

Middle Childhood: Cognitive and Language Development

Overview

During middle childhood there is a change in the way children think. This maturing intellectual capacity is explained by two theories: Piagetian and information processing.

As cognitive ability increases, so too does the child's command and understanding of language. Mastery of the language includes speaking, reading, and writing.

Schools have important functions in supporting the cognitive and language development of school-age children. Schools are expected to educate children, to assimilate those children who may have differences from the norm and to evaluate all children.

Questions To Consider

1. What changes occur in thinking and reasoning during middle childhood?
2. How do concepts develop and change during middle childhood?
3. In what ways do school-age children use language?
4. What is the best learning environment for the middle years child?
5. What role should parents play in their child's education?
6. How do schools educate children with special needs?
7. How do schools assess what children have learned?

Vocabulary

Read these terms with their definitions before viewing the program.

Classification Recognition that a particular object or person may belong to more than one class.

Concrete operations Mental actions that fit into a logical system carried out in the presence of the event being considered.

Conservation Recognition that certain properties remain constant even if other properties are changed.

Decentration Ability to consider more than one attribute of an object at one time.

Identity Recognition that if nothing has been added or subtracted the amount remains constant.

Knowledge base Knowledge builds on knowledge.

Mainstreaming Assimilating into regular classrooms children who differ from the norm.

Meta cognition Higher order process required in planning and decision making.

Meta memory Awareness of one's own intellectual processes.

Rehearsal Repeating what is to be remembered.

Reversibility Realization that certain properties can negate or reverse the effects of others.

Seriation Ability to arrange objects into a series or order.

Instructional Objectives

When you have successfully completed this module, you will be able to:

1. Describe Piaget's theory of concrete operational thought.
2. Describe the theory of information processing.
3. Identify the characteristics of language of middle childhood.
4. Discuss the functions of schools in cognitive development during middle childhood.

Self-Test

After studying the objectives and watching the video take the self-test to check your progress.

1. Match the Piagetian characteristics of thinking in column I with its description in column II.

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|------------------------------|---|
| _____ a. Concrete operations | 1. The ability to consider more than one attribute of an object at one time. |
| _____ b. Conservation | 2. The realization that certain properties can negate or reverse the effects of others. |
| _____ c. Decentration | 3. Mental actions that fit into a logical system carried out in the presence of the event being considered. |
| _____ d. Identity | 4. The recognition that a particular object or person may belong to more than one group. |
| _____ e. Reversibility | 5. The ability to arrange objects in order. |
| _____ f. Classification | 6. The recognition that certain properties remain constant even if other properties are changed. |
| _____ g. Seriation | 7. The recognition that if nothing has been added or subtracted the amount remains the same. |

2. Describe the theory of information processing.

3. List at least five advances in children's language development in middle childhood.

In the following, select the phrase which best completes the statement.

4. The function of the school is to
- a. teach children to become literate
 - b. assimilate children into the culture at large
 - c. evaluate each child's progress
 - d. all the above
5. In the ideal classroom
- a. the teacher emphasizes individual effort
 - b. children choose what they will study
 - c. the teacher uses demonstration and encourages exploration by the children
 - d. verbal exchanges are mainly between teacher and children
6. If parents and teachers have high expectations
- a. the children will be more successful in school
 - b. the children will feel under excess pressure to succeed
 - c. the boys will be influenced but not the girls
 - d. the children will not be influenced
7. Mainstreaming means that children with special needs will be
- a. educated in the least restrictive environment possible
 - b. placed solely in classrooms with other special needs children
 - c. expected to cope in regular classrooms regardless of special needs
 - d. protected from contact with normal children
8. Children who speak a non-standard English need to be
- a. discouraged from using the non-standard form at all times
 - b. taught in the non-standard code
 - c. taught standard English as a distinct code
 - d. all the above
9. Standardized tests are used to
- a. measure progress in specific areas
 - b. compare achievement of children in different states and countries.
 - c. determine a child's mental age
 - d. all the above
10. Standardized tests
- a. are accepted without question
 - b. have been revised to remove all cultural bias
 - c. measure only a few aspects of intelligence
 - d. measure all aspects of intelligence