Diversity in Development:
Basic Understanding of Developmental Domains

Authors: Jacqueline Ip (Speech and Language Therapist)
Published: 1st September 2021

A beautiful forest consists of a variety of plants, insects and animals. They all work in a good balance to make the forest flourish. Diversity allows things to work well. Similarly, embracing diversity in our community and preschools enables our kids to have better learning experience.

What is diversity in terms of children's development? Different cultures have their own ways to look at it. Some common areas include intellectual, spiritual, emotional, moral, academic, physical, social and aesthetical development.

Let us learn more about different developmental domains in our context. Some examples of the domains are shared below.

1. Independence	2. Motor/Physical and Sensory Procesing	3. Communication	4. Attention
• Feeding • Toileting • Dressing, etc	• Gross motor: Running, jumping, ball catching, throwing, hopping, etc • Fine motor: Handwriting, copying, scissors cutting, colouring, etc • Posture • Seven senses: Sight (Vision), Hearing (Auditory), Smell (Olfactory), Taste (Gustatory), Touch (Tactile), Vestibular (Movement) and Proprioception (Body Position	• Language: auditory comprehension, expressive communication (understanding instructions, using bidy language and words, using gestures, vocabulary and sentences) • Speech: Pronounciation, voice • Pragmatic skills: Using language in different situations	•Attending to activities and lessons

| 5. Behaviour	6. Learning/Academic	7. Social-emotional
• Following rules and classroom instructions	• Literacy: Reading (letter sound, blending, sight word recognition), writing (numeracy)	• Communicating with peers and adults • Managing emotions (e.g. anger, anxiety)

In order to illustrate the above domains, a case example is given. Can you identify the developmental domains in the following example? What are the areas that Adrian can do well?

Adrian is a 4-year-old boy. His father fetches him to school at 8.00am every day. Adrian likes to ride a scooter to school. Once he reaches school, he happily waves goodbye to his dad, takes off his shoes and put his schoolbag in his cubbyhole independently. He then plays for a short while but he often plays alone. After that, he has lessons and he is attentive.

Adrian participates in some drawing activities in the lessons. He always needs teacher's one-on-one guidance. He can recognise all letters and is able to read. When he needs to go to the toilet, he asks his teachers for permission.

After the morning lessons, he then goes for lunch. Although he eats slowly, he can always finish his portion. He goes shower and changes his clothes independently. The first half of the day ends with his naptime.
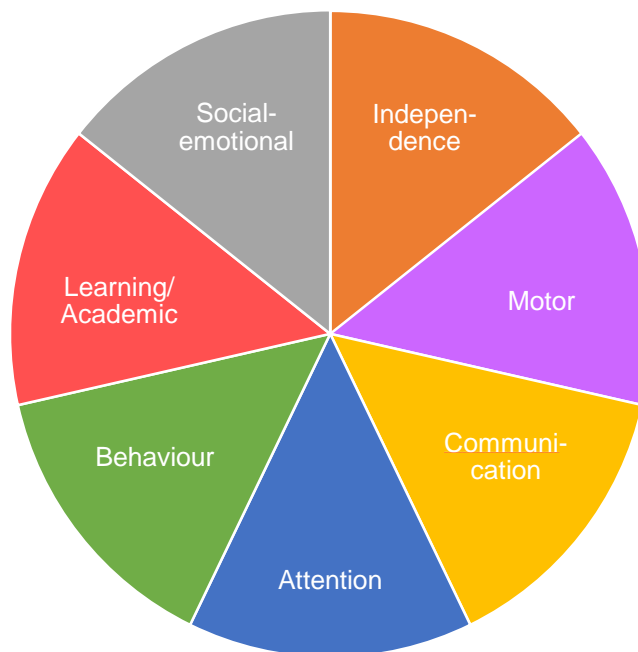
Let us look at the following categorisation – his strengths are in blue:

Independence
- **Taking off his shoes, dressing**
- Eating

Motor
- **Riding a scooter**
- Drawing

Communication
- Understanding lessons
- **Asking for permission**

Attention
- **Attending to lessons and activities**

Behavior
- **Follow routines well, e.g.asking for permission, puting schoolbag in cubbyhole**

Learning/ academic
- **Recognising all letters**
- Learning

Social-emotional
- **Saying 'bye' to daddy comfortably**
- Playing wtih friends

Adrian has strengths and weaknesses in different areas. We all do! We can always use these strengths to promote learning. For example, Adrian always rides a scooter to school. He is also good at reading. We can use these to promote social interaction skills – talking about scooter, riding a scooter together with his friends, reading in a small group with classmates, etc.

What are the strengths of your child in terms of the above developmental domains?

Everybody is unique. No individual is the same. The more we understand, respect and value these differences in others, ourselves, in our kids and other children, the more we are contributing to an inclusive community!