At the Turning Point

The Young Adolescent Learner

Turning Points Guides

At the Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner

Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School

Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership

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Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work

School Quality Review

School Structures that Support Learning and Collaboration

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Preface

Turning Points is a national design for middle school change coordinated by the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston, Massachusetts, which serves as the National Turning Points Center. The design focuses on restructuring middle schools to improve learning, teaching, and assessment for all students. It is based on the seminal *Turning Points* report issued by the Carnegie Corporation in 1989, which concentrates on the considerable risks that young adolescents face as they reach the “turning point” between childhood and adulthood.

The purpose of this guide is to provide a foundation for understanding the needs of the young adolescent learner and to describe practices, strategies, and tools that can help schools address these needs in a caring and academically challenging environment.

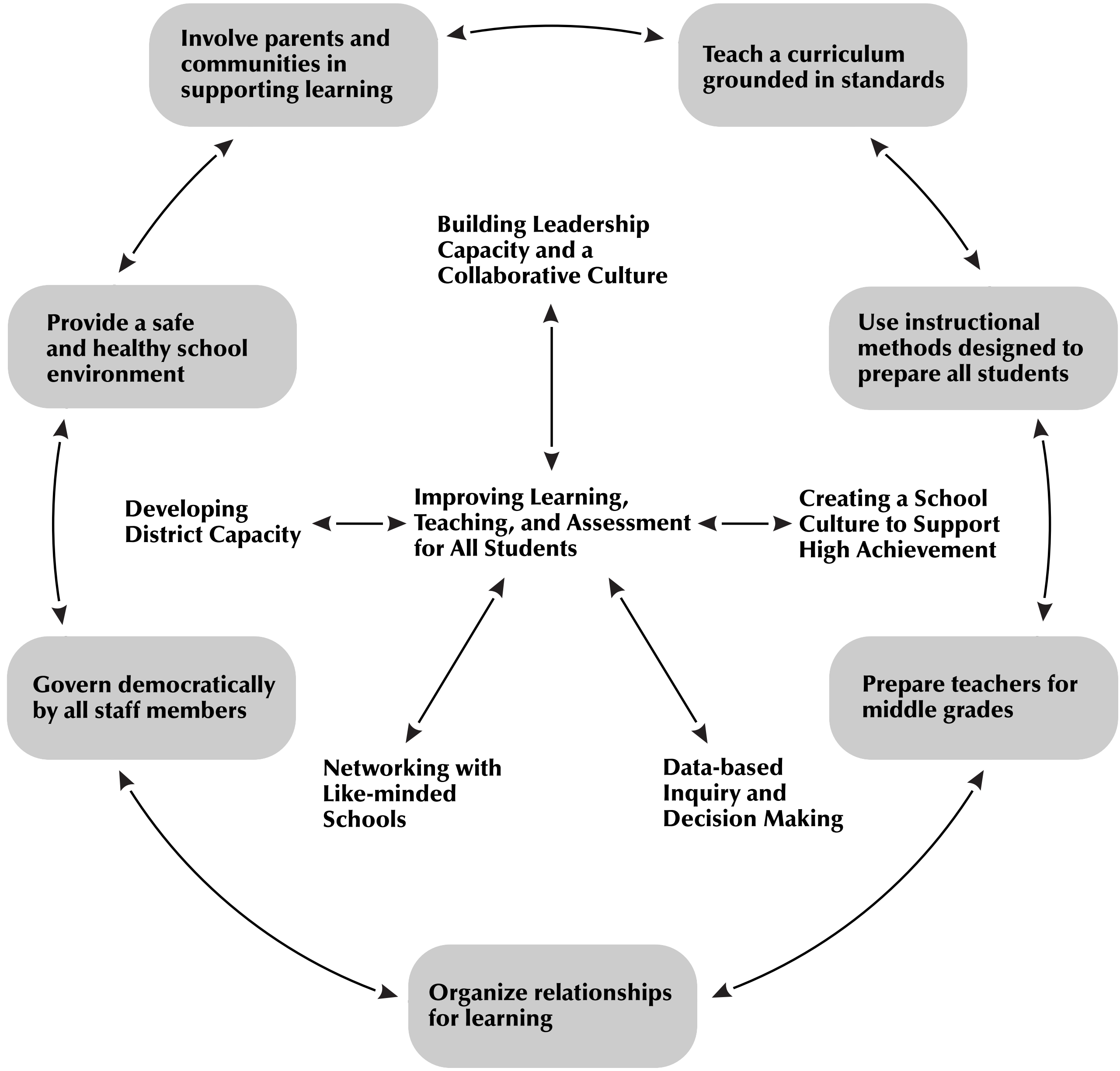
This guide includes:

