

** Parents often approach me with questions about what is common and developmentally appropriate for their child's age, so the school counselor at St. Joseph and I researched and compiled information about 3rd graders. Be aware that children move through these stages at different rates, some sooner, some later. We hope this is helpful. - Denise Rousso, St Anne School Counselor*

Your Third Grader

Common Cognitive, Social and Emotional
Developmental Behaviors of 3rd -Graders*

Classroom:

- As your third-grader's brain develops, a powerful new cognitive skill emerges: the ability to *evaluate* him/herself. During this period, children may become hypercritical of themselves and others. Your child may even experience periods of self-loathing and low self-esteem. Not to worry – he or she is passing through a critical brain development stage known as “learning evaluation.”
- Because of the enormous amount of learning and data processing taking place in 3rd grade, parent and adult guidance are needed to help to develop “memory strategies” and break down homework and projects into steps.
- Overestimates abilities and often “bite off more than they can chew.” Best response is positive redirection and encouragement.
- Transitioning from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”
- Loves to work cooperatively and in groups. Becomes engrossed in activities; likes to socialize with others.
- Tires easily, may give up temporarily on difficult assignments, but bounces back quickly.
- Attention span ranges from 8 – 30 minutes, with boys having a shorter attention span than girls.
- Growing interest in rules and logic, how things work and classification.

Social behaviors:

- A slight decrease in tattling and a stronger desire for things to go well with their friends.
- May have a “best” friend with whom they are close, and at the same time, have a lot of arguing, disputing and “getting mad” at each other in the friendship.
- Becoming more influenced by peer pressure, fueled by a stronger need to belong.
- Still very much a “black and white” thinker, but is becoming aware that his/her point-of-view is subjective and not the one-and-only opinion.
- “Secret” clubs and groups may emerge. Friendship groups include more children than at age 7.
- Gregarious and humorous. Enjoy jokes/riddles. Many boys fascinated by “potty” humor.

Communication Style:

- “I’m bored” may mean it is too hard.
- Listens, but they have so many ideas that they may not always recall what was said.
- Likes to explain ideas, as their vocabulary is expanding.
- Dramatic, exaggerates.

You're the best judge of your child's development and what is "normal" for him or her. Just when you think you've figured out your child, something changes. You may find strategies that once worked no longer have any impact on him or her. Don't worry, this is normal. If you would like more resources or information, please contact your pediatrician or you may contact Denise Rousso, 282-3538, ext. 115 or at drousso@stannesea.org.

**Information compiled by Jennifer Moyer-Taylor, St. Joseph School Counselor and Denise Rousso, St. Anne Counselor. References on back.*

My Child Won't Complete His Work

By Allison Gardenswartz, *Consulting Educator*,

Question

Help! My child refuses to complete any class work. The teacher gives him plenty of time, at the end of the day, she fills out what he is missing and sends it home with him with a note telling us he did not accomplish anything today. She tells us that when she asks him to complete a task (any task) he moves with very deliberate slowness, and it sometimes takes him up to five minutes just to move across the classroom from one spot to another. The other day, she kept him in at lunch to have him write one definition for one vocabulary word. He was unable to complete it in the 40 minutes she allotted him. He is capable and able to complete this work, and he does not have a learning disability. He can do it at home for us, but it takes him forever if we are not standing over him every second.

Answer:

I have several suggestions for you. Initially, I think you should talk with your son and ask him if he can explain why he struggles to complete the tasks.

Does he lose focus? Sometimes setting up a reminder cue can be helpful - tie a colored string around his wrist and when he sees it tell him he should ask himself if he is on task.

A behavior-modification system set up with small, specific positive rewards for daily tasks completed could be very helpful. You can then add on larger rewards weekly for consistent completion of work. For example, if class work is completed at school on Monday, then your son gets a reward after school - a treat or extra playtime or whatever you decide on. Then, if it continues throughout the week, the rewards are greater - three days of consistent completion of class work gets a bigger prize, and the whole week an even bigger one. You can sit with your son and discuss the rewards so that he is a part of choosing them.

Additionally, a timer is a great tool to use with children who procrastinate. Allot a specific amount of time for a given assignment - perhaps 20 minutes for a math sheet that you think should take 10 minutes. Set the timer and have him start working. Let him know at 10 minutes that he should be half-way done with the task and then stop him at the ring of the timer. Make it into a game in which he is trying to beat the timer, and ultimately beat his own times and improve. Again, offer rewards: stickers, pencils, extra playtime, computer time. Rewards have to be dependent upon the likes of the child.

Finally, if you find that despite a reward system, a reminder system and tools to help your son stay on task, he is still struggling to stay focused and complete his work, then you should pursue the issue with a medical professional, such as a psychologist, to determine if there is something more going on.

Advice from Great Schools' experts is not a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment from a health-care provider or learning expert familiar with your unique situation. Great Schools recommends consulting a qualified professional if you have concerns about your child's condition. If you have any questions or concerns about your child, consult your pediatrician.

Your 3rd Grader References (from front):

Ames, Louise (1989). *Your Eight-Year-Old-Lively and Outgoing*. Dell Publishing: New York. Ames, L.B., Baker, S.M., Ilg, F. (1981). *Child Behavior*. Harper & Row: New York.

Pellissier, Hank. Retrieved on August, 31, 2011. <http://www.greatschools.org/parenting/behavior-discipline/slideshows/4451-brain-third-grade.gs>.

In *Social Skills*. Retrieved August 25, 2011, <http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/1399-wont-complete-work.gs>.

Wood, Chip (1997). *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom 4-14*. Maine: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Help! Writing is Torture for my Third-Grader

By Debra Collins, Family therapist

Question:

I have a very intelligent third-grader. He takes an advanced curriculum and does very well on his tests. However, my husband and I do most of the organizing for him, review his assignments and ensure his work is done. The math, science and reading doesn't seem to be so bad. The writing however is torture. He has reward charts and consequences for his writing being completed, and we are for at least now requiring he complete a minimum of two paragraphs in school. He is the first of three and is wearing us down.

What can we do to help him? How much can he help himself? It is almost like he has no work ethic. How much should we push him?

Answer:

I would like to start with your statement, "It is almost like he has no work ethic." Your son is doing well in math, science, reading and testing. Since you mention that he works within an "advanced curriculum," I'm assuming that he performs above grade level. It is important to look at his overall accomplishments.

A third-grader is just learning how to put his thoughts together in order to construct a simple paragraph. Things such as topic sentences, sequence of events, punctuation and so forth, are more difficult when you have to write them yourself. Writing is a complex series of events, and the blank page can be daunting.

His teacher may know if he needs help with concepts, or if he just needs more experience at writing. A child may not develop at the same rate in all areas. Some tasks just need the benefit of time and practice before they are integrated.

I have worked with many children where the real problem was writing in cursive. Their fine motor skills were delayed and by the time they struggled to physically write, they had lost their train of thought. His teacher will be able to help you determine that.

Lastly, homework teaches children organization skills and responsibility. Let him do it first and then go over it with him. It is a fine balance between stimulating your child's growth and "pushing." If you are having power struggles, it seems that you are leaning in the direction of pushing, which can result in your son losing his enthusiasm for school.

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Collins, Debra, *Ask the Experts*. Retrieved October 8, 2011. <http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/1252-writing-is-torture.gs>.

Pellissier, Hank, *Health and Behavior*. Retrieved on August, 31, 2011. <http://www.greatschools.org/parenting/behavior-discipline/slideshows/4451-brain-third-grade.gs>.

Wood, Chip (1997). *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom 4-14*. Maine: Northeast Foundation for Children.



