

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN THE BEHAVIOR OF THE
NORMAL SIX-YEAR-OLD CHILD

by

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INTRODUCTION

Those who are associated with children such as teachers, parents, potential parents, or from any other standpoint, whether it be professional or non-professional, become interested in their development and behavior. This interest has brought about studies in child behavior, growth, and development. To fully understand a child there must be a knowledge of principles of growth, and how these principles can be applied in an actual situation with a six-year-old child.

No two-year-old children grow exactly alike in every respect, nor is there a typical six-year-old child, but there are certain characteristics which do seem to be predominant and indicate what can be expected in the normal six-year-old child.

There are definite needs in the life of a six-year-old that should be understood. Neglect to understand the behavior of a six-year-old child, his physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth, his play activities, and school learnings cause confusion between the child and the adult. The ability to understand and appreciate the six-year-old child as an individual will normally result in a satisfactory relationship with him.

The purpose of this report is to present to teachers, parents, and others who work with children some knowledge of the behavior of the six-year-old child. This study may aid those interested in recognizing the emotional behavior, physical growth, social nature, intellectual status, and play activities of a normal six-year-old child which are factors necessary for proper adjustments

of the child and the adult.

The problem of recognizing the normal behavior of the six-year-old child and how to cope with this behavior is a concern for all who deal with children. Through research and observation, some of the behavior has been identified which should enable adults to better understand the six-year-old child. It is important to know how a child of six behaves and why. There are many things about the sixth year that adults do not realize are part of being six.

In this report the writer has attempted to show the natural growth and behavior of the child as revealed through research, related literature, and experience and thinking of the writer.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The bodily growth of the six-year-old child has begun to slow down, compared to the way the child has grown earlier. The six-year-old child is not quite as vigorous and staunch as he was at five. The sixth year brings about fundamental changes, somatic and psychological. The child's body chemistry undergoes subtle changes which result in increasing the susceptibility to infectious disease. Nose and throat difficulties are quite frequent and otitis media comes to a peak. Many other important developmental changes occur which affect the mechanisms of vision and whole neuromotor system (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 89).

When the child is six he is approximately two-thirds as tall as he will be as an adult. His body, as a whole, will be about two-fifths of the size of an adult body (Strang, 22, p. 319).

An average American child of six stands about 46 inches tall and weighs about 48 pounds (Mussen and Conger, 16, p. 313). According to Strang (21, p. 319), the average annual gain of a six-year-old child is about one or two inches in height, and three to five pounds in weight. Also, the body of the six-year-old child lengthens out while the feet grow larger. The heart is in a period of relatively rapid growth.

Anderson and Goodenough (2, p. 4) stated that by the age of six, 90 percent of the brain's growth has been accomplished, and the number of brain cells does not increase throughout life. Jenkins et al. (12, p. 110) commented that the brain had almost achieved its full weight by the age of six.

A girl of six is about a year advanced over a boy of the same age. Due to this speedier development, girls are often slightly ahead of boys of the same age in ability to write, dress themselves, and to do many other things which require muscular control (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 3).

Vision and Hearing

At the age of six, eye-hand coordination is improving steadily. The six-year-old child's eyes are not ready for much close work. They are not yet mature in either size or shape and seem to be relatively shallow, which accounts for a tendency toward farsightedness (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 110).

A child's eyesight is among the first things a teacher must be concerned about and investigate. Teachers usually test the children's eyes and often pick up only noticeable defects. The

parents should take the child to a competent eye specialist before he starts to school (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 54).

Teeth

One of the characteristics of a six-year-old child is his "toothless grin." The six-year-old molars are the most important teeth in childhood and usually most neglected. There are four permanent teeth called the six-year-old molars and they do not take the place of any baby teeth but grow directly behind them (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 5). These teeth are often mistaken for baby teeth. The six-year-old molars have an important effect on the shape of the jaw, as did the baby teeth (Pryor, 17, p. 203). The dentist should be visited by the six-year-old child every three or four months, as the dentist considers these six-year-old molars the most important permanent teeth, because they are corner posts of the mouth and have the largest grinding surface (Pryor, 17, p. 204).

Since girls are more physiologically mature, they shed their teeth a little earlier than boys (Strang, 22, p. 319). The shedding of the first teeth is an exciting experience for boys and girls alike. They are naively proud to lose their first tooth and believe in dental fairies, in elfins, and other supernatural agencies (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 97).

Motor Control and Growth

At six a child is developing and using large body muscles more rapidly as he is running, jumping, climbing apparatus,

sliding on sliding boards, chasing and playing dodging games which offer opportunities to move around a great deal and help development. He has basic motor skills and enjoys doing all sorts of stunts which involve the whole body (How Children Develop, 7, p. 19). He delights in strenuous physical activity and often over-exerts himself. He is only beginning to develop small muscles through activities such as tying shoe laces, which may be very frustrating to him. Tying a bowknot item on the Stanford Binet Test was passed by 35 percent of the six-year-old children compared to 69 percent of seven-year-old children (Strang, 22, p. 330).

The six-year-old child is able to climb stairs like an adult. He has a well-developed sense of equilibrium which enables him to stand on one foot for several seconds. His feet point forward in walking, therefore he can and likes to walk on a chalk line (Pryor, 17, p. 205). The six-year-old child is learning to roller skate, ride a bike, bat a ball, and can hammer and saw.

He has better control of arms and leg muscles than he has of hands and finger muscles. Writing requires a coordination of eye and hand activities, which is difficult for the six-year-old child (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 194). It takes a lot of practice to develop coordination of eye and hand. He is easily distracted and may continue to work with his hands while he watches another activity (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 101).

The sixth year is an active year for a child. He is almost constantly moving about, first one place and then another. He is

exploring, wanting to see and touch everything. He plays first with one thing and then changes to something different. He likes anything that runs on wheels, wagons, scooters, wind-up toys, and frequently attempts to make something that runs, which is very crude. The six-year-old child's muscular development is still uneven and incomplete (Reynolds, 18, p. 119).

It is not uncommon for a six-year-old child to complain that his hand is tired from trying to write, draw, or paint. He is often seen in an awkward position attempting to write or color. He may stand up at his seat, lean over a table, or rest his head on his arm (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 100).

The child of six has long been cutting out pictures with scissors, drawing with crayons, and fitting together pieces of simple puzzles but now he is able to cut and fit the pictures more accurately (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 21).

