

## **PRESCHOOLERS COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Piaget described the age from 2 until 7 years of age as the preoperational thinking stage. Some signs of preoperational thinking are:

- a. Children learn that objects and words can be symbols.
- b. Children learn through fantasy, creative and dramatic play.
- c. Children continue to view the world in terms of themselves. They are self centered.
- d. Children find it difficult to focus on more than one thing at a time.

The first intelligence test was developed by the French psychologist, Alfred Binet, in 1905. Later, Stanford University adapted the test. It is now called the Stanford Binet test.

The score or intelligence quotient (IQ), is simply a number that tells whether a child shows intelligence that is average, above or below average for his/her age. The average IQ is 90 to 110.

Four, five and six year-olds learn from a wide variety of experiences.

The following techniques are helpful when working with children:

- a. Look for opportunities to talk with children about what they are doing.
- b. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer.
- c. Ask a child's opinion or views about something.
- d. Children need to be included in clean-up tasks.
- e. Talk to children when traveling or going places about what they see and visit.
- f. Help children to learn and understand their world through experiments.

Whether or not children enjoy reading, art and music depends largely upon the attitudes of their parents.

By school age, language ability is one of the most dependable indications of intellectual development.

## **PRE-OPERATIONAL STAGE**

Piaget places preschoolers in the pre-operational stage, meaning before mental actions. Piaget's theory states that three abilities or standards must be met before operations or mental activity can exist. The pre-schooler is working to master these tasks.

1. Mental actions must be dependent upon mental ability instead of senses and/or

- motor skills.
2. Mental actions must be considered logical. To be logical the child must be able to combine or add ideas, put things in order or sequence, and to engage in simple consequential or cause and effect thinking.
  3. Mental actions have to be able to be reversed in the child's mind. For example, if a certain route or course is taken to grandpa and grandma's house from the child's own house, they should be able to reverse the course on the way home.

There are also five abilities that the preschool age child characterizes in the preoperational stage:

1. Deferred imitation: the child imitates, as closely as he/she can, actions they have seen before. For example, a child feeding a doll the same way and doing and saying the same things that his/her mother did as she fed the baby the day before.

2. Symbolic play: This child uses symbols for the real world as they engage in make-believe play. This involves more than imagination, it involves aspects of how the child feels about his/her world.

3. Drawing: The child does not just scribble anymore. They draw recognizable pictures. They attempt to represent objects or people from their world in their drawing. However, the child's art work is not visually accurate. It is how the child thinks.

4. Mental images: the child can pull images from his/her memory about past experiences.

5. Language: the child must be able to identify in his/her mind the object or person when they are named AND be able to identify an object or person by name when they see it. Language is very abstract. For example, the word "cookie" doesn't smell like, look like, sound like what a cookie is, but the word "cookie" represents a cookie.

Because children learn best by doing, this is how a parent or caregiver can best enhance cognitive development--allow the child to play with and actively interact with objects, games, books, and people. While the child is playing or even engaging in a common everyday, routine or activity, parents/caregivers should ask inquisitive questions and allow the child to formulate his/her own ideas. Help the child be aware of things around him/her. Point out new things and answer his/her questions as well as encouraging them to question you.

## LEARNING CENTERS

Some suggested learning centers are:

1. **SORTING:** Household objects such as buttons, silverware, game pieces, peg board pieces, color chips, blocks with different shapes, blocks made out of different materials.
2. **CLASSIFYING:** Natural objects such as boys/girls, cars/trucks, dolls or people by hair color, big/little, tall/short, zoo animals/farm animals.
3. **SEPARATION:** Line up the class members according to height. Have a pile of rocks and have the children line them up according to the weight of each rock. Stories such as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" and "Three Billy Goats Gruff" include differences in characters such as young/old, big/little.
4. **TRANSFORMATIONS:** Cook any product and notice the change. Add warm water to preset Jell-o. Freeze water or thaw an ice cube or snow. Have pictures of children growing older. Plant a seed and watch it grow. Make playdough, cookies, or cake.
5. **REVERSAL:** Lace up a shoe, tie it, then unlace it. Build a sand castle, then smash it. Build a block tower and push it down. Use zip, snap and button dressing frames