic, with a strong sense of justice

Adapted from the Michigan Parent Handbook developed by the Michigan Resource Center



Community Resource Kit

Alaska Children's Trust 1-800-643-KIDS

Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network. [akchildabuseprevention.org](http://akchildabuseprevention.org)