A research-based rationale for the Turning Points principles and practices meant to guide schools in meeting the needs of the young adolescent learner

An explanation of the qualities and characteristics of ten-to-fourteen-year-olds helpful to educators in creating Turning Points schools

Key strategies and practices to help teachers support the intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and moral growth of young adolescents, and to foster socially equitable outcomes for all students

Turning Points Design Principles and Practices



Turning Points Principles*

- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve high standards and become lifelong learners
- Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing professional development
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose
- Govern democratically through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know students best
- Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development

Six practices translate these principles into action in each school and throughout a network of Turning Points schools in a district. Within each area of practice, teacher teams, a school leadership team, and faculty committees engage in collaborative work.

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(New York: Teachers College Press), 24–25. © 2000 by Carnegie Corporation of New York. All rights reserved.

The Six Turning Points Practices

- **Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for All Students:** working collaboratively to set high standards, close the achievement gap among students, develop curriculum that promotes habits of mind and intellectual inquiry, utilize a wide range of instructional strategies and approaches, emphasize the teaching of literacy and numeracy
- **Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture:** creating a democratic school community, fostering skills and practices of strong leadership, establishing regular common planning time, embedding professional development in the daily life of the school
- **Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making:** setting a vision based on the Turning Points principles, collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data to help improve areas that most impact learning, teaching, and assessment, setting annual measurable goals
- **Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development:** creating structures that promote a culture of high-quality learning and teaching, establishing small learning communities, eliminating tracking, lowering student-teacher ratios, building parent and community partnerships
- **Networking with Like-minded Schools:** participating in network meetings, summer institutes, and forums; visiting other Turning Points schools
- **Developing District Capacity to Support School Change:** building district capacity through collaboration

Introduction

At the end of a hallway, twelve-year-old Nate stands looking at the plaster of Paris mask he made as a project for his humanities class. The mask hangs suspended from the ceiling on a piece of fishing line, just like all the others, floating against a background of large swatches of torn black and white paper forming a stark patchwork mosaic. The face on Nate's mask is divided in half by a vertical line. Each side of the face shows a different expression: one confident and sure, the other full of doubt.

The whole time his teacher, Ms. Cooper, was explaining that they'd be making masks for a character in the book they were reading, Scorpions by Walter Dean Myers, Nate had been excited, but also a little anxious about the project. Even though the teacher had explained it, he never really thought much about why they were making the masks in humanities. Nate just loved the two days he spent listening to music in the cafeteria, smearing plaster of Paris over his partner's face, sculpting the features, and painting his design.

None of his teachers had ever displayed any of Nate's work, let alone something artistic, in the team hallway before. Looking at his mask now, he wishes he had put more time into choosing colors and adding detail to the expressions. In the past, teachers always made him write a book report when he finished reading a book for school.

The mask idea was fun, but not really being artistic, Nate was glad he got to explain his ideas in the "Artist's Note." On the wall near his mask, Nate's "Artist's Note" tells why he chose the character Tito

The risks young adolescents face as they navigate this phase of life can be considerable as they make decisions and choices that will affect future decisions about their health, education, and who they will become.

to make a mask for. In the book, Tito says: "They look like they thrown-away people.... That makes me scared, because I don't want to be no thrown-away guy."

That's how Nate feels, always wondering if he's going to make it, if he can handle things. But the mask he made of Tito shows two sides of him—not just the nervous side, but the sure side, too. He didn't want the mask to make Tito out to be tough, because in the book, even though Tito acted like a tough guy, inside, he was unsure of certain things.

If there were such a thing as the *typical* young adolescent, Nate and his dual-sided mask of Tito from Walter Dean Myer's book *Scorpions* might represent it—uncertain about some things, but absolutely sure of others; looking tough on the outside, but being insecure on the inside; thinking deeply about some issues, but seeing others in black and white. Young adolescents, or children between the ages of ten and fourteen, share an array of ever-changing, diverse, and oftentimes perplexing qualities. Indeed, a middle school teacher will encounter seemingly grown men and women, children, and adolescents together in any given classroom at any given moment on any given day.

