The Young Adolescent Learner:  
*The Turning Point Years*

NANCY M. DODA, PH.D.  
TEACHER TO TEACHER  
NDODA@TEACHER-TO-TEACHER.COM  
WWW.TEACHER-TO-TEACHER.COM

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**The Wonder Years**

1. What are the critical developmental shifts in the young adolescent years of life?

2. What are the implications for best schooling during these years?

3. What can all educators learn from best middle grades practices?

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- Young adolescence is the white water in the river of life. -Mark Twain

- When your child turns 13 take him to a field and put a barrel over his head. Put a hole in the barrel and feed him through the hole. When he turns 16, plug up the hole. -Mark Twain

- The young adolescent learner is an organism that runs wherever it goes, and when it gets there it hits someone or something.

- I'll pray for you! (Montreal Agent)
“Working with young teens is not easy. It takes patient, humor and love. Yes, love of kids who burp and fart their way to eighth grade. Who tell you “Life sucks!” and everything they do is “Boring!” Who literally roll to the floor in hysterical laughter when you separate the prefix and the suffix from the word “prediction” and ask them for the root and what it means. Who wear short, skin-tight skirts and leg-laced sandals, but carry teddy bears in their arms. Who used a paper clip to tattoo Jim Morrison’s picture in their arm during quiet study, while defending the merits of Tigger’s personality in Winnie-the-Pooh. Who send obscene notes that would make a football player blush, written in pink magic marker, blasting each other for stealing a boyfriend, and sign the note—“Love, P.S. Please write back.”—Linda Reiff, Seeking Diversity

THE 4 Big Ideas

1. YOUNG ADOLESCENTS ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY UNIQUE.
2. YOUNG ADOLESCENTS THRIVE IN SAFE HAVENS.
3. POWERFUL LEARNING IS COLLABORATIVE, ACTIVE, RELEVANT, AND INTEGRATED.
4. EVERYONE CAN GET SMART!

Three words to keep in mind today according to...

Do First
EXPLAIN SECOND

Reflect
Transfer
Model

“Modeling is not the main means of influencing others...”

A. E.

http://www.hetemeel.com/einsteinform.php

Reflect

“We do not learn from experience...”

J.D.

http://www.flickr.com/photos/langwitches/5662527301/
Transfer

“Transfer is the basis of creativity and problem solving. It can’t be assumed, it must planned for and taught.”

M. H.

If you don’t use it...

Three words to keep in mind today according to...

Model

Reflect

Transfer

‘WE MUST TRUST ONE ANOTHER ENOUGH TO TAKE THE RISKS NEEDED TO REALLY LEARN.’
Introductions and Check In

CHECKING IN IS A TOOL FOR REAL CONVERSATIONS

Check In: A Tool for Real Conversations

- Take Turns; Be brief
- No Cross Talk or Conversations
- Introduce Yourself
- Share: What’s On Your Mind?
- End saying, “I am checking in!”

(See reading “Check-In...A tool for real conversations”)

When you were thirteen?

IN WHICH DECADE WERE YOU 13?

Silent Line Up

1. 1950’s
2. 1960’s
3. 1970’s
4. 1980’s
5. 1990’s

IN WHICH DECADE WERE YOU 13?
Silent Line Up

Connections: Decade-Alike Talk

- Pop Culture Recall: Songs, dress, TV, film, heroes, norms, and slang?
- Vivid school memory of one incident, on one day during 10-15 years!

Pulse

Reflect & Transfer

- How did the activities we have just done change the way it feels to be here together in this room?
- Why might this be critical to the education of our young adolescents?
Reflect & Transfer

• How did the activities we have just done change the way it feels to be here together in this room?
• Why might this be critical to the education of our young adolescents?

Make 2 Appointments
• 12 O’Clock = Someone from your decade group.
• 3 O’Clock = Someone you don’t get to see often enough.
• Return to your Home table

Reflect & Transfer

• How did the activities we have just done change the way it feels to be here together in this room?
• Why might this be critical to the education of our young adolescents?
Big Idea #1

YOUNG ADOLESCENTS
ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY
UNIQUE

DEVELOPMENTAL SHIFTS

✓ PHYSICAL
✓ INTELLECTUAL
✓ SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL

Up Close and Personal

• We asked them: “What should middle school teachers know about middle school students?”
• 2700 Letters from North American students were coded and analyzed.
• From pimples to politics to peers to projects....

Small Group Investigation

What Students Say... | Implications...
Our Findings

- We long to be known and trusted.
- We learn best when we feel safe.
- We want our differences to be acknowledged discretely.
- We want to learn important stuff that matters in the world and in life.
- We learn best when we are actively engaged.
- Respect us as people/learners with important ideas and contributions.
- Understand our developmental nature and associated challenges. (Doda & Knowles, 2006)

Team Challenge

What do we know about young adolescents?

