



## Learning Tool Box

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## Early Childhood

Students at ages 3 through 5 are working toward developing the following Learning Tools

- **Separation** from parents and caregivers
- Accepts **limits and boundaries**
- Can **follow directions** individually and in a group
- Can **tolerate frustration** and has tools for self-regulation
- Can **transition** easily
- Can **focus on a self-directed activity** for at least 10 minutes at age three and at least 20 minutes for age 5
- Can **focus on a teacher or leader-led activity** for longer than they can focus on a self-directed activity
- Parents and caregivers **understand child's temperament** and the areas of strength and challenge - tools for areas of challenge are explicitly and concretely taught
- Student has **interactions with adults and children** and moves into collaborative play and discussions
- Can ask "**why and how come**" **questions** in a relevant manner
- Remembers and retells **stories in a sequence**

## Elementary-Aged Students

- Shows **Curiosity** as a learner by asking meaningful questions, noticing new materials, and using many different strategies when exploring areas of interest or presentation
- Is **Inventive** with play and materials by creating imaginary worlds - and does so both by showing what they experience but also creating new ways to represent their environment with their play objects; finds new ways to solve problems and can generate multiple solutions to solving problems
- **Delves deeply** into areas of interest - has clear interests and shows ownership of them, spends days to weeks pursuing these interests and makes plans for how to extend their involvement in their interests.
- Shows **self direction** by **taking responsibility for her/himself**, can make choices among activities, begin projects and continue them independently, asks teachers for very specific assistance, willing to take some risks
- **Persists in solving problems** and tries multiple solutions - when challenged by a task, the student will make many attempts to solve the problem without asking for help and continues to return to the project over many days
- **Sustains attention to self-initiated activities** by spending 20-30 minutes (and increasing that time by 10 min per grade - so 20-30 min for K, and 30-40 min for 1st grade and so on)
- **Sustains attention to teacher or leader-led activities** by spending more time than they do with self-initiated activities, and they can resume tasks after a disruption or distraction.

# Middle School Students

Students in grades 6 through 8 are developing these learning tools:

## **Executive Functioning:**

- **Response Inhibition:** they think about what they want to say before they say it, and what they will do before they do it. Example: they won't rush to post or comment on social media until they have processed all implications of their comment or they will wait until they have processed content in class before asking questions of the teacher
- **Working Memory:** They are able to remember things they need to work with without writing them down, they remember to turn in homework assignments and they keep track of their belongings and know where they are.
- **Emotional Control:** When their homework is difficult or takes a long time they are patient, they have tools to handle frustration and they are able to remain calm when things do not go as planned. When their emotions become very heightened in an energy sense or very low in energy, they have tools to bring their emotions back to a place where they can access their brain for learning.
- **Flexible Thinking:** When something is not working out they try to find a different solution. They are calm and accepting about a change in plans and routines and they are able to do creative open-ended work assignments.
- **Sustained Attention:** Students are able to feel energetic and able to finish all of their homework even in undesirable situations. They are able to finish whatever they start including chores and homework.
- **Task Initiation:** Students have a schedule for homework and chores and do not wait until the last minute. They are able to put away distractions such as phone food and focus on their homework. Students are able to start their chores and homework on their own.
- **Planning and Prioritization:** When they have a big assignment they know how to plan it out. When they have many things to do, they begin by prioritizing. They are able to do long-term projects easily.
- **Organization:** Students keep their school supplies and backpacks organized, they like to keep their desk or workspace at home neat and organized, they also keep their bedroom neat and organized. They understand how to manage their things and their responsibilities for caring for them.
- **Time Management:** Students can usually guess how long their homework will take. They always finish their homework at night and go to bed on time. They are able to get ready quickly. They can get from one class to another on time. Students also have an understanding of what general time periods feel like such as 15 minutes, 30 minutes and 1 hour.
- **Goal-Directed Persistence:** Students can save money for things they would like to do by themselves. They believe it's important to earn good grades now for their future plans. They work toward a goal and continue even if they do not need it initially. They feel a sense of satisfaction toward working on something over a longer period of time.
- **Metacognition:** Students have different study strategies that they use for different types of work. They check their mistakes before handing in work. They evaluate their

performance whether it be academic or other to see if they need to make any changes. They always look at evaluations whether they be exams or writing and make sure that they have learned something from the experience of being evaluated.

### **Other Learning Tools:**

**Responding to Different Teacher's Methods and Evaluation Rubrics** - Students in Middle School are learning how to manage different leadership and teaching styles. They have to learn what each teacher values and promotes in their learning environment and respond accordingly.

**Reading** - Students learn how to read longer pieces of text, take notes and ask clarifying questions

**Writing** - Students can work through the writing process of planning, organizing, writing, revising and editing and use self-regulation and strategies to continually improve their writing skills and process for academic writing

**Math** - Students build skills and understanding of concepts. They keep mastery of skills over time. They have a way to organize content being covered in class and strategies to study effectively (not just practicing problems without strategy).

**Studying** - Middle school students use strategies to study information - to understand it and to memorize it. They need to continue to build and adjust these strategies to be responsive to the expectations of their academic program.

**Attending to Feedback** - Middle school students build their ability to gain feedback within their learning experiences and when they apply that feedback, they grow as a learner.

