

Baumrind found that parents of competent children are **authoritative parents**. They have confidence in their abilities as parents and therefore provide a model of competence for their children to imitate. When they establish limits and explain reasons for restrictions, they encourage their children to set standards for themselves and to think about why certain procedures should be followed. And because these parents are warm and affectionate, children value their positive responses as rewards for mature behavior. The children of authoritative parents tend to be self-motivated. They stand up for what they believe, yet are able to work productively with others.

**Authoritarian parents**, by contrast, make demands and wield power, but their failure to take into account the child's point of view and their lack of warmth lead to resentment and insecurity on the part of the child. Children of authoritarian parents may do as they are told, but they are likely to do so out of compliance or fear, not out of a desire to earn love or approval. They also tend to be other-directed rather than inner-directed.

**Permissive parents**, as defined by Baumrind, are disorganized, inconsistent, and lack confidence, and their children are likely to imitate such behavior. Permissive parents make few demands of their children, allow them to make many of their own decisions, do not require them to exhibit mature behavior, and tend to avoid confrontation with their children. As a result, such children are markedly less assertive and intellectually skilled than are children from authoritative homes.

Finally, **rejecting-neglecting parents** do not make demands on their children or respond to their emotional needs. They do not structure the home environment, are not supportive of their children's goals and activities, and may actively reject or neglect their child-rearing responsibilities. Children of rejecting-neglecting parents are the least socially and intellectually competent of the four types.

You might refer to these observations not only when you plan how to encourage competence but also when you think about the kind of classroom atmosphere you hope to establish.

### Pause & reflect

Given the characteristics of preschool and kindergarten children, what classroom atmosphere and instructional tactics would you use to foster learning and enjoyment of school?

## PRIMARY GRADES (1, 2, AND 3; SIX, SEVEN, AND EIGHT YEARS)

### Physical Characteristics: Primary Grades

1. *Primary grade children are still extremely active. Because they are frequently required to participate in sedentary pursuits, energy is often released in the form of nervous habits—for example, pencil chewing, fingernail biting, and general fidgeting.* To minimize fidgeting, avoid situations in which your students must stay glued to their desks for long periods. Have frequent breaks, and try to work activity (such as bringing papers to your desk) into the lessons themselves. When children use computer software that contains sound effects, distribute headphones to ensure that they concentrate on their own work and to minimize distractions between students.

One of the effects of the current emphasis on preparing students to meet state learning standards is the reduction or elimination of recess time, even for kindergarten and primary grade students. One survey, for example, found that 30 percent of kindergarten classrooms did not have a recess period (Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005). Are educators acting wisely in seeking to reduce the number and length of breaks young children receive in order to focus more intensively on teaching academic skills? Not according to cognitive development theory and research.

As we noted in the previous chapter, Piaget believed that children's ability to think beyond their own perspective is greatly facilitated by peer interaction because such interactions involve other points of view that must be comprehended and accommodated. During the school day, these types of interactions occur most frequently during such unstructured activities as recess. A second theoretical perspective, called the *cognitive immaturity hypothesis*, maintains that giving young students unstructured breaks reduces cognitive interference from preceding instruction and increases attention to subsequent instruction. Research findings support the accuracy of these theoretical positions. For example, the opportunity for kindergarten students to play with peers during recess was a significant predictor of first-grade achievement. Second, children (especially boys) who received a recess break earlier rather than later in the morning were more attentive after the break than before (Pelligrini & Bohn, 2005).

2. *Children still need rest periods; they become fatigued easily as a result of physical and mental exertion.* Schedule quiet activities after strenuous ones (story time after recess, for example) and relaxing activities after periods of mental concentration (art after spelling or math).
3. *Large-muscle control is still superior to fine coordination. Many children, especially boys, have difficulty manipulating a pencil.* Try not to schedule too much writing at one time. If drill periods are too long, skill may deteriorate, and children may develop a negative attitude toward writing or toward school in general.
4. *Many students may have difficulty focusing on small print or objects. Quite a few children may be farsighted because of the shallow shape of the eye.* Try not to require too much reading at one stretch. Be on the alert for children rubbing their eyes or blinking, signs of eye fatigue. When you are preparing class handouts, be sure to print in large letters or use a large-size computer font. Until the lens of the eye can be easily focused, young children have trouble looking back and forth from near to far objects.

