

HELPING FAMILIES UNDERSTAND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Many families may feel confused or unsure as their former toddler starts asking big questions, acting more independently, or struggling with friendships. Your experience and knowledge as an educator can help parents feel calm and confident. Use this guide to talk with families about what's normal—and how they can help.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children grow fast between kindergarten and 5th grade. Their brains and bodies are working hard!

- Growth isn't always even—kids may feel clumsy or less coordinated.
- They may get tired quickly or need more rest after school.
- Skills such as balance, strength, and fine motor control (e.g., writing or tying shoes) develop at different rates.



HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

- Make sure children get 9–11 hours of sleep each night.
- Give children time to play outside and explore different physical activities.
- Be patient with skills like cutting paper, writing, or riding a bike—they improve over time.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

This is the age where kids shift from learning “what” to learning “why” and “how.” Their curiosity grows.

- Children may ask lots of questions and want real answers.
- They begin understanding more complex ideas but may still take things literally.
- They start planning, predicting, and problem-solving.
- They might repeat misinformation without fully understanding it.



HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

- Answer their questions—even when they’re hard or repetitive.
- Encourage curiosity with books, hands-on learning, and open-ended conversations.
- Support schoolwork without doing it for them.
- Remember, growth looks different for every child.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

K–5 students feel big emotions, even if they can't always explain them. Their self-esteem is still forming.

- Mood swings can be common—especially after long school days.
- Kids may feel embarrassed easily or take things personally.
- They may crave independence one minute and snuggles the next.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

- Help kids name their feelings: “It sounds like you’re frustrated.”
- Praise their effort, not just results.
- Create space to talk without judgment or punishment.
- Remember it’s normal for kids to be messy, moody, silly, or stubborn.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Elementary students are learning how to be part of a group—on the playground, in the classroom, and in friendships.

- Friendships can change quickly, leading to drama.
- Kids begin to care deeply about what others think.
- They may copy behaviors to try to “fit in.”
- Bullying (and exclusion) can start in the early grades.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

- Talk about what makes a good friend and how to treat others with kindness.
- Monitor digital device use and teach safe behavior online.
- Role-play how to stand up for themselves or ask for help.
- Remember, challenges in early grades often smooth out with time, structure, and support.

Every time you explain how kids grow, you give families peace of mind. Share your experience. Offer examples. Celebrate progress, not perfection. You are a steady, trusted guide.