The skills of whistling, turning handsprings, balancing a pole on the open hand are bodily movements which bring about more and more control over muscles (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 21). He wiggles on his chair, falls out occasionally, and this sixth year could be defined by a first-grade teacher as a "wiggling, squirming" stage.

Health

Partly due to the uneven physical growth, a six-year-old child is particularly susceptible to various contagious diseases which he encounters. He is a difficult patient, especially during convalescence, as his ever-shifting mind is requiring some

different and new type of entertainment to keep him as quiet as possible while in bed (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 111). He enjoys coloring books, small toys, modeling clay, and cut-outs.

A six-year-old child is a "complaining child, yet his complaints should be taken seriously, as often his legs and hands pain him. He perspires a great deal and complains about being too hot. The mucous membranes are easily inflamed. Allergy responses are high among the six-year-old children" (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 106).

A child of six tires easily, but hates to give up and rest. He is often too hurried, too worried to eat, or rest properly. He needs 11 to 12 hours of sleep daily. At six he will go to bed quite easily but wants a bedtime story read to him. He awakens around seven in the morning and goes to the toilet by himself (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 104).

The hustle and bustle of morning rush, the parents going to work and meeting the school bus schedule often cause tension and upset the child. He forgets his bathroom routine (Reynolds, 18, p. 116). The six-year-old child can use a towel quite well and is capable of washing his hands and face reasonably well but not spontaneously. He needs and likes to be assisted in his washing up. If help is not given, he will probably come to the table unwashed (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 105).

Clothes

The six-year-old child is clothes conscious and is very proud of new clothes; yet he fails to take very good care of them.

When removing them, he flings his clothes in all directions. He is slow in dressing as he lacks the desire to dress (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 105-106).

Health-Appetite

The six-year-old child has a good appetite and will eat more between meals than at meal time. He does not often eat a good breakfast, as six-year-olds are easily upset from school and develop stomach ache, nausea, and infrequently vomit at breakfast. Gesell recommends a liquid diet of milk and fruit juice for breakfast. The child often wants something to eat before going to bed or will awaken during the night, asking for food. His eyes are bigger than his stomach and he will ask for seconds or for larger helpings than he is able to consume (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 101). At this age the child eats what the rest of the family eats; no special attention is given to him as to food preparation.

Food should be made easy to eat and appetizing. The six-year-old child is suspicious of new food and will refuse to taste it (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 47). His appetite can be boosted through new experiences and playing games. They prefer plain cooking, raw vegetables to cooked ones. He may refuse to eat meat as he does not want to chew it. The textures of his food are extremely important; he refuses to eat lumpy, stringy foods (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 101).

The six-year-old child's manners at the table are poor. He swings his legs under the table while eating, is always reaching for something and spilling something else, stuffing his mouth too

full and trying to talk. He refuses to wear a bib and forgets to use a napkin. If he uses a napkin, it is usually found on the floor. Food particles around his mouth are wiped with the back of his hand across his face (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 102).

SOCIAL STATUS

There are two worlds for the six-year-old child to adjust to: the world of home and the world of school (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 96).

Home and School

For a long time the six-year-old child has waited for the opportunity to go to school. He is ready for school, but the first day is a big step for him, and he needs encouragement. A verbal pat will give him strength to enter this new experience (Stewart and Gruenberg, 21, p. 59). The six-year-old child views the world in terms of his own feelings about himself and his accomplishments (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 13-14). This is one of the greatest turning points for him, as he is stepping beyond the family circle into school and community life. Until now his relationships have usually been limited to his own family and a few neighboring children. Now he is six and must find his own place and make his own friends under entirely new conditions. His success at school depends upon his ability, his own worth as an individual, and his contribution to his group. This transition between home and school, between the life of a child protected by the home and that of a beginner, who must meet the often rigorous

demands and competitions of the first grade work, is a difficult period in his life (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 109).

The six-year-old child is no longer dependent upon his mother but still needs her love and affection which will encourage him to become independent and capable. He must become a person in his own right (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 198).

His success depends upon his liking to go to school to learn and liking other children and people. Good feelings are needed for a six-year-old to learn (Hymes, 9, p. 25).

School and Learning

The six-year-old child should be able to work and play without being compared with other children who are six. He needs to feel secure and competent. The social progress of a six-year-old child is social maturity involving his ability to share himself with others (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 15). He is in a period of learning and not one of final achievement. Steady growth is a sign of success. The six-year-old child needs praise, encouragement, and understanding from his teacher as well as his parent. At six he gets along well with other children, but is self-reliant enough to amuse himself in various ways when he plays alone (Up the Years From One to Six, 23, p. 76).

Eagerness to learn is one of the outstanding traits of a six-year-old child. It is an age of "why." He comes to school wanting to learn, and eager to know about what is happening now (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 18). This is his first formal learning which has to go on all through life. Starting to school is the beginning of

a big lifetime task (Hymes, 9, p. 4-5). School is fun, a place to play with other children, interesting things to do, and a chance to grow up a bit. He likes to achieve and is proud of his accomplishments. When a six-year-old child does something for someone, he feels big and important. School helps him to achieve this feeling. He is away from his mother's "don't" and on his own (Hymes, 8, p. 101). He is striving to become an individual on his own, yet somewhat fearful that someone else may come along and displace him (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 194).

The six-year-old child's play behavior and his interests undergo rapid expansion and become more socialized. He often plans for his future as to what he is going to be when he is grown (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 21). He wants his environment to have a familiar set pattern, as he has so many new experiences that he prefers psychological landmarks to remain fixed (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 96).

The six-year-old child selects a friend at school of his own choosing. His best friend today will probably be forgotten tomorrow. The friends of a six-year-old child are perhaps his most important acquisition. The attitude toward success which he receives from friends has far-reaching influence in his life.

EMOTIONAL STATUS

The transition period which the six-year-old child passes through is somewhat similar to teen-age adolescence. He is becoming more on his own, and his success depends upon his own efforts (Strang, 22, p. 316). New propensities are erupting,

new impulses, new feelings, new activities are developing in the underlying nervous system of a six-year-old child. He tends to to to extremes under slight stress, whenever under compulsion to use his most recently acquired powers. He is an active growing organism entering new fields of action (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 90).

Gesell and Ilg (6, p. 109) described a six-year-old child as "sunshine and shadow, or either-or, utterly sweet or utterly horrid." He may meet new experiences with shyness or sheer abandon. He may declare he knew the answer to a question yet refused to answer. The six-year-old child is wonderfully good at school and terrible at home, or vice versa.

