



YARDSTICKS

Children ^{IN THE}
Classroom
Ages 4-14

3rd Edition

CHIP WOOD



Foreword by William Crain

NORTHEAST FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN, INC.



Ten-Year-Olds

“Mrs. Hanson told Diane and me to get our folders and place them on our desks. I made a pretty semicircle with mine. I was glad I had only good papers for my parents to see.”

Nothing’s Fair in Fifth Grade | by Barthe DeClements

“Can we stay in today and finish the book? Please!”

“Will you read more this afternoon, Mrs. Goodwin? We promise to do our math for homework if you would. This story is so awesome!”

“Yeah,” comes the chorus of hushed voices.

“Well ... all right, children ... but just one more chapter,” yields Mrs. Goodwin, silently delighting in one of those magic moments of teaching, one she will always treasure about this class.

The children settle back in, sprawling on the carpet, or chins on hands at their desks; two girls lean against Mrs. Goodwin as she reads from her comfy chair. The story continues.

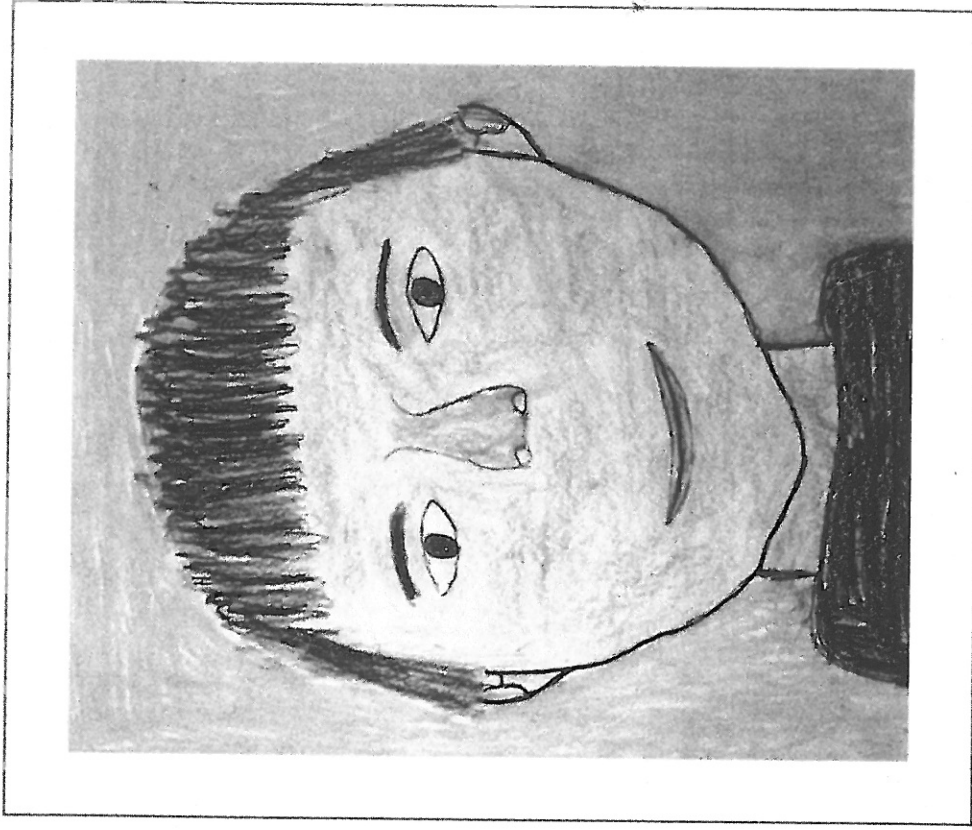
Such scenes are repeated often when children are ten. To exaggerate a little, here is the golden end of childhood. At ten, children find comfort in themselves, their teachers, their parents, and even their siblings. They relax in their childhood, gathering strength for the

impending storm of adolescence and consolidating their gains from their early years. You can see this clearly in the cognitive choices that children make in school. Tens concentrate on, even relish, producing tangible products that display their competence—book reports, theme reports, beginning research writing, and scientific documentation.

These industrious children are also able to easily share their knowledge with their classmates and work well on group projects. This is the ideal age for the class play or trip, and tens can often help evelens and even twelves in cooperative pursuits because of their relative calmness and instinct for cooperation.

At ten, children seem to be at their most actively receptive as learners of factual information. This is usually a good time to master the multiplication tables that have been such a struggle until now. It's an age for state capitals, presidents, principal products of major nations, exports and imports, and poetry and speech memorization. Education about the human body, sex, childbirth, and child rearing (as determined by the school's curriculum policy) can be more effective now than a year or two later when children are more self-conscious about their bodies. The facts are more easily taught and remembered, and boys and girls tend to work well together.

Children know all the rules at ten, thanks to their facile memories. Board games and games of strategy are great favorites, and tens are likely to be in mutual agreement about how to play, rather than endlessly arguing about rules. It's a wonderful age at which to teach or reteach mediation, to introduce or reintroduce problem-solving formats in class meeting, to teach governmental structures and scientific principles. All these will be challenged at eleven, argued with at twelve, and rebelled against at thirteen. But ten is a great time for initial introduction and general acceptance, which plant the seeds for the more formal and more abstract cognitive challenges ahead.



Just as children at every chronological age will vary somewhat from the typical developmental picture for that age, not all ten-year-olds will perfectly fit this generally happy picture all of the time. Some children at ten will have issues with friendships, homework, or subjects that are hard for them, or they will struggle with difficult medical or family dilemmas. But there is a sturdiness about ten that can help the children get through these situations. That sturdiness is observable in many fifth grade classrooms.