The developmental stage of young adolescence has been referred to as the "turning point" between childhood and adulthood (Carnegie, 1989). The risks young adolescents face as they navigate this phase of life can be considerable as they make decisions and choices that will affect future decisions about their health, education, and who they will become. The seminal *Turning Points* report (Carnegie, 1989) concentrated on the risks adolescents face and identified two critical issues that contribute to the academic failure of many adolescents:

- A mismatch between the school's organizational structure and curriculum and the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional needs of adolescents[1]
- An unfounded assumption that middle school students are not capable of critical, complex thinking

1. See the Turning Points *Guide to School Structures That Support Learning and Collaboration* and *Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School* for more on effective school structures.

These two issues are particularly acute in many urban schools that serve largely low-income students and students of color. In their organization and curriculum, such schools do not reflect the students' culture, and often hold low expectations for student achievement.

Middle schools, in every context, need to both strengthen their academic core, and establish caring, supportive environments that value the young people they serve. Above all, each and every middle school teacher needs to develop strong relationships with his or her students. Such relationships are the foundation for powerful learning.

Turning Points and the Young Adolescent Learner

Turning Points seeks to create challenging, caring, and equitable middle schools. Recognizing that each child comes with unique strengths, challenges, and needs, Turning Points teachers maintain high expectations for all their students and hold a vision that their students will leave middle school able to:

Middle schools need both to strengthen their academic core and to establish caring, supportive environments that value the young people they serve.

- Think creatively
- Identify and solve complex and meaningful problems
- Know their passions, strengths, and challenges
- Communicate and work well with others
- Lead healthful lives
- Be ethical and caring citizens of a diverse world

To help students achieve this vision, Turning Points middle schools commit to a multiyear, comprehensive change process.[2] While what happens in each classroom ultimately has the most direct and profound influence on a young person, a schoolwide culture that is supportive and collaborative, and also challenging and equitable, will

2. For more information about the Turning Points principles and practices, see the *Turning Points Design Overview.*

amplify the power of any individual classroom strategy. With a schoolwide emphasis on teaming and professional collaboration, Turning Points faculty work to create a learning environment that nurtures key developmental areas in each student.

A Word About Teachers

It would be wrong to go further with this guide without acknowledging the crucial role of teachers. Middle school teaching is highly complex, involving content knowledge, knowledge of young adolescent development, and dozens of interconnected skills (e.g., the ability to relate to and engage students, and to coach, present, reflect, and analyze). Teachers bring diverse knowledge, strengths, and experience to their roles. They care deeply about young people and entered teaching in the first place because of that care and concern.

Because of an array of institutional barriers—school structures that isolate, limited teacher preparation programs, poor leadership, lack of resources, and the like—many, if not most, teachers are prevented from engaging in the ongoing learning and development that will enable them to excel at teaching young adolescents. As a result, knowledge about powerful middle grades teaching and learning gained from decades of research and practice is not penetrating most schools and classrooms.

Turning Points believes that given rich and productive professional collaboration, and ongoing, school-based professional development that is directly linked to classroom practice, middle school teachers will be able to apply the best ideas and tools of powerful curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This guide is meant to be one helpful resource in a comprehensive approach to professional learning.

About This Guide

This guide is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the developmental characteristics of young adolescents Turning Points schools seek to address. Understanding the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and psychological, and moral characteristics of the early adolescent can provide the foundation for a vision of learning and teaching in the middle grades.

The second section addresses the implications these characteristics hold for teaching and learning by suggesting six areas Turning Points schools engage in to respond to the unique needs of young adolescent learners. These areas are:

Nurturing students' intellectual capacities

Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners

Shaping curriculum based on the needs and interests of students

Developing students' leadership and voice

Creating a safe learning environment

Engaging students in the community

Section three presents ways schools can get started in developing a schoolwide approach to supporting students' learning.

Characteristics of the Young Adolescent Learner

Every now and then, seventh-grade social studies teacher, Mr. Oakes, stands back and takes a look at what's going on in his classroom. Today, in pairs or small groups, his students are working on projects. Sarah and James are poring over a stack of books from the library, writing notes on index cards. Shonese draws detailed illustrations, while Tony designs charts and graphs on the computer. Pedro is bouncing his pencil eraser on his desk and tapping his foot against the chair leg. Mr. Oakes knows this helps Pedro to stay focused on his reading. Clara is so excited about explaining her ideas to her partner that she's twirling around her braid of hair as if it were a propeller. Megan is staring out the window, watching the traffic move along the busy street that borders the school. Mr. Oakes doesn't call her back to work quite yet. He knows Megan needs this dream time to relax and allow her ideas to percolate. At the back of the classroom, good friends Percy and David are laughing and fooling around. He remembers their huge disagreement from yesterday and knows that neither can accomplish any work until the friendship is reestablished. Slowly, he heads to the back of the room, knowing that his presence alone will remind them to get back to work. Mr. Oakes notices that Mariela is finally engaged in her group's project. It took the stack of letters written by seniors at the senior center about her project to capture her imagination and inspire her research. "These kids are working hard," Mr. Oakes thinks. Only a middle school teacher would recognize that amid all these varied activities, real learning is taking place.