Choose One

1. Between the ages of 10-14 middle school students grow and gain on average,...

A. 10-20 in. and gain 40-50 lbs.
B. 5-10 in. and gain 10-20 lbs.
C. 5-15 in. and gain 5-15 lbs.
2. What parts of the body grow fastest in young adolescents?

Choose One

A. feet, nose, hands
B. head, toes, arms
C. teeth, eyes, legs

A. feet, nose, hands
“Crustaceans are at their most vulnerable when they are between shells.”

Author Unknown

2. Most young adolescents experiencing these developmental changes feel...

Choose One
A. Excitement and anticipation
B. Improved confidence
C. Confusion and self doubt
D. Anger and frustration

C. confusion and self doubt
Not Hormones With Feet

YOUNG ADOLESCENCE IS AN ENORMOUS TIME OF INTELLECTUAL GROWTH

Questions from Young Adolescents

- Why are wars necessary?
- Why are schools the way they are?
- Can the environment be saved?
- Why is there so much prejudice?
- What is the purpose of time?
- How do you know when something is real?
- Can we stop crime?
- What will people evolve to look like?
- How will technology change us?
- Is time travel possible?
- Why do people live as they do?
- Why are there so many poor people?

The Consensus

‘The period of life called young adolescence--the years 10-15-- represents one of the most pivotal times in human development. How students fare in these middle years, sets a course for their future years in life and in school.’

BIG IDEA #2

YOUNG ADOLESCENTS THRIVE IN SAFE HAVENS
Team Challenge

What do we know about young adolescents?

A. Student self esteem increases but there’s no academic improvement
B. Academic performance increases
C. Reduction in bullying and improvement is student academic performance.
D. There’s no impact on either self esteem or academic performance.

3. What does research show about middle level schools that consistently implement programs that address the social and emotional needs of young adolescents?

C. Reduction in bullying and improvement is student academic performance.
The Power of School Connectedness

“Students are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and succeed academically when they feel connected to school….School connectedness was found to be among the strongest protective factors for both boys and girls.” (CDC, 2009; US & Canada)

4. Stress causes the body to produce cortisol. How does cortisol affect new learning?

A. interferes with the brain’s ability to organize and retrieve new information
B. reduces overreaction
C. supports reflection and transfer for learning
D. has nothing to do with learning

A. Interferes with the brain’s ability to organize and retrieve new information.
Being Known Well Counts

EMOTIONS AND LEARNING

The Classroom Climate

Positive climate leads to Endorphins in blood, which

Negative climate leads to Cortisol in blood which

The Learning Content

What instructional activities will get students emotionally connected to the content of the learning?

Team Challenge

What do we know about young adolescents?

Team Challenge

What do we know about young adolescents?

The New York Times and BusinessWeek Bestseller

A WHOLE NEW MIND

Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future

Daniel H. Pink

The New York Times and BusinessWeek Bestseller

A WHOLE NEW MIND

Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future

Daniel H. Pink
"Every young adolescent needs one adult in school who knows him/her exceedingly well and serves as the mentor, advocate, liaison and coach." (AMLE, This we believe; (2005) Hulley & Dier, Harbors of Hope)

By Many Names
- The Old Homeroom- Revisioned
- Advisory Time
- Base Camp
- Connect
- Prime Time
- Operation Breaking Barriers
- Morning meetings
- Seminar

Attention to Social/Emotional and Academic Performance
- Students participating in planned Social/Emotional efforts gained 11 percentile points on standardized measures of academic achievement (.28)
- Better than research results of a Daily aspirin/.01 (SEL=Social and Emotional Learning)


Build a True Community
of Learners
Taking a Class Portrait

Daily Greeting

Community and Collaboration

Community and Collaboration

Community and Collaboration
Cooperative Teamwork

Clock Appointment Reflection

- Meet with your 3 O’clock Appt.

What are the ways we now provide social & emotional support for students in grades 7-8?

How might we grow in this area?

Mrs. Mutner liked to go over a few of her rules on the first day of class.

Students Help Develop Classroom Norms
**Words to Live by:**

**Affirmations:**
- 5-Cs + 3
- Commitment
- Cooperation
- Courage
- Caution
- Caring
- Creativity
- Friendship
- Responsibility

**Key Ingredients:**
- Familiarity
- Trust
- Shared Identity
- Shared Values
- Common Purpose
- Shared Space & Time: History

**Team Challenge**

Characteristics of successful schools for young adolescents according to the research.
5. Name 1 universally supported recommendation for the effective organization of teachers serving young adolescents.

Choose One

A. Interdisciplinary Teams
B. Flexible, Longer Blocks of Class time
C. Wider hallways 😊

A. Interdisciplinary Teams
A Teaching Team

- Common Students
- Common Planning
- Time
- Common Procedures
- Common Space

TRUTH #3

POWERFUL ADOLESCENT LEARNING IS ENGAGING, RELEVANT AND EMPOWERING.