Emotional Feelings

The parent of a six-year-old child or the teacher often finds it extremely difficult to deal with his behavior. He is violently emotional with emotion functioning at opposite extremes. He wants to be first, to be best loved, to have the most of everything. One minute he loves; the next minute he hates. His mother has been removed to second place since he started to school, and he blames her for whatever goes wrong. A great deal goes wrong for the six-year-old child as he is demanding of others and very rigid in his demands. He is having trouble to adapt to others as things have to be just so and his way (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 34). The six-year-old child has a real job, that of growing, which needs an adult interest in him, praise, enthusiasm, and support (Hymes, 9, p. 9).

The six-year-old child giggles and grimaces, acts silly, trying to make others laugh. He wants to be the life of a party and monopolize the conversation, do gymnastics, act foolishly, and interrupt without realizing what he is really doing (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 110).

The child of six tends to be extremely negative in his response to others and refuses to do something if he does not want to do it (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 34). He resents punishment and hates correction. A six-year-old child is very noisy and boisterous and becomes easily excited or emotionally upset (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 110). He thrives on praise but finds it most difficult to accept criticism, blame, or punishment. He wants others to give in to him, for his way of thinking has to be right. The six-year-old child is rigid and unadaptable. If he is winning, everything is fine. If others win, he accuses them of cheating, and tears and tantrums occur. Things need to go well for him; then he is enthusiastic, eager, ready for anything (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 35).

Emotional Attitudes

The six-year-old child believes in Santa Claus. His overwhelming interest and great excitement at Christmas time are expressed. The joy the child experiences in Santa Claus is certainly worth any little disillusionment which may follow later. Santa Claus, to a six-year-old child, is a real man, living in a real house, and has a real wife. He prints a letter to Santa with a list of toys and gifts he would like to receive. Often a

six-year-old child denies fiercely any hint that Santa is not real. Yet, this denial may just precede a beginning skepticism (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 301-302).

Ilg and Ames (11, p. 302) quoted Dr. Gesell, "Usually a child can assimilate, adore, and in time deny the concept of Santa Claus without suffering any scars of disillusionment."

The six-year-old is developing a feeling relationship with God. Prayers are important to a six-year-old child. He feels confident that his prayers could be answered (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 128). He loves to pray, and religion is important to him. He is interested in Sunday School and Church and enjoys hearing stories from the Bible. He especially likes to hear the story of "Our Little Lord Jesus" (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 302).

Difficult Age

The sixth year is a difficult year in a child's life. The adult can make it a little easier for him by respecting the fact that he is having a difficult time within himself as well as his relations with others. Many techniques should be used and unhappy incidents by-passed, if possible, during this sixth year. During this period in a child's life, he is at his worst with his mother. He will hug his mother and tell her he loves her and the next minute burst out with anger and hatred (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 35).

He nags his mother, back-talks, is fidgety, has a cranky attitude, and demands attention at once. These are all a part of his striving to grow up (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 201).

The sixth year is exasperating and irritating to adults who do not understand the development which he passes through. He is restless and finds it difficult to sit still because of his tremendous drive toward activity (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 19).

A six-year-old child manifests his bipolarities in many various ways. He goes from one extreme to another, may be crying and then easily diverted into laughter, or his laughter into crying (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 91).

The emotional reactions of a six-year-old child become more subtle and display a more varied manner, yet are attached to a greater variety of stimuli. The six-year-old child is developing a sense of humor and can better see a joke in a story as well as in an actual situation (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 211).

The six-year-old child's body is healthy, supple, sensitive, and alert. His whole action system reacts--when he smiles, he fairly dances with joy--when unhappy he cries copiously and shakes with grief. Even during his sleep, his whole organism is pitched into his dreams (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 94). He loves his parents deeply underneath, but usually does not seem to express himself. He does not enjoy being kissed, at least not in public. In the desire to become more independent of his parents, he turns to trusted adults outside his family for ideas and knowledge (Spock, 20, p. 313).

The child of six wants adult approval of his undertaking. He desires to be close to adults yet wants to be on his own. He thrives on praise but criticism is difficult for him to learn to take (Strang, 22, p. 356).

The sixth year is an expansive age. The six-year-old child is ready for almost anything. His desire for new experience is prodigious, which causes him to want all of everything (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 34).

His body is a very sensitive indicator of his feelings. Tension or pressure may make him sick to his stomach, or excitement cause the loss of appetite, excessive fatigue, loss of sleep, or bed wetting. A six-year-old child cannot make wise judgment about his own energy. He gets "wound-up" and cannot relax easily. Therefore, it is necessary to have occasional quiet moments in a child's schedule, even if he does not take a nap (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 200-201).

His dreams are about fires, wild animals, war, bad men, and about his family. A six-year-old child frequently laughs in his sleep or talks out loud giving demands. "Don't do that," or "Put it down." He calls out names of his family and playmates during his sleep (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 114).

Emotional Behavior

The six-year-old child displays many desirable emotional traits, some of which are outstanding, including persistence, purposefulness, generosity, sociability, and pride in possession or accomplishment (Pryor, 17, p. 212).

The six-year-old child's behavior comes in pairs. He is often under a compulsion to make a decision or choose between evenly competing opposites. It is hard for him to make a simple decision as to "what will he have--vanilla icecream or chocolate

icecream?" This is a difficult choice for a six-year-old child for he is immature and cannot adeptly cancel out a rival alternative. The complication simplifies as he matures (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 90).

The six-year-old child should be given freedom of choice, a chance to make decisions when the occasion arises. Allow the six-year-old child to choose the dessert for a certain meal or let him select and buy a shirt. These decisions will often give him a much-needed sense of importance (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 198).

In the complex culture, the six-year-old child is in a period of development where alternatives crowd upon him rather thickly. He lacks command of his motor impulses and his inter-personal relationships. He is aware of more than he can manage. He attempts things which are too difficult for him. At Christmas he wants a good many presents but cannot decide exactly what he wants. His manners are hasty and sketchy as he is active and acquisitive (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 91-92).

The six-year-old child boasts constantly, always trying to establish superiority of his possessions (How Children Develop, 7, p. 22). He wants everyone to have just punishment and rewards (How Children Develop, 7, p. 26). Cheating is actually a matter of great interest to him, but he has come only far enough to be concerned about the cheating of others. He is quick to complain about his playmates' cheating, but he is equally quick to cheat himself if he needs to in order to win (Ilg and Ames, 11, p. 252).

