

Preadolescence is a time when considerable overlapping of developmental characteristics occurs, with elements of both middle childhood and early adolescence apparent. However, several unique characteristics set this period apart from others. In general, puberty begins at 10 years old in girls and 12 years old in boys, but it can be normal for either sex after 8 years old. Boys experience little visible sexual maturation during preadolescence.

Psychosocial Development: Developing a Sense of Industry (Erikson)

Freud described middle childhood as the **latency period**, a time of tranquility between the oedipal phase of early childhood and the eroticism of adolescence. During this time, children experience relationships with same-sex peers following the indifference of earlier years and preceding the heterosexual fascination that occurs for most boys and girls in puberty.

Successful mastery of Erikson's first three stages of psychosocial development is important in terms of development of a healthy personality. Successful completion of these stages requires a loving environment within a stable family unit. These experiences prepare the child to engage in experiences and relationships beyond the intimate family group.

A **sense of industry**, or a sense of accomplishment, occurs somewhere between 6 years old and adolescence. School-age children are eager to develop skills and participate in meaningful and socially useful work. Interests expand in the middle years, and with a growing sense of independence, children want to engage in tasks that can be carried through to completion (Fig. 14-2). Failure to develop a sense of accomplishment may result in a sense of inferiority.