We Lose Students Through the Cracks

6. According to research (US & Canada), which one of the following is THE BEST predictor of career/college readiness?
Choose One

- A. High school GPA
- B. Advanced Placement courses taken
- C. 8th grade achievement
- D. Socio-Economic Status

- “Something about cells.”
- “We’re doing this packet.”
- “That was last week!”
  - “I get good grades.”
- “I am in the accelerated program and we did it so fast, I don’t remember much.”

“Almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his school days and wonder what has become of the knowledge he was supposed to have amassed during his years of schooling...but it was so segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life.”

Dewey (1938, 48)
Considerations

- The amount of new knowledge developed from 1997 – 2009 is more than the whole history of civilization (Calkins, 2010)
- In United States we currently have more content standards than could be learned well by any student in the length of a K-12 education. How about Canada?

7. What is one classroom effect of the physical changes in young adolescents?

Chose One

A. Student behavior is predictable.
B. Students are unable to sit still for whole class instruction.
C. Peer relationships become secondary to relationships with adults.
D. Sleep and eating habits are stable.

B. Students have difficulty sitting still for whole class instruction.
Are we done with this?

...and ready for this?

How We Learn Best

- Listening, Reading: 10%
- Discussing With Others: 70%
- Making, Applying, Creating: 90%

DEFINING POWERFUL LEARNING
The 1-2-4 Process

1. Write your own definition of Powerful Learning (PL). Work alone.
2. Meet with a partner. Share. Synthesize. Combine into 1 definition of PL.

Kinetic Conundrum - The Young Adolescent Learner

Many students view classroom activities as “...an arbitrary sequence of exercises with no overarching purpose.”

From “Inside the Black Box” by Paul Black and Dylan William, Phi Delta Kappan, October 1998.
The academic challenge in a middle school curriculum lies not in painful abstraction, but rather in its capacity to engage the intellectual imagination and curiosity of young adolescents. 

(Bean, 2005)
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Big Ideas

What are the limitations of the human body?

How are cultures from various times and places similar and different?

How are Explorations of Space and the Oceans similar?

How do successful businesses function?

How are cutting-edge technologies changing our life?

How do our beliefs affect our actions?

How do the Stock Market and the economy function?

What factors determine the foods we choose to eat?

How do particular electronic technologies work?

How do ancient cultures compare and contrast with our own?
Opportunity is Everything

- Only...First Class Seats
- Everyone Can Learn
- Equitable Recognition Systems
- Culture is an Asset
- Growth is always possible

The Growth Mindset

If students believe that intelligence is something you can get and not something you already have, they will learn far more.

Carol Dweck, *Mindset*

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Study after study has shown that much of the achievement gap between children from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups can be traced not to family & life circumstances, but to how their teachers viewed them while they were in school.

(Gordon, Della Piana & Keleher, ERASE Initiative, Applied Research Center)
Redefine “Smart”

SMART IS NOT SOMETHING YOU ARE. IT IS SOMETHING YOU BECOME.

8. Which of the following is the superior grouping practice for young adolescent learners?
   A. Class assignments based on academic ability.
   B. Mixed ability class groupings.
   C. Mixed ability classes with occasional needs-based skill grouping.

C. Mixed ability groupings with occasional needs-based skill grouping.
The Knack

Cracker Jack Theory

Assessment for Learning

Peer Assessments
Self-Assessments
Practical Strategies

Sample Exemplars

- Redo Quiz, test, project
- Collaborative Learning
- Self-Assessment
- Rich Formative Assessment
- Student-Led Parent Conferences/Meetings
- No Try Outs in Sports
- Broad Recognitions
9. How many provinces in Canada have educator associations devoted solely to successful schooling for young adolescents?:

A. All 10
B. 3 out of 10
C. 6 out of 10

Clock Appointments

Make 2 Appts. 12 & 3

Name

Sum It All Up

- Meet with your 12 O’clock Appointment.
- Find another set to make a Quad. Work as a group of 4.

1. Take the quote strips given to you and read them through.
2. Underline favorite lines that capture our big learning from the day.
3. Use the lines you have chosen to create your own Poem about Young Adolescent Learners and their education. Title it, practice reading aloud. Be ready to share it.
THE 4 TENATIOUS TRUTHS

1. YOUNG ADOLESCENTS ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY UNIQUE.
2. YOUNG ADOLESCENTS THRIVE IN SAFE HAVENS.
3. POWERFUL LEARNING IS ACTIVE, RELEVANT AND INTEGRATED.
4. WE CAN ALL GET SMARTER!

EMPOWERMENT

SHIFTING THE COGNITIVE LOAD TO STUDENTS

Resources

- www.teacher-to-teacher.com
- User-SD91
- Password-YA
“A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn no other way”

-Twain

In which mode of transportation would you best be able to retrace a trip?

•Consider Why?

The Driving Metaphor Of Empowerment
What Does it Mean To Put Students In The Driver’s Seat?