



## Promoting Healthy Development

Adults can help promote healthy development in young children and adolescents through a variety of strategies that are unique to each age group. The table below outlines some of these strategies in children ages 5-8, 9-12, and 13-18, which are further detailed in the following sections.

Ages 5-8	Ages 9-12	Ages 13-18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limit criticism</li><li>• Positive attention and specific praise</li><li>• Feedback sandwich</li><li>• Teach and model respect</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Model and discuss role of making mistakes in the learning process</li><li>• Learn from feedback</li><li>• Use non-judgmental language</li><li>• Discuss complexity of social dynamics in peer relationships</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Show respect, trust, and honesty, and express similar expectations</li><li>• Pick your battles</li><li>• Notice changes sleep, mood, friends, academics, and other areas of functioning</li><li>• Provide supervision and monitoring while respecting privacy</li></ul>

### AGES 5-8

Because children at this age are sensitive to feedback, and may be nervous about their abilities, it is important for educators to give lots of positive attention and praise. Specific praise helps children identify positive behaviors and positive traits in themselves. It also increases the likelihood they will repeat this behavior in the future. While criticism should be limited, educators can use a “feedback sandwich” by giving brief corrective feedback between two positive statements.

It is also important for educators to teach and model respect. Just as children need explicit teaching and examples to learn academic information, they also need this explicit instruction and modeling for respect and appropriate behavior. Teachers can help students learn how to respond to problems by modeling using a low and calm voice, stating how they feel, and providing information about how to solve a problem.

### AGES 9-12

It is important to give clear and constructive feedback to help children learn from mistakes. While it may be tempting to avoid negative feedback because it can be upsetting, students need this feedback to learn. Feedback should be aimed at helping children to learn from an incident and know how to do it differently the next time. Educators should use non-judgmental language, listen to what students say, and acknowledge the feelings associated with what is said. Students will need ongoing

support and recognition for expressing and dealing with difficult emotions and praise for areas of competence that they are developing.

Students at this age are also continuing to learn how to navigate increasingly more complex relationships with peers. Educators are in a position to reinforce positive peer relationships and can promote peer learning opportunities inclusive of all students. Educators can support students by recognizing and encouraging student strengths and skills, which will help them to feel proud and to build on and expand their abilities.

## **AGES 13-18**

To promote healthy development in teenage students, it is important to be knowledgeable about adolescent development and create an atmosphere of respect, trust, and honesty. Adults working with adolescents can benefit from putting themselves in the student's place and trying to remember what it was like growing up at this age. Knowing a student's typical functioning and demeanor can help school staff recognize changes in patterns or habits such as mood, friends, and academics. While supervision and monitoring are important in shaping healthy behaviors, they should be balanced with respecting an adolescent's privacy.

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