**Meeting with Teachers** - In Middle School, students partner with teachers to further investigate topics of interest or to manage challenges that arise. Students need to feel comfortable asking to meet with teachers and show up for those meetings

**Self-Advocacy** - Students learn about the ways in which they make meaning within their learning - they share this with teachers, tutors and parents so that they can be supported. Students ask questions when they do not understand feedback. Students and parents need to communicate and gain communication skills so that families can support the student's increasing school work demands and extracurricular activities by having a monthly calendar and talking through when students will accomplish their tasks within the family schedule.

**Self-Regulating Amid Massive Social, Emotional and Physical Development** - Middle School students are engaging in a notable stage of overall development that affects their academic performance and learning abilities. They check in with their social, emotional and physical health and wellness and partner with adults to gain tools in these areas so they can regulate to have their brains available for learning.

**COVID Related Learning Tools** - During the time of the pandemic, Middle School students are experiencing trauma. They can be worried about their health, the health of their family, the health of their friends. They could be reading news and be concerned about what they are learning. Their everyday learning has been disrupted by various methods of teaching - remote, hybrid and in-person learning. Students benefit from having time to process their experiences and gain tools for managing their trauma so they can learn best.

# High School Students

High School Students are in Grades 9-12

The assumption for high school students is that they have gained all of the previous learning tools mentioned in the Early, Elementary and Middle School sections. During these years, the level at which students operate in their learning is higher because they are able to abstract more easily and they can become more sophisticated with their executive functioning skills. If these learning tools seem too advanced for your high school student, we suggest reading through the middle school section and building from there.

## Executive Functioning:

- **Response Inhibition:** High School students can “see” the long term effects of their actions and take steps to slow down their actions to consider all consequences before acting, posting, responding or writing. They understand all they post online will remain with them for the long term and not be assumed as private information.
- **Working Memory:** They are able to remember many different categories of information without writing them down, they keep track of not only their school work, but their belongings and when they need more of something. They use working memory within long, sophisticated pieces of writing or mathematical problem solving to hold and access multiple strategies and skills.
- **Emotional Control:** High School students have many tools to understand, control and move within their emotions. They understand their thoughts control their feelings and they have an awareness of what they are thinking and what they can think to produce desired emotions. When they feel out of emotional control they seek help.
- **Flexible Thinking:** When something is not working out they try to find a different solution. They accept various points of view and can understand various perspectives. They do not get “stuck” when they meet a challenge in learning - rather, they have tools to bend, change, adapt and grow.
- **Sustained Attention:** Students are able to feel energetic and able to finish all of their homework, paid work, chores, and other obligations even in undesirable situations. They are able to finish whatever they start and not jump from task to task within a sustained work period. They can put down their phones and engage in person-to-person conversations or activities without issue.
- **Task Initiation:** Students have a digital calendar that they own and maintain. They plan ahead and do not wait until the last minute. They are able to put away distractions such as phone food and focus on their homework, paid work, chores, and other obligations. Students are able to start these activities on their own.
- **Planning and Prioritization:** When they have a big assignment they know how to plan it out. When they have many things to do, they begin by prioritizing. They are able to do long-term projects, goals, work and college planning easily.
- **Organization:** Students keep their computers, phones, school supplies and backpacks organized, they like to keep their desk or workspace at home neat and organized, they

also keep their bedroom neat and organized. They understand how to manage their things and their responsibilities for caring for them.

- **Time Management:** High School students understand time - how long typical tasks take and when they will be completed. They keep a digital calendar and hold themselves accountable to meetings, deadlines, and appointments. They have a realistic understanding of boundaries and ownership over their calendar.
- **Goal-Directed Persistence:** Students can save money for things they would like to do by themselves. They believe it's important to work toward future plans. They work toward a goal and continue even if they do not need it initially. They feel a sense of satisfaction toward working on something over a longer period of time.
- **Metacognition:** Students have different study strategies that they use for different types of work. They evaluate their performance whether it be academic or other to see if they need to make any changes. They always look at evaluations whether they be exams or writing and make sure that they have learned something from the experience of being evaluated.

### **Other Learning Tools:**

**Responding to Different Teacher's Methods and Evaluation Rubrics** - Students in High School are learning how to manage different leadership and teaching styles. They have to learn what each teacher values and promotes in their learning environment and respond accordingly.

**Reading** - Students learn how to read longer pieces of text within various subjects without teacher direction as to when to read or how to read; they can take notes and ask clarifying questions

**Writing** - Students can work through the writing process of planning, organizing, writing, revising and editing and use self-regulation and strategies to continually improve their writing skills and process for academic writing

**Math-** Students build skills and understanding of concepts. They keep mastery of skills over time. They have a way to organize content being covered in class and strategies to study effectively (not just practicing problems without strategy).

**Studying** - High school students use strategies to study information efficiently in a way that works for their learning preferences - they work toward understanding material and can apply strategy to memorize it. They are responsive to the expectations of their academic program.

**Attending to Feedback** - High school students gain feedback within their learning experiences and when they apply that feedback, they grow as a learner.

**Meeting with Teachers** - In High School, students partner with teachers to further investigate topics of interest or to manage challenges that arise. Students need to feel comfortable asking to meet with teachers and show up for those meetings.

**Self-Advocacy** - High School Students know how they learn best and share this with teachers, tutors and parents so that they can be supported. Students ask questions when they do not understand feedback. They share what they need from family to ensure they have the time needed to do work and to participate in activities.

**Self-Regulating Amid Massive Social, Emotional and Physical Development** - High School students are engaging in a notable stage of overall development that affects their academic

performance and learning abilities. They check in with their social, emotional and physical health and wellness and partner with adults to gain tools in these areas so they can regulate to have their brains available for learning.

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