The six-year-old child uses body postures, gestures, and speech to give expression to emotions and ideas which are

materializing within him (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 93). Through daily experiences he can realize what kinds of behavior bring the most satisfaction. As the six-year-old continues in growth, he gradually becomes more critical of himself and less critical of others (Strang, 22, p. 357). His behavior at home may disturb his parents but he may appear quite grown up when he is away from home. He imitates mannerisms of mother, father, or a "beloved teacher," which are signs of growth and development (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 118). He desires the freedom to grow away from adults but still prefers to have the confidence of parents that will "stand-by" him when he is in need (How Children Develop, 7, p. 21).

At no age is a child as interested in parties as a six-year-old child; at no age is he less competent to produce a party agreeable to adults' ideals of decorum (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 93).

MENTAL STATUS

Language development is important to intellectual growth. Children of six usually are interested in representative drawing. After the sixth year the child learns to read, and his choice of reading is an additional valuable source of information as to his intellectual status (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 14).

Intellectual Development

Through everyday living the six-year-old child has acquired some knowledge of numbers. The real understanding of numbers comes slowly and takes practice and experience in the use of concrete objects related to an experience (How Children Develop, 7,

p. 23). Many six-year-old children are able to count by rote but comprehension must be developed with concrete objects familiar to them (Pryor, 17, p. 210).

The average six-year-old child uses between 2500 and 3000 words. He has used or is familiar with every form of sentence and every part of speech. Now, after being six, he will develop his speech by adding to his vocabulary and improving sentence structure for more accurate expression (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 12). The child of six is capable of putting several sentences together to tell a story. He delights in repeating large words in chanting fashion. He is in the stage of asking questions about everything (Reynolds, 18, p. 128). The six-year-old child likes stories and riddles and shows a great interest in new rhyming words. He likes to make up his own stories (Pryor, 17, p. 209). A six-year-old child is able to detect differences before he can recognize similarities. His interest is in the "here and now" (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 253).

Mental Capacity

One of the outstanding characteristics of the six-year-old child is his meager capacity to modulate. The difficulty he has in making a distinction between two-way possibilities is not limited to emotional or ethical nature. In his early effort to print letters of the alphabet he reverses the letters. The letter "b" appears backward. This tendency to reversals may be linked to his penchant for mirror symmetry (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 92).

The six-year-old child is serious about himself and likes to assert his own ideas. He is impressed with his ability to imitate grown-up behavior and his conversation begins to develop a more mature sound. He works largely in terms of immediate goals and is interested in the present (How Children Develop, 7, p. 21-26). The child of six is formulating ideas and often asks "why" when he runs counter to some general rule (Strang, 22, p. 342). This verbal explanation given in answering the "why" will take the place of actual experience. This ever-increasing number of questions asked is a determining factor of his ability to comprehend language (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 211). The development in motor ability and language proceeds rapidly as the six-year-old child develops. His vocabulary is increasing as he adds words and phrases current in the community (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 211).

At the beginning of the first grade the six-year-old child's mind is not ready for formal instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Through creative activity and motorized life experiences these subjects can be introduced to the child (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 94).

The six-year-old child likes to have responsibilities which make him feel grown up. At school he can feed the goldfish, erase the blackboard, water the plants, pass out milk cartons; all these little tasks will give him a feeling of security. He is able to run the vacuum sweeper, rake leaves, polish shoes, clear the table, sweep the steps, wipe dishes, put out milk bottles, and perform many other equally simple jobs which occur to him before

his parents have to tell him (Pryor, 17, p. 214). Rich experiences with things and in group activities will develop for the six-year-old child: words, ideas, and attitudes which are needed for good learning (Gesell and Ilg, 5, p. 254).

The six-year-old child wants to touch, to see, and to investigate everything. He needs to see meanings and relationships in everyday things which are associated with him. This interest in things around him hinders his ability to concentrate on book work. He is a passionate watcher of steam shovels, derricks, graders, and caterpillars (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 194).

PLAY ACTIVITIES

Groups of six or eight six-year-old children can play together for quite a long period of time. One child is usually boss but the rest do not object (Reynolds, 18, p. 122). These children are able to work out their problems without too much recourse to physical force and with enough satisfaction that they still play together as a group. Group play involves less crying and fighting among six-year-old children. They play together harmoniously in groups for quite some time. Girls have more verbal arguments, while boys quarrel by using physical force (How Children Develop, 7, p. 23). Six-year-old children seem to quarrel and argue a great deal but will shift moods very often and continue to play (Reynolds, 18, p. 101).

The child of six can get along and play with one playmate more successfully than with two. There is a lot of "tit for tat" with two six-year-old children. What one does to the other, he

in turn, does to him (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 92). This play does not always run smoothly but the six-year-old child wants to play with other children (Reynolds, 18, p. 22).

The child of six likes to tease, punch, or hit other children just for the fun of it, but this socially undesirable behavior recedes as he becomes older (How Children Develop, 7, p. 23).

At six, girls and boys play with companions of either sex. There is a good deal of puppy-like chasing of boys and girls and vice versa, with kissing, while onlookers squeal and giggle, chanting taunts, "Johnny kissed Susie, Johnny loves Susie," then Johnny turns on them and chases them. Love is a game which is played with much relish but little finesse in the first grade (Martin and Stendler, 14, p. 225).

In the first grade everyone wants to be leader; there is a rush and scramble for the playground apparatus, with pushing, fighting, shoving, and quarreling. Each child wants to be first, to be the winner, and finds it difficult to lose. These children need to be taught how to take turns and how to get along together (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 115). There is a growing interest in group play, and willingness to participate in group activities. The six-year-old child wants to have as many turns as possible, regardless of the opportunities for others (How Children Develop, 7, p. 22). He may enter a game with enthusiasm only to leave if he does not get the part he wants or if he loses. There, perhaps, was some other attraction which took his attention. Boys and girls tend to show different interests in spontaneous play. Girls

like to dress up and play house; boys like to play cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 115). A boy of six seems to feel stronger if he carries a gun. The six-year-old child enjoys taking small toys to school to show and share with other six-year-old children. These objects are a support to him and express his importance among his fellow classmates (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 194).

