

Developmental Attributes of Middle Schoolers

Adolescents are...	That can make them ...	Responsive middle school teaching ...
* struggling with identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * talk out loud and silently about themselves * experiment with different identities * adopt strong opinions about themselves and the world around them * use clothing, hairstyle, manner (attitude), and other ways to show personal style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * includes lots of discussion * structures time for reflection * taps their interest in social justice and causes * continues to incorporate dramatic arts and role-playing * continues to integrate the visual arts
* trying to balance numerous worlds (self, school, family, peers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * talk about their new awareness of how different these worlds can be; notice parents' flaws * respond with strong emotion when there's conflict between these worlds * withdraw to avoid conflicts; complain about "boredom" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * includes literature that explores these conflicts * is empathetic to students' new awareness of differences in these worlds * facilitates expression of observations and feelings; empathizes with confusion
* going through puberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * reach reproductive maturity; think about sex * fidget and move around a lot * compare physical differences among more or less matured peers * flock and ostracize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * re-teaches the facts of puberty as needed * allows often for movement and physical activity * guides personal comparisons toward appreciation and understanding of differences * monitors social interaction and addresses bullying firmly
* thinking about themselves all the time (self-conscious), alternating between high expectations and low self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * moody * acutely vulnerable to criticism * capable of startling achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * is joyful and celebratory * reassures * emphasizes positive feedback * provides many opportunities for safe risktaking and open-ended project development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * becoming independent from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * focus on friends and peers for pubertal self-help, social support, identity formation, and values clarification * push away from parents (show less affection; resist help) * move away from teacher adoration and sometimes seek teachers out for friendly support/advice/clarity and other times ignore them as adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * structures frequent small group work and student-student interaction * provides choices for group or solo work * carefully gauges students' ability to do homework without parental help * has an advisement component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * thinking more abstractly (hypothesis, metacognition, multiple dimensions, relativism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * listen to loud music while doing their homework * reconstruct history (access more memory) * structure/plan their personal lives * use organizational strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * takes emergent curriculum to a new level (more possibilities, more hypothetical thinking) * structures time for explaining methods of discovery and processes * increasingly values students' personal stories and provides opportunities to write their own history * encourages the acknowledgement of many points of view * combines the comfort of concrete learning with the challenges of conceptual understanding * places topics in a broader (global) context * revisits study skills at a higher level

Chart prepared for Cornerstone Learning Community by Shana Ryberg and Laura Young with the following references:

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Elkind, David. (1994). *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

"Normal Adolescent Development Part I" (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, June 2001). Retrieved May 9, 2009, from www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/normal_adolescent_development_part_i.

Phelan, P., Davidson, A.L., Yu, H.C. (1998). *Adolescents' Worlds*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Stevenson, Chris. (2002). *Teaching Ten To Fourteen Year Olds*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.