Tens especially love group games outdoors. They can learn, and usually enjoy, cooperative and noncompetitive activities as well as more traditional and competitive games like kickball, tag, and dodgeball. Boys and girls play well together in either kind of activity. Group initiatives and challenges have great success at this age, so it's a good time for formal outdoor education like a ropes course challenge or overnight camping. Children often have their fondest memories of weeks at summer camp when they were ten.

Ordering their world is central to ten-year-olds. Enjoy the clean bedroom, the orderly classroom, and the relative absence of arguments. Observe and capitalize on children's interest in classification and seriation: they love rock collections, sets of baseball and superhero cards, doll and teddy bear and unicorn collections, jewelry boxes, secret compartments. Teach about phylum and genus and other ways of organizing the world. Teach beginning genetics, the value of repeating experiments and testing variables. Teach tens about attributes and combinations of attributes to describe different phenomena. The world is theirs to organize.



Outdoor play is as critical for preadolescent children as it is for children in early childhood (see "Exercise" in the "Developmental Considerations" section). Schools that have eliminated recess have taken away children's inalienable right and undeniable need to play. Breaks are especially important to these industrious ten-year-olds, allowing them to bounce back from fatigue and do even more school work.

Ten-Year-Olds: Growth Patterns

PHYSICAL

- Large muscles are developing quickly
- Desperately need outdoor time and physical challenge
- Often write more sloppily than at nine
- Snacks and rest periods benefit their rapidly growing bodies

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

- Generally content; enjoy family, peers, and teachers
- Friendly, generally happy; quick to anger and quick to forgive
- Work very well in groups; enjoy clubs, activities, and team sports
- Usually truthful; developing more mature sense of right and wrong
- Highly sensitive to and able to resolve questions of fairness and other social issues
- Able to enjoy cooperative and competitive activities

LANGUAGE

- Listen well
- Read voraciously
- Expressive and talkative; like to explain things



COGNITIVE

- Very good at memorizing facts
- Increasingly able to think abstractly; enjoy rules and logic; good at solving problems
- Enjoy collecting, classifying, and organizing
- Can concentrate for long periods
- Take pride in school work

Ten-Year-Olds in the Classroom

VISION AND FINE MOTOR ABILITY

- Able to focus well on both the board and close-up written work
- Can pay attention to spelling, dictation, and penmanship all at once, but work may be somewhat sloppy as they learn to integrate these skills
- Particularly enjoy tracing and copying as fine motor skills strengthen; making maps and drawing cartoons provide excellent fine motor practice.
- Ready to start using tools such as compasses, protractors, rulers, and templates; need plenty of practice time

GROSS MOTOR ABILITY

- Need a great deal of physical activity; large muscles for jumping, running, and other big movements are developing quickly, although upper body strength is generally undeveloped
- Extra recess and play time are a must, or their energy may spill over into acting out in the classroom
- Love group games, relays, group initiatives, class outings, ropes courses, double Dutch jump rope clubs, team sports, and other organized activities

COGNITIVE GROWTH

- Highly productive with school work; usually conscientious with homework; pay close attention to form, structure, directions, and organization

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COGNITIVE GROWTH

- Receptive learners; very good at memorization; love geography, world records, facts about sports and TV programs, and activities requiring memory skills (such as spelling, math, and certain computer and electronic games)
- Enjoy choral reading, singing, poetry, and plays
- With concrete organizational skills at their peak, enjoy classification, seriation, and exactness; enjoy and learn much from working on collections and science and math projects

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR

- Basically cooperative nature is conducive to group activity, whole class cohesion, and collaborative learning; ten is a good age for learning peer mediation and conflict resolution
- Quite concerned with friendship and fairness issues; teams, groups, games, and competitions help them practice social interaction
- Generally satisfied with their own abilities; happy and flexible
- Eager to reach out to others, such as through community service or tutoring younger children
- Enjoy being noticed and rewarded for their efforts; respond well to the teacher's "noticing" language; for example, "Claire, I noticed that you were frustrated with that math problem at first, but you kept trying different strategies until you got it!"
- Quick tempers may lead to physical outbursts and tears, but problems are usually quickly and easily solved

Ten-Year-Olds: Curriculum

READING

Provide opportunities for children this age to:

- Read, memorize, and recite poetry, do choral readings, and put on plays
- Read trade books centered on themes
- Read independently and indulge their desire to devour one book after another; read more and do fewer book projects
- Enjoy comic books

WRITING

Expect from these children:

- *Writing:* Readiness to write lengthy chapter books, longer poems, first research papers, pieces about famous people—all usually filled with light and descriptive language; more frequent use of humor; more use of dialogue; description of realistic interaction between characters
- *Spelling:* Enjoy memorizing how to spell difficult words and using the words, properly spelled, in day-to-day writing
- *Writing Themes:* Friends, friends, and more friends in many adventures; time travel; writing letters to request information; writing notes to friends; writing reports
- *Handwriting:* Fluent cursive (keyboarding helps those having great difficulty)

THEMATIC UNITS

(Social Studies, See Current Events)

Favorite themes for children this age:

- Geography
- Immigration
- History
- How things work
- Geology, land formations, and weather
- Industry (for example, research on the source of a particular product)

MATH

Provide opportunities for children this age to:

- Master multiplication tables
- Work extensively with decimals
- Compute extensively with fractions
- Use maps to measure and compute
- Do double-digit division
- Solve word problems