Ages 6-12 years

(plus some info on ages 3-5)

Developmental Concepts - Cognition/Thinking

- By about age 6-7 kids begin to take pleasure/pride in the accomplishment of new and different goals/skills. The attainment of each goal motivates the achievement of new ones.
- So be sure to acknowledge a child's accomplishments. Better yet, do it in front of his/her teammates or parents. This positive reinforcement will spur the child to take risks by motivating them to try new/unfamiliar skills.

Quantity concepts:

- Under age 7 it is difficult for children to understand the words "more" or "less", "many" or "much".
- Number use is an important part of understanding quantity
- So saying things like "too many of you are going after the puck" is difficult to understand. Say things like "only 2 of you should go after the puck"

Time concepts:

- Children are confused by "a little bit" or "a little later". Try using a timer or use a clock and say (while pointing to the numbers) "I want all my skaters to get good rest so you should go to bed when the big hand is on the 12 and the little hand is on the 8".

Right and Left:

- Usually kids can't understand this concept until about age 7
- Avoid using the terms right and left when talking about placement on the rink unless you are specifically teaching the concept of right and left
- Teach the kids the concept of right and left. They respond better to using names such as "leftie" and "rightie" or teach them that their left hand makes the letter "L". Or play the "hokey pokey".

Problem Solving:

- Elementary age kids use cause and effect/trial and error to learn

Ex: snow plow stop. How many times do kids fall before they finally get it? Or just turn/change directions vs. hard stop?

- Use descriptive words to help them get a picture - "I want you to spray me with the ice like a snow plow!" (then demonstrate this)
- Also keep in mind that for young kids demonstrating and explaining do help, but letting kids try and try again by getting "the feel" of specific skills is what is necessary. Observation of the kids with positive reinforcement "that's it Johnny, you're doing it!" Get them to think about what this feels like…"Tell me what it feels like". Once they have the feel down, this is where repetition comes in. Repetition will put the feelings into long term storage in their brain and help them to recall how to do certain skills based on what feels normal.
- As you can see it is important to try and stop bad habits from forming at young ages!

Abstract thinking:

- Kids at this age still cannot think abstractly
- Thinking is restricted to immediate and physical - trial and error
- They cannot truly analyze their own thoughts or think about problems in the future

They cannot visualize how what they are learning in practice translates to games

Generalization of Learning:

- Never assume that because a child can demonstrate a particular skill in one environment that the same level of accomplishment will be apparent in another setting or even another time.
- Ex: just because your players can perform a "system" in practice does not mean they will be able to 1) perform this in a game situation 2) know when it is appropriate to run it in a game situation 3) be able to modify the system to accommodate for a game situation

Initiation and termination of activity:

- Is directly related to the child's motivational level and self control
- Ex: if you are teaching a skill that is too difficult for a player and they know it (from past experience) they will be less motivated to participate. Try and identify this early and modify the skill to make it achievable for the child.

Self concept:

- If a child's self concept is impaired, the entire functional ability to perform in all areas of life is impacted.
- So stay positive

Social conduct/Self expression:

- Acting out or talking too much COULD be a way of avoiding tasks that are too difficult for the child.
- Try and recognize this early and adjust tasks as needed
- It might be helpful for coaches to be notified if a child has been diagnosed with things like Asburger's (mild autism) or ADHD as these things would totally effect how the coach should teach

Behavior disorder children:

- They are difficult to motivate and non-compliant
- They require extra patience
- Use different types of assessment strategies
- This child does not do well in an environment where they perceive the examiner to be an authority figure
- Select performance activities where fewer interactions between coach and child are required. They need to see the coach as an information provider/gatherer rather than an authority figure

Tone of voice:

- Using a different tone of voice so that directions are given in the nature of play will help increase attention span.

Attention span:

- The general rule is that normal attn span is 3-5 minutes per year of a child's age
- Is directly related to the child's developmental age vs. chronological age. So even if Bobby is 5-1/2 years old if he might only developmentally be functioning at a 5 year old level.
- Ex: if most of my kids are age 5-6 years old that would mean they could attend for about 20-25 minutes.

Reinforcement:

- It is important that the child be encouraged for effort rather than the results of effort.
- "I like the way you are working" or "You're really working hard" is more effective than those that denote a value judgment of the finished product, such as "You did that correctly".
- Although external rewards are an important reason for participation, caution must be exercised by the instructors in overemphasizing the use of extrinsic rewards as they may decrease the internal (excellence, sensation) interest of the players for participation. That said, external rewards should be provided as a meaningful reward for specific, important goals and not as a continuous natural part of participation.