Although many children at this age have had extensive exposure to computer games and video games and therefore have begun to develop greater eye-hand coordination with images on screen, it's still appropriate to select software programs that incorporate easy-to-see graphics and easy-to-click buttons to avoid frustration.

5. *Children tend to be extreme in their physical activities. They have excellent control of their bodies and develop considerable confidence in their skills. As a result, they often underestimate the danger involved in their more daring exploits. The accident rate is at a peak in the third grade.* You might check on school procedures for handling injuries, but also try to prevent reckless play. During recess, for example, encourage class participation in "wild" but essentially safe games (such as relay races involving stunts) to help the children get devil-may-care tendencies out of their systems. In your journal, you might list other games to use for this purpose.

Primary grade children have difficulty focusing on small print

Accident rate peaks in third grade because of confidence in physical skills

**Table 3.2** Applying Theories of Development to the Primary Grade Years

**Psychosocial development:** industry vs. inferiority. Students need to experience a sense of industry through successful completion of tasks. Try to minimize and correct failures to prevent development of feelings of inferiority.

**Cognitive development:** transition from preoperational to concrete operational stage. Students gradually acquire the ability to solve problems by generalizing from concrete experiences.

**Moral development:** morality of constraint, preconventional. Rules are viewed as edicts handed down by authority. Focus is on physical consequences, meaning that obeying rules should bring benefit in return.

**General factors to keep in mind:** Students are having first experiences with school learning, are eager to learn how to read and write, and are likely to be upset by lack of progress. Initial attitudes toward schooling are being established. Initial roles in a group are being formed, roles that may establish a lasting pattern (for example, leader, follower, loner, athlete, or underachiever).

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**JOURNAL ENTRY**  
 Safe But Strenuous Games
 

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6. *Bone growth is not yet complete. Therefore, bones and ligaments can't stand heavy pressure.* If you notice students indulging in strenuous tests of strength (punching each other on the arm until one person can't retaliate, for example), you might suggest that they switch to competition involving coordinated skills. During team games, rotate players in especially tiring positions (for example, the pitcher in baseball).

### Social Characteristics: Primary Grades

The characteristics noted here are typical of both primary and elementary grade students and underlie the elementary level characteristics described in the next section.

Rigid interpretation of rules in primary grades

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**JOURNAL ENTRY**  
 Enjoyable Team Games
 

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1. *Children become somewhat more selective in their choice of friends and are likely to have a more or less permanent best friend.* Friendships are typically same-sex relationships marked by mutual understanding, loyalty, cooperation, and sharing. Competition between friends should be discouraged because it can become intense and increase their dissatisfaction with each other. Although friends disagree with each other more often than with nonfriends, their conflicts are shorter, less heated, and less likely to lead to a dissolving of the relationship (Hartup, 1989; Ross & Spielmacher, 2005).
2. *Primary grade children often like organized games in small groups, but they may be overly concerned with rules or get carried away by team spirit.* Keep in mind that, according to Piaget, children at this age practice the morality of constraint: they find it difficult to understand how and why rules should be adjusted to special situations. When you divide a class into teams, you may be amazed at the amount of rivalry that develops (and the noise level generated). One way to reduce both the rivalry and the noise is to promote the idea that games should be fun. Another technique is to rotate team membership frequently. If you know any especially good but not excessively competitive team games, note them in your journal. You might also consult *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2nd ed., 1995), by Robert Slavin, for descriptions of several team learning games that emphasize cooperation.
3. *Quarrels are still frequent. Words are used more often than physical aggression, but many boys (in particular) may indulge in punching, wrestling, and shoving.* Occasional fights are to be expected. If certain children, especially the same pair, seem to be involved in one long battle, you should probably try to effect a truce. But when you can, give children a chance to work out their own solutions to disagreements; social conflict is effective in spurring cognitive growth (Howe, Rinaldi, Jennings, & Petrakos, 2002; Murphy & Eisenberg, 2002; Tudge & Rogoff, 1989).