Understanding the breadth and variety of young adolescents' developmental characteristics can only help teachers teach and students learn.

Young adolescents are a wondrous group. Eager to learn, full of energy, curious, ready for adventure, sociable, disarmingly honest, and ready to solve the problems of the world—this group of students can be both a delight and a challenge for teachers to motivate, hold their attention, and channel their enthusiasm and energy into real learning. Young adolescents draw on a wide range of experiences when they come to school. Helping students to use their strengths in the classroom to achieve valuable learning is every teacher's challenge. Knowledge of how widely young adolescents' developmental experiences vary and what some of these varying characteristics are can only help teachers teach and students learn.

Between the ages of ten and fourteen, the young adolescent grows and develops more rapidly than during any other developmental stage except for infancy. Even then, "infants are not the conscious witnesses of their development as are young adolescents" (National Middle School Association, 1995). This means that adolescents have an acute, sometimes painful, self-awareness of their growing process. These changes, then, have enormous implications for learning.

Adolescents grow at a rapid pace, and they grow erratically in fits and starts, as well as unevenly across the different areas of development. So, while a fourteen-year-old boy may seem physically mature, he may be quite young socially or emotionally. Similarly, while cognitive skills expand during early adolescence, the "growth of these abilities is inconsistent, variable and situation-specific" (Scales, 1996, 24). For example, although in social studies class a student might do well imagining what society would be like if only wealthy, White males could vote, in a real life situation this same student might not be able to imagine the ramifications of making poor choices in taking care of his or her own health.

Understanding five key areas of young adolescent development can provide a strong foundation for meeting the needs of these learners. The National Middle School Association (1995) identifies these important areas as:

- **Intellectual:** Young adolescent learners are curious, motivated to achieve when challenged, and capable of critical and complex thinking.

- **Social:** Young adolescent learners have an intense need to belong

and be accepted by their peers while finding their own place in the world. They are engaged in forming and questioning their identities on many different levels.

Physical: Young adolescent learners mature at varying rates and go through rapid and irregular physical growth, with bodily changes that can cause awkward and uncoordinated movements.

Emotional and Psychological: Young adolescent learners are vulnerable and self-conscious, and often experience unpredictable mood swings.

Moral: With their new sense of the larger world around them, young adolescent learners are idealistic and want to have an impact on making the world a better place.

Intellectual Development

While the intellectual growth of young adolescents differs from individual to individual, in general this age is characterized by a transition from concrete thinking to abstract thinking. Young adolescents are developing the ability to analyze their own and others' thinking, and to think about abstract ideas such as justice or equality. They are making the transition from thinking logically about real life experiences to reflecting on and reasoning about abstract concepts and ideas.

The transition from concrete to abstract thinking does not always take place in an orderly or predictable manner.

This transition, however, does not always take place in an orderly or predictable manner. The same student who in the morning can explain the motivation of a character in a novel cannot be convinced in the afternoon that two differently shaped containers are holding equal amounts of water. The same student who volunteers to serve food to HIV-infected children at a community center is at risk for making irresponsible decisions about his or her own sexual behavior. Some students can visualize and solve math problems in their heads, while others need to manipulate objects or draw diagrams to help them come to a solution.

The intellectual focus of the young adolescent is not primarily on academic matters, but rather on the self in relation to these topics. *"Why does this matter to me?" "How can I help or influence this situation?" "How good will I be at this?" "What are others doing and*

thinking?" "What will they think of me?" These are all questions that a young person might ask while engaging in intellectual pursuits. To teachers, such questions might seem a diversion from the pursuit of knowledge. In fact, posing these questions ultimately assists the learning process of the young adolescent.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- Moving from concrete to abstract thinking
- An intense curiosity and wide range of intellectual pursuits, few of which are sustained over the long term
- High achievement when challenged and engaged
- Preferences for active over passive learning experