

DISCUSSION STARTER

Features of young adolescent learners



What learning and teaching strategies are most suitable in middle school classrooms?

- 1 Divide into teams of approximately four people. Each team has 8 to 10 minutes to identify suitable learning and teaching strategies to match one set of features of young adolescents. (Try to allocate all five sets of features across the larger group.)
- 2 Each team splits in two pairs. Each pair joins with another pair to make new teams of approximately four people. In 5 to 8 minutes, teams identify suitable learning and teaching strategies to match a different set of features of young adolescents.
- 3 Two teams join to make a group of eight. In 5 to 8 minutes, they identify and justify up to three strategies that are most suitable in middle school classrooms.
- 4 Each team of eight presents its ideas to the larger group. A summary of the strategies is prepared and copies are provided to all staff.

Features of young adolescents				
<p>SET A Intellectual development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curious; developing ability to move from concrete to abstract thinking and to complex problem-solving, enormous variation between individuals and for individuals at different times and contexts • More likely to hide learning difficulties to maintain peer acceptance • Present-focused; often egocentric; keen to make a difference and to take action to alter situations; may lead to unsafe risk-taking • Interested in and ready to study specialist subjects • Often questioning of rules, 'knowledge' and expectations 	<p>SET B Physical development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant physical growth and change, with enormous variation between individuals, often causing awkwardness and poor coordination; often a trigger for self-consciousness • Physical vulnerability, for example due to demands of rapid growth, insufficient nutrition, inadequate sleep, consequences of risky behaviours • Often restless and tired, with swings between high activity and lethargy 	<p>SET C Social development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer relationships gain importance; at the same time, deeper relationships often sought with adults • Experimenting/risk-taking in developing new relationships • Increasingly want independence • High need for peer acceptance 	<p>SET D Emotional and psychological development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing understanding of emotions; emotions can be unpredictable and intense • Often overly self-conscious and critical of self while pursuing peer acceptance • Often self-absorbed and see their situation as unique 	<p>SET E Spiritual and moral development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing personal values • Developing a sense of personal responsibility for actions • Developing sense of accountability and responsibility for others; idealistic and wanting to help others • Developing a sense of how personal values interact and coexist with community and societal values • Begin to search for meaning in life

Based on *At the turning point: the young adolescent learner*, www.turningptw.org, accessed 10.6.04