Practice:

- Whether practice is beneficial depends on the child's maturational state.
- Unless there has been sufficient neurological maturation, certain kinds of motor skill activity are impossible, and practice will NOT help.
- Ex: the average age when kids can skip using alternating feet is age 5. Having your 3 year old practice this every day for ½ hour would be pointless!
- Extended practice sessions or accelerated training are not necessarily linked to motor skill performance. Rather motor skill efficiency is the product of maturation and experience.
- Ex: if Bobby is a kid who is allowed to climb trees, skateboard, ride a bike and Jack is a boy who's parents protect him from "dangerous" activities such as these. Bobby's brain will have more neuron pathways that have addressed things like balance and thus he will be more neurologically mature and ultimately have more efficient motor skills than Jack.

- **Play: Ages 4-6 years**
- Limit activities to 10-15 minutes
- Enjoy more "make believe" and games with less structure
- Enjoy playing activities where they imitate adult roles (doctor, policeman, GI Joe)
- Regarding circuit skills approach: lets say there are 5 stations teaching different hockey skills. Repeat these stations frequently (multiple practice sessions) but approach them in different ways (so the child does not get bored with them; you can even do this with a different tone of voice or calling it something different or having a different coach/parent teach it because we all teach/act different). Then when it is looking like most kids have got the concept, drop that skill the next practice session and replace it with a new skill. Then maybe reintroduce it again later (say about 2 practices later) and see how well the kids recall and perform the skill.
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Play: Ages 7-8 years

- By this age kids begin to think they know it all and don't want to practice. So you have to get more creative.
- They just want to play so make it fun!

Other motor skill info: (that might be of interest)

- By age 5 all motor skills are in place - after this it is just refining motor skills
- Ages 3-5 have decreased hand/foot coordination
- On the whole, physical developments during the 6-12 year age group are slow but steady. Because bodily changes are less marked and physical size increases slowly, children gain control of and perfect motor skills they have been unable to master in the past. As a result, overall balance and coordination and refinement in physical activities show an increase at this time.

Age 3:

- Running/walking is smoother
- Cannot turn or stop quickly
- Can take running/walking steps on toes
- 42% can jump well
- Can leap off the floor with both feet
- Can ascend stairs and small ladder using alternating feet
- Can throw about 3 feet without losing balance
- Uses 2 handed throwing and body remains fixed
- Catches large ball with arms extended and stiff; makes no adjustment of arms to receive ball

Age 4:

- Greater control of stopping, starting, turning
- 73% skilled in jumping
- 20% are proficient throwers and begins to assume adult throwing stance
- 29% are proficient in catching; arms more relaxed at elbows

Age 5:

- Can stand up without using hands for support
- Makes 90* pivot in standing
- Can run 35 yard dash in less than 10 seconds
- 80% have mastered jumping
- 74% are proficient throwers; starting to transfer weight with throwing
- 56% are proficient in catching; can now catch small ball and uses hands more than arms to catch
- Skips on alternating feet
- Can bounce a ball
- Can catch and kick a ball simultaneously
- Can walk up/down stairs on alternating feet without using the rail
- Can alternate a ball right and left after age 5

Age 6:

- Balances on 1 foot with eyes open
- Jumps over one foot obstacles
- Reaches for objects beyond arm's length with ease
- Kicks ball from running start
- Balances well on toes
- Heel toe walks forward
- most kids can: roller skate, skip rope, and ride a bike

Age 7:

Most have perfected running and jumping and the basics of throwing, hitting, and catching a ball

Ages 6-12:

- awkward and inefficient movements, erratic changes in tempo, inability to sit for long, and fatigability.
- Developing muscles are more susceptible to injury from overuse.
- Boys are ahead of girls in motor skills and have greater strength
- Average pulse: 85-100 beats per minute & Average blood pressure: 95-108/62-67

Practice Suggestions:

- Come to practice with a practice plan and make sure your assistant coaches/parent helpers are aware of their "jobs" for that day.
- A good instructor to child ratio is 1:4 or 1:5. A maximum should be 1:8. Try and give every kid 1:1 attention every session. Even if it is just a minute or two. This shows the child you care about them and are noticing them.
- USA Hockey's cross-ice practice and play model is recommended
- Drills and activities should be changed frequently within one practice but repeated over consecutive practices until players experience success.
- Use music or songs (hokey pokey to learn right and left)
- For younger kids, use things bigger than a puck (small ball) and then advance to puck use
- Off ice "homework" pays off big time on the ice - see handout for more ideas
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Great website: www.pecentral.org

I know this is more physical education based vs. hockey but they have some great ideas that would work off the ice or could be modified to on ice skills/games

Look under lesson ideas/elementary/preschool menu