Boys engage in more active play and rougher games while girls enjoy less active games and like to play indoors with dolls, having doll parties, keeping house, and making doll dresses (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 22). There is an awareness of sex differences when boys and girls do mix in free play as house-keeping or play-store. The boys are the fathers and storekeepers and very rarely do boys take a mother's part or be a nurse. Girls will join boys in running and chasing games. The friends of the six-year-old child are almost always the same sex (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 116). The six-year-old child's capacity for group formation is quite limited. He is developing an interest in games and enjoys tag games. The leaders are with small groups rather than the entire first grade class (Jersild, 13, p. 193).

The six-year-old child likes to climb trees and apparatus and hang by his hands or by his knees. He likes to show off trying to stand on his head, walk on his hands, or turning cartwheels. The body muscles of a child develop through active play, therefore much play should be provided for the six-year-old child (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 8).

The six-year-old child is able to bounce a ball and to catch the ball. He is interested in painting, clay modeling, drawing, finger painting, use of crayons, and easel work (Pryor, 17, p. 206). Boys prefer drawing airplanes, trains, trucks, and boats, while girls draw people and houses. Six-year-old children love to play in mud, digging holes and filling these holes with water (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 121).

A six-year-old needs companionship of children of his same age. When he is with younger children it gives him a feeling of being bigger than someone else, and older children furnish him with many ideas. Through play he learns to follow others, face differences of opinions, and become flexible (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 23).

Play is self-expression whereby a child may act out his ideas, feelings, whether of joy or fear, aggression, or submission (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 22).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIRST-GRADE TEACHER

Understanding children is an essential part of teachers and administrators. Morrison's significant statement has been widely quoted: "The teacher should spend half his time in studying pupils as individuals and the other half of the time doing what that study shows to be desirable and necessary" (Strang, 22, p. 439).

Physical

The first-grade teacher needs to devote the first few weeks of school to learning about each pupil--physical needs, emotional stability, social adjustment, intellectual ability, interests, and unique personality. Careful study of the six-year-old child's physical condition plays a leading part in his mental and moral well-being (McManis, 15, p. 10). The teacher must understand the chronological age and physical and mental maturity are often far apart. It is well for the teacher to know what she can expect from a six-year-old child. A six-year-old child can perform any task which involves the use of large muscles--activities such as building with large blocks, dancing, action songs, and games and chasing games.

It is natural for a six-year-old child to wiggle his body, slide around on the seat, stick out his tongue, shake his head, and go through all sorts of contortions when first learning to write. Writing requires the use of his small muscles which are not fully developed (Anderson and Goodenough, 2, p. 9). Girls are usually a little more developed and therefore are able to write better than boys.

Every teacher needs to realize what it means to a six-year-old child to lose his first tooth. The time spent in working with or pulling his first tooth should not be overlooked by a first-grade teacher, as it is part of being six.

The child of six is active, constantly moving, exploring, watching, and touching everything. He should never be compelled

to remain in his seat all day. He tires easily, develops pains, and complains to require the teacher's consideration. Rest periods at the beginning of school and toilet breaks are very important in the daily program of a first-grade teacher's schedule.

Physical condition is important at six years of age, school is a strain, and each child should be in good health, well nourished, and free from remediable defects. The first-grade teacher must observe each six-year-old child and study the results in the light of what she knows about each child and his family background, discovering any effects of ill-health in the early years of childhood. A healthy six-year-old child has color in his cheeks, sturdiness of legs, brightness of eyes, good posture, and vitality. He runs about a great deal and sits still for only short periods of time.

Through careful observation a teacher of first graders can single out children who cannot see well or are hard of hearing. She should report her findings to parents. The behavior of a six-year-old child indicates his difficulties.

School is a new experience and often upsetting to a six-year-old child, which in turn affects his eating. He needs rest and should be free from fatigue at mealtimes.

Social

When the six-year-old child enters school the child tends to establish some independence from his parents and make a mark for himself in a new social world. The school is the new world and the teacher must see that each child is a part of this new

world. Self importance and self respect are human needs that must be developed within each individual in every classroom.

Maturation, which is the inner growth of muscles, nerves, and brain connections plays an important part in making a child of six the social being he eventually turns out to be. Reynolds (18) believes that the six-year-old child presents an interesting combination of two opposites in social behavior: the ability to work together toward a common end and an intense personal rivalry.

Social behavior in the classroom involves being courteous, keeping quiet at certain times, taking turns, not laughing or making fun of the mistakes of other children, paying attention when someone is talking, cooperating by obeying reasonable rules, and sharing with other children (Strang, 22, p. 355).

The six-year-old child wants to be first in everything, a difficult characteristic which the teacher must learn to cope with and to show him how others feel about him when he is always first. He loves everyone and wants everyone to love him. Attitudes toward himself and his standing with classmates must be developed before formal schooling can begin. Friends mean a great deal to the six-year-old child, adults as well as young playmates. He is moving away from the dependence upon adults, yet wants their approval and understanding.

The teacher needs to secure the fullest cooperation and entire confidence of the six-year-old child in order to fully understand him and to be able to develop characteristics which will lead him to become a better adult (McManis, 15, p. 9). The six-year-old child needs to be accepted by his classmates and have the

feeling of "belonging" which will make him comfortable and happy. He needs to share his interests, have other children to play and laugh with, and to be able to show off (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 26).

The child of six needs to strengthen his belief in himself. The school room should be so inviting and full of wholesome activity that no child will feel insecure and lonely. The six-year-old child is very active and curious. He likes to follow the fire truck, watch men at work, and enjoys taking field trips. He tires easily, and new things and activities are required in order to hold his attention. The school room must be democratic and cooperative where skills are learned which will get the child ready to take an active part in society (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 9).

The school is a part of a six-year-old and the teacher must attempt to reach the best in a child. Success is important to the six-year-old child. He likes school, he likes his teacher, he likes his playmates, and he wants to be recognized and become important. The sixth year marks regular school instruction where character and knowledge begin to develop. Honesty, trustfulness, neatness, kindness, unselfishness are carried on within school training. No child is born with these virtues, so the home and school must become deeply interested in each child so these virtues will become a part of him in developing into a good citizen (Sach, 19, p. 36). This sixth year is an important year; for what he learns in this period will determine what he will be like when he is seven and eight.

Character building is taught by the satisfaction the child gets from doing right rather than wrong. He will learn that poor behavior brings sorrow and pain, and will want happiness which comes when he is honest and upright (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 21). Children learn through experiences and imitation. The first-grade teacher is often his ideal and her attitudes and behavior he imitates. Therefore, it is a tremendous advantage to the six-year-old child to have an understanding, well-trained first-grade teacher who will guide him in his learning--spiritually and morally. He takes himself seriously and should be treated with respect.