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**JOURNAL ENTRY**  
 Handling Feuds and Fights
 

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Although occasional quarrels and minor physical aggression will likely have only temporary effects on students, you should keep an eye out for students who are frequent targets of insults, threats, physical aggression, and exclusion from the peer group. Research has shown that third- and fourth-graders who were frequently victimized by classmates had lower scores on standardized achievement tests, lower grades, and higher levels of depression than their nonvictimized peers both at the time the incidents occurred and a year later (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, & Toblin, 2005).

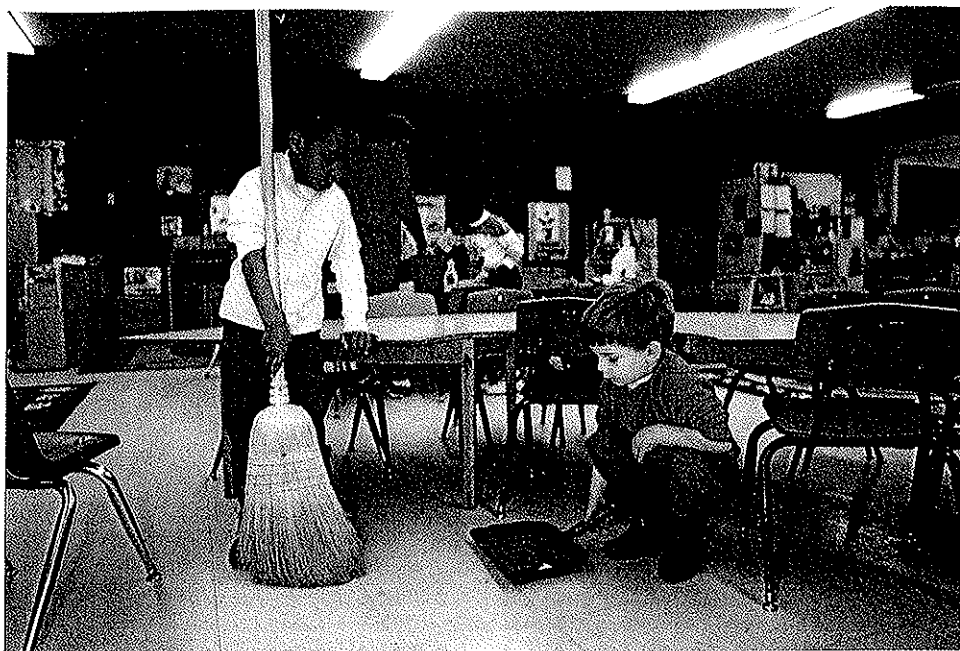
### Emotional Characteristics: Primary Grades

To encourage industry, use praise, avoid criticism

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1. *Students are sensitive to criticism and ridicule and may have difficulty adjusting to failure.* Young children need frequent praise and recognition. Because they tend to admire or even worship their teachers, they may be crushed by criticism. Provide positive reinforcement as frequently as possible, and reserve your negative reactions for nonacademic misbehavior. Scrupulously avoid sarcasm and ridicule. Remember that this is the stage of industry versus inferiority; if you make a child feel inferior, you may prevent the development of industry.

*Most primary grade students eagerly strive to obtain "helping" jobs around the classroom. Accordingly, you may wish to arrange a rotating schedule for such jobs.*



#### JOURNAL ENTRY

Spreading Around  
Responsibilities

2. *Most primary grade children are eager to please the teacher.* They like to help, enjoy responsibility, and want to do well in their schoolwork. The time-honored technique for satisfying the urge to help is to assign jobs (eraser cleaner, wastebasket emptier, paper distributor, and the like) on a rotating basis. In your journal, you might note other techniques—for example, were there any particular responsibilities you enjoyed as a student?
3. *Children are becoming sensitive to the feelings of others.* Unfortunately, this permits them to hurt others deeply by attacking a sensitive spot without realizing how devastating their attack really is. It sometimes happens that teasing a particular child who has reacted to a gibe becomes a group pastime. Be on the alert for such situations. If you are able to make a private and personal appeal to the ringleaders, you may be able to prevent an escalation of the teasing, which may make a tremendous difference in the way the victim feels about school.

