

Summary of the Seven Developmental Needs

(Excerpted and adapted from research conducted by the Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC, and from Keys to Quality in School-Age Child Care, Programming That Works for Older Children, by Roberta L. Newman.)

1. The Need for Physical Activity. Except for the period of infancy, early adolescence is the most rapid period of physical growth in childhood. These children need to exercise and develop their growing bodies. Physical activity should include opportunities for developing both large and small muscles.

2. The Need for Competence and Achievement. It is common for young adolescents to feel self-conscious and unsure of their abilities during this period of rapid growth. They need lots of opportunities to demonstrate to themselves and to others that they can do things well.

3. The Need for Self-Definition. Rapidly growing children need lots of opportunities to explore who and what they are becoming and how they relate to the world around them as a member of their sex, race, family, culture, community, etc. They need opportunities to explore a wide variety of roles and possible careers as they begin to look at what the future might hold for them.

4. The Need for Creative Expression. As children's bodies and minds rapidly grow and change and as they become more involved in the world beyond home and family, opportunities for creative expression are essential to their development. These opportunities help children develop an understanding and acceptance of themselves as they use speaking, writing, singing, dancing, drama, and the visual arts to express their emerging feelings, interests, thoughts, talents, and abilities.

5. The Need for Positive Social Interaction. Though the family remains of primary importance to older children, they now need increasing opportunities to experience positive relationships with peers and adults outside the family. These positive relationships can provide comfort, support, and security as they are confronted with and experience new ideas, views, values, and feelings.

6. The Need for Structure and Clear Limits. As older children grow in their need for independence and freedom, they also need the security of structure and clear limits to help them develop skills and qualities associated with independence freedom such as responsibility, resourcefulness, and reliability.

7. The Need for Meaningful Participation. The Center for Early Adolescence stresses that older children "need to participate in the activities that shape their own lives." That is, they need opportunities to develop and use new talents, skills, and interests in the context of the "real world."