Emotional

Six-year-old children's emotional functions are often opposite extremes: good or bad, shy or boisterous; happy when he wins, cries when he loses. The first-grade teacher can make it easier for herself and for him by using techniques of ignoring the insufficient happenings. He needs assurance of feeling that his parents are proud of him, and his teacher has faith in him.

The six-year-old child is not always sure that he is loved, no matter how much attention he receives. He is jealous and mixes feelings of love and hate (Hymes, 10, p. 7).

The simple act of going to school gives the six-year-old youngster a feeling of being grown-up. The teacher must look for opportunities within the classroom to further this feeling of being big. The more a child learns, the bigger he feels (Hymes, 8, p. 112-123).

The six-year-old child should be given freedom of choice in making decisions. He should be allowed to express his thoughts and to release his tensions. Active games and rest periods should be scheduled in every daily program of first grade.

The gifted teacher of first grade is sensitive to the emotional needs of each child. She understands a child's behavior in order to guide him. Her friendliness toward him, if the feeling is genuine, will give the six-year-old child confidence in himself. There must be gentleness and firmness in dealing with the six-year-old child. Explanations and directions should be clear and simple. The child must understand what is expected of him (Your Child From One to Six, 24, p. 38).

The six-year-old child is very easily upset, and emotional problems should be guarded against in every classroom. He needs to have a sense of security and self-esteem which will enable him to develop his abilities, and to meet situations adequately. Encouragement and praise can help a child become self-confident, eager to go ahead, and willing to try new things (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 21).

It is well for the first-grade teacher to know and understand the emotional traits which are predominant among six-year-old children, some of which are persistence, pride of accomplishment, noisiness, activity, desire to argue, impatience, worrying, complaining, jealousy, giggling, laughing, and wanting to be first. By knowing these characteristics, the teacher will be able to help and guide the child in the right channel to maturity. In planning a school program to fit the six-year-old child, these individual

differences must be taken into account.

Mental

The classroom of today is a learn-by-living process. The children learn by playing, exploring things, relating new experiences, taking field trips, discussing previous experiences, singing, dancing, dramatizing, and just plain talking (Gans et al., 4, p. 172). Children learn through participation in activities. The six-year-old child has developed a good speaking vocabulary and the school program should allow each one to improve sentence structure through self-expression. He is proud of himself when he has achieved. Some tasks should be easy, based on the level of his ability. Responsibilities should be given to each child of six which he can accomplish readily and easily. He is interested in everything, especially the "why." Actual experience is learning for him. The daily program should center around the child and his interests. A six-year-old child will tackle any job. His ideas are great, usually above his abilities. The first-grade teacher must never expect all children of six years of age to be working on the same project and achieving the same success. Reynolds (18) stated that children grow in intellectual interests and abilities just as they do in muscular control. Their minds are not yet complete, therefore the first-grade teacher needs to have varied activities, experiences, and provide information for the six-year-old children. They are interested in almost everything of the present, especially things and people who are close to their lives.

Play

The six-year-old child's life revolves around play. Play takes energy and encourages his imagination and develops skills of both the body and the mind. Through play, an understanding of others is learned (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 31).

Play for a six-year-old is not an organized game. It is experience gained and shared with one another. It lays the foundation for reading readiness. Play teaches children to talk. Language is growing all the time in make-believe play. Through play children plan, organize, and fit things together. They learn to work with others, and to share and take turns with articles. The six-year-old child is spontaneous, vigorous, creative, active, and brimming with his own ideas and notions. He wants to make up simple rules and regulations to the games he plays. The child of six likes raw materials: sand, water, blocks, paints, clay, barrels, boards, and boxes which he can do with what he likes. He has ideas of his own and prefers adults not to interfere (Hymes, 9, p. 16-20).

The six-year-old needs to have wise adult supervision during play but a minimum of interference. Everyone wants to be first, which requires much training by the teacher to eliminate to a certain extent this natural desire within a six-year-old child. Girls and boys of the age of six can play together very well in small groups. They quarrel and argue but usually can iron out their own difficulties without teacher's assistance. It is quite normal to see six-year-old children running about within the schoolroom. This is a part of being six; the activeness and

alertness of getting about in a hurry. They are developing their large muscles and their bodies are gaining strength.

Every first-grade teacher should plan for dramatic play in her classes, as it is a source of learning as well as fun and pleasure. There need not be any elaborate planned affairs but just let the children be creative. They love to dramatize stories and will submit their own conversation, actions, and gestures (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 117). The six-year-old child has a vivid imagination; he loves to dress up and assume he is someone else. Not all dramatic play requires costumes, however, they do add to and have an important place in the play life of the six-year-old child. Reynolds stated that as children grow in their interest and intellectual ability, their play grows more complex and instructive.

In the schools today much stress is placed on developing the whole child and by means of fruitful play experiences, the child is learning about himself and others. The first-grade teacher is guiding each child along the pathway of life through outstanding learning activities. The six-year-old child needs a flexible program, or one which includes a great deal of play.

Reading

Going to school to a six-year-old child means learning to read. This is, no doubt, the most important single skill he has to acquire, for without a firm grasp of reading he will be helpless when he wants to know about other subjects (Your Child From 6 to 12, 25, p. 52).

Reading is not too difficult if proper readiness and maturity such as muscles, organs, and nervous system have developed properly. Some children will be ready to read before six years of age while others are not. The importance of understanding what one reads is the crux of being able to read. Saying a word is not reading. Experiences which utilize reading in many logical and sensible ways and are simple for the six-year-old child to understand, should be provided by the first-grade teacher. Reading is a slow process for a beginner and the six-year-old child should never be pushed too hard or given too difficult materials, as this only leads to an emotional block which may retard progress (A Curriculum Guide, 1, p. 40). The six-year-old child loves to read, and reading gives him a feeling of being big and grown-up, which is exciting and thrilling to him. Careful observation on the part of the first-grade teacher can spot children who may be having difficulty, and these children should not be forced in reading until they are ready. Enriching experiences, group conversation, and learning to adjust to other child are very important before formal reading. The six-year-old child is anxious to begin to read and to accept responsibilities. He believes that if he knows how to read and write, he will be able to establish status with older children. A reading readiness program must involve growth in control of eye muscles and nerves, development of intellectual abilities, and include experiences of a six-year-old child's interests. A majority of six-and-a-half-year-old children are ready to begin reading if a good readiness program has been used (How Children Develop, 7, p. 23).

