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**Human Development Theory**

Student learning and development is a process of physical, social, emotional, and psychological change over time. In order for learning to be authentic and meaningful, students need to be able to develop and learn at different rates, speeds, and times. For instance, students need to be developmentally ready to learn specific concepts whether in math or basic social interactions. As Vygotsky states, “just enough” and “just in time” social learning is important for students to develop and remain within their Zone of Proximal Development. Learning takes place organically and experimentally in different social contexts such as the home, school, and community. It is important for students to build knowledge and understanding in these social contexts so they can fully develop in all areas. For example, if students are delayed in attending a learning environment such as school they may potentially fall behind their peers socially. Cultural beliefs about education and schooling play an important role in student development and as teachers, we must be aware of the diversity that exists in our classrooms.

Like most people, I am sometimes guilty of assuming where my students should be at developmentally based on their age and as a result expect they are ready to learn curriculum and skills that may be unrealistic or irrelevant. Traditional schooling models are set along this belief that by grade “x”, students should be able to learn “y”. Students don’t always develop and meet pre-determined benchmarks during their schooling years but I do not necessarily believe that this is a precursor of future learning and success.