#### Cognitive Characteristics: Primary Grades

1. *Children understand that there are different ways to know things and that some ways are better than others.* When an observation can be explained with either a possible (that is, a theoretical) explanation or an evidence-based explanation, preschoolers fail to see one as more compelling than the other, but primary grade children usually prefer the explanation based on evidence. This is the beginning of scientific thinking (Kuhn, 2002). In one study described by Deanna Kuhn (1999, 2002), preschoolers viewed a set of pictures depicting two individuals running a race. They were asked to indicate who won the race and to explain what led them to that conclusion. One of the runners was wearing a fancier running shoe, and some of the children said that was the reason he beat his opponent. But because this same individual was also holding a trophy and exhibiting a wide grin in the last picture, some children cited that fact as evidence that the boy won the race. By the time they reach the primary grades, virtually all children understand that a fact-based explanation is superior to a theory-based explanation and so point to the second picture as the reason for their conclusion.
2. *Primary grade children begin to understand that learning and recall are caused by particular cognitive processes that they can control.* Not until children are about seven or eight years of age do they begin to realize that learning and memory

Awareness of cognitive  
processes begins to emerge

**JOURNAL ENTRY**

Assigning Short and Varied Tasks

stem from cognitive processes that are under their conscious control. When learning words, for example, younger children may need to be prompted or directed to group the words by category because they do not realize that such a technique aids recall. Likewise, they may not recognize their lack of comprehension when they read difficult or unfamiliar material and may need to be prompted to think about how well they are understanding what they read. By the primary grades, this awareness and monitoring of one's learning processes, called *metacognition*, begins to emerge (Schneider, 2002). We will return to the subject in Chapter 8, "Information-Processing Theory."

3. *Because of continuing neurological development and limited experience with formal learning tasks, primary grade children do not learn as efficiently as older children do.* Therefore, you should assign primary grade children relatively short tasks and switch periodically from cognitively demanding activities to less demanding ones. Providing youngsters with periodic breaks, such as recess, increases their ability to attend to and perform well on subsequent classroom tasks. The nature of the recess activity does not seem to be important. It can be physical activity in a schoolyard or playing games in class (Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1997).
4. *Talking aloud to oneself reaches a peak between the ages of six and seven and then rapidly declines.* Don't be surprised or concerned if you observe students talking to themselves, either when they are by themselves or when they are with classmates. This is a well-documented phenomenon that Vygotsky called private speech. Vygotsky described private speech as a transition between speaking with others and thinking to oneself. Private speech is first noticeable around age three and may constitute anywhere from 20 to 60 percent of a child's utterances between the ages of six and seven. By age eight, however, it all but disappears and is replaced by silent, or inner, speech (Berk, 1994; Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Feigenbaum, 2002).

As its name implies, private speech is not intended to communicate a message to someone else, nor does it always take the form of complete sentences. One important purpose of private speech, which may consist of single words or phrases, is to help children clarify their thinking and solve difficult problems, such as those that arise in the course of doing math problems or reading unfamiliar material. For example, a child may count on her fingers out loud while working on a math problem and then say, "The answer's ten." Observations of first and second graders found that those who talked to themselves while doing math problems did better at math the following year than did students who exhibited little private speech. Another interesting finding is that students who exhibit the greatest use of self-guiding private speech are more likely to have authoritative mothers (Berk, 1994).

## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (GRADES 4 AND 5; NINE AND TEN YEARS)**

### **Physical Characteristics: Elementary Grades**

1. *Both boys and girls become leaner and stronger.* In general, there is a decrease in the growth of fatty tissue and an increase in bone and muscle development. In a year's time, the average child of this age will grow about 2 to 3 inches and gain about 5 to 7 pounds. As a result, the typical child will tend to have a lean and gangly look. Although the average nine-year-old boy is slightly taller and heavier than the average nine-year-old girl, this difference all but disappears a year later. And from age eleven until about fourteen and a half, girls are slightly heavier and taller than boys. Because secondary sex characteristics have not yet appeared, boys and girls can be mistaken for one another. This is particularly likely to happen when girls have close-cropped hair, boys have very long hair, and both genders wear gender-neutral clothing (Berk, 2006; Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Hetherington & Parke, 1993).