The ability to control eye muscles and emotional stability have great bearing upon the six-year-old child's ability to learn to read. He is ready to learn and can learn quickly (Pryor, 17, p. 210). Six-year-old youngsters should learn to read, as reading is an exciting experience for any child (Stewart and Gruenberg, 21, p. 73).

Characteristics observed while the six-year-old child is beginning to read are that his lips move, his feet shuffle, and he twists his fingers in his hair (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 112). The first-grade teacher should realize that it is difficult for a six-year-old child to control his motions voluntarily, should remember that he has a short interest span, and that it is difficult for him to carry on activity through conclusion to satisfy an adult.

Numbers

The six-year-old child learns to count more easily if he has objects to count. Toy cars and animals which he can move about as he counts are very effective for him (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 112). He is eager to use his mathematical knowledge. He wants to find out how to write numbers, how to add, and how to be doing what he sees older children doing with numbers. The first-grade teacher needs to foster this desire. Children should be taught through concrete situations and they will gain concepts of size and comparison of numbers. Number combinations are easily learned by use of concrete objects, letting the child make his own problems to add. At this age he is able to recognize money and can make small

purchases. The six-year-old child can do doubles--two and two are four--four and four are eight; he likes to sing-song his fives and tens to 100 (Gans et al., 4, p. 273).

The first-grade teacher needs to use many daily happenings to show the six-year-old child how numbers function in his everyday activities (A Curriculum Guide, 1, p. 43). The child who sees a need of learning is easy to teach.

Language

Gans et al. (4, p. 194) reported from Seashore that a child six years of age has acquired a speaking vocabulary of approximately 2,500 words and an understanding vocabulary estimated from 17,000 to 24,000 words.

Language is becoming more effective to a six-year-old as a tool he must use to communicate his ideas. Although he has acquired a vocabulary, he needs help in using it in the best possible manner (Gans et al., 4, p. 194). His sentences are longer and include more words and phrases. The many questions he asks are meaningful and are asked for information. Anything that touches his life: pets, toys, churches, and stores, are of interest to him (Pryor, 17, p. 209). He is now a part of a large social world. His language skills are being developed; he uses language to share his experiences with the group; and his long, rambling method of discourse must be eliminated to suit a listening audience. He must be able to express himself and to stick to a topic (Gans et al., 4, p. 194).

The six-year-old child often moves his whole body expressively as he talks and tells a story with gestures. He adds to his story by telling what is not completely true. He should not be scolded as he is actually giving expression to his imagination (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 117).

Rhymes and nonsense syllables are fun for a six-year-old child. He likes foreign words and repeats them just for hearing the sound, not for the purpose of communication (Pryor, 17, p. 209).

Art

The six-year-old child's drawing of a man can be recognized as *genus homo*. His drawings usually tell a story which he wants others to understand. He is uncritical and enthusiastic about his art work (Strang, 22, p. 332).

His spontaneous drawings are crude but somewhat realistic. His drawing consists of houses, trees, sky, some animals, fire, and lightning. His drawing also depicts some of his fears and dreams (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 97). The six-year-old child usually attempts to reproduce in his drawings and paintings what he sees. The objects in the pictures are usually recognizable, but the six-year-old child is more interested in expression than how he does the drawings. The man may be larger than the house, and the sky is usually a strip of blue across the top of the page (How Children Develop, 7, p. 26). The sun is large and the trees are small compared to other objects in his picture. His small muscles are still immature and he is in a stage of art development which art specialists call the "scribbling stage" (A Curriculum

Guide, 1, p. 44). Finger painting, clay modeling, poster painting, building and construction work are art projects which should be provided for the first-grade child. The six-year-old child should be encouraged to express free-flowing ideas in painting or drawing. This creative work should not be hindered by art principles and formal art techniques when dealing with a six-year-old child. He expresses ideas that are related to his experiences and his everyday activities which are real to him. The six-year-old child enjoys doing art work and in making things that are meaningful to him.

Music

The six-year-old child is capable of carrying a tune and can enjoy simple music (Pryor, 17, p. 210). He is able to learn to sing many songs by note. He enjoys rhythm games where each child can interpret his own way of body skills and movements to fit his mood. He is happiest and does his best work in situations where he can be an individual (Frank and Lawrence, 3, p. 99). Rhythm activities that accompany songs and rhythm instruments are enjoyed by the six-year-old child. He learns to sing patriotic songs. Most first graders can sing one stanza of America (A Curriculum Guide, 1, p. 44). The six-year-old child likes to watch T. V. programs and listen to records. He is not fond of movies (Gesell and Ilg, 6, p. 122).

Writing

The first-grade child needs to learn to print his name so he can label his drawings and other belongings. Formal writing should not be taught as his eye muscles' coordination is not fully developed for it (Strang, 22, p. 331). Manuscript writing is taught to first graders as it is easier for them because they are learning to read print in books. The six-year-old child needs large pencils and wide-lined paper as his muscular coordination is not mature enough for adult material (A Curriculum Guide, 1, p. 41).

As the six-year-old child writes, he screws up his face, bites his lips, wiggles around in his seat, and goes through all sorts of movements. This is partially due to the fact that the small muscles of his arms and hands are not completely developed. His work is crude, but creative effort should not be criticized or discouraged (Jenkins et al., 12, p. 112). The writing of the six-year-old child is the product of his own effort. He must be mature to be able to write. He learns at his own rate of speed when he is ready to learn (A Curriculum Guide, 1, p. 41).

SUMMARY

The six-year-old child is often misunderstood or neglected because of lack of knowledge of adults. There are principles of growth and certain characteristics which seem to be predominant and indicate what can be expected in the behavior of a normal six-year-old child. The physical, social, emotional, mental growth, play activities, and school learning must be understood by those

who work with six-year-old children.

The average American child of six is about 46 inches tall and weighs about 48 pounds. Ninety percent of the brain's growth has been accomplished by the age of six and it has achieved its full weight. The number of brain cells will not increase after the age of six. The sixth year is not quite as rapid for bodily growth but many somatic and psychological changes are taking place. The child of six is more susceptible to infectious disease, with much throat and nose difficulty. He is beginning his first year of school and book learning which require the use of eyes, ears, and muscles. Attention toward a good, strong, healthy body and mind is necessary before formal education can take place. The six-year-old child is losing his first teeth and these are being followed by six-year-old molars which are permanent teeth and act as corner posts of his mouth. He is developing body muscles and has basic motor skills fairly well developed, but is only beginning to develop small muscles. He has better control of arm and leg muscles than he has of hand and finger muscles which are still uneven and incomplete. The six-year-old child is very active and hates to give up and rest. Yet he tires easily and should have 11 to 12 hours of sleep daily. He must be reminded to go to the bathroom as he forgets or neglects to do so.

The six-year-old has a good appetite and often thinks he can eat more than his stomach will hold. He eats a great deal between meals and often wants very little breakfast. His food must be made appetizing and easy to eat. He prefers raw vegetables to cooked ones and wants plain cooked food.

The sixth year is referred to as the transition age as the child is entering a new and different world that he has never known--that of school. He is leaving mother and home to enter into new experiences which he has to make his own accomplishments. His ability to achieve status among new friends and make a place in this social group will depend upon his feelings toward himself and others, getting along with different children, and eagerness to learn. The six-year-old child is in the age of "why" and at school, formal learning takes place through experiences about what is happening now. This learning gives him the feeling of achievement.

The six-year-old child is becoming more on his own, and his success depends upon his own efforts. He needs praise, encouragement, and understanding from his teacher as well as his parents. His play behavior and his interests undergo rapid expansion and become more socialized. The transition period which the six-year-old child passes through is somewhat similar to teen-age adolescence. New propensities are erupting; new impulses, new feelings, and new activities are developing in the underlying nervous system of a six-year-old child.

This sixth year is exasperating and irritating to adults who do not understand the growth and development which the child passes through. His emotional reactions become more subtle and display a more varied manner, yet are attached to a greater variety of stimuli. He tends to go to extremes under slight stress, be it tension or pressure. He is unable to accept criticism but thrives on praise. Some of the most desirable emotional

traits the six-year-old child displays are generosity, sociability, pride of possession or accomplishment, purposefulness, and persistence. One outstanding characteristic of the six-year-old child is his boastfulness. He wants to be first in everything and disregards the feelings and desires of others, as he is serious about himself and likes to assert his own ideas.

The six-year-old asks many questions and has an average speaking vocabulary of 2500 to 3000 words. The development of language proceeds rapidly at the age of six. The child is increasing his vocabulary through conversation and listening. Language is becoming more effective to a six-year-old child as a tool he must use to communicate his ideas.

Six-year-old children play well together in groups which are small, and are able to work out their difficulties without adult assistance or interferences. Many quarrels occur and arguments among six-year-old children but their play will continue and their mood will shift. Girls are involved in more verbal arguments than boys, but boys' quarrels result in physical force. One playmate at a time is better than two for a six-year-old child in order to get along successfully.

The six-year-old child's play companions can be of either sex as both sexes get along equally well. Boys engage in more active play and rougher games than girls. Play is self-expression and the six-year-old child enjoys dramatic play. The teacher needs to provide many opportunities for creative play.

It is necessary for teachers and parents to understand six-year-old children and to help them to develop self-respect and the

feeling of self-importance. The classroom is a learn-by-living process which is essential for the growth and development of six-year-old children, and the daily program should be centered around the children's interests. The schools are attempting to develop the whole child, and the first-grade child needs more attention and guidance as he is entering into a new world different from his protected home. He must have rich, fruitful experiences in order to learn about himself and others.

Reading is probably the greatest single skill that the six-year-old child needs to acquire. Understanding what he is reading is being able to read. Maturation and proper readiness are cruxes toward good reading; and being able to do well in any school subject. The six-year-old child should be encouraged always to do his best and to express himself freely. In art or writing, creativeness should be encouraged. The sixth year is a year for development and not accomplishment to an end. The six-year-old child's work is crude but as he matures, he will improve. He learns at his own rate of speed when he is ready to learn. A wise teacher or parent can guide the six-year-old child to develop into an intellectual, worthwhile citizen for tomorrow if there is proper understanding of his physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth and development.

In this report the writer has attempted to give information which will be of benefit to teachers and parents of six-year-old children.

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A REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN THE BEHAVIOR OF THE
NORMAL SIX-YEAR-OLD CHILD

by

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The development of the normal six-year-old child is an interesting and fascinating process. The physical changes which take place in the body, the development of intellectual growth in language skills, emotional status, social status, play activities, and the new capacities which appear as the child grows are important to one who works with children.

The schools and teachers need to understand the child's pattern of growth, and through this report the writer has attempted to show the natural growth and behavior of a normal six-year-old child. It must be recognized that these factors of development--physical, social, emotional, and mental--are necessary for the success of a child.

Since the foundation of personality and the basic patterns of behavior are developed in the earlier years of a child's life, it is essential that the first-grade teacher understand the normal behavior pattern of the six-year-old child. When the teacher learns about the child she is teaching, she will be able to help him develop some of his natural inclinations and soften the less useful ones. It is the responsibility of the first-grade teacher to provide opportunities through enriching experiences whereby the six-year-old child may be able to learn.

At six, the bodily growth begins to slow down. The brain's growth has nearly been accomplished and full weight achieved. Hand and eye coordination has been established by the age of six. The six-year molars are appearing--the first permanent teeth. The large muscles of a six-year-old child are fairly well developed while smaller muscles are still uneven and incomplete.

The sixth year is the transition period as the child is entering a new world--that of school--where he must prove his own worth. New friends are being acquired and new experiences are enriching and changing his life's pattern. He is easily upset and needs to be reassured of his abilities. A feeling of security and being wanted, praise, and encouragement are needed to develop a child who will become an understanding adult free of emotional difficulties.

The six-year-old child uses between 2500 and 3000 words, and his vocabulary is continually increasing as he adds words and phrases current in the community. Reynolds stated that children grow in intellectual interests and abilities just as they do in muscular control.

The six-year-old child's life revolves around play. Play for the six-year-old child is not an organized game. It is experiences gained and shared with one another.

Going to school to a six-year-old child means learning to read. This is no doubt the most important single skill he has to acquire. He is anxious to learn how to read and believes, if he knows how to read, he will be able to establish status with older children. The child who sees a need of learning is easy to teach.

The proper knowledge of the principles of growth and how these principles can be applied in an actual situation with a six-year-old child are important for an adult, in order to understand fully a six-year-old child's behavior. This report is an attempt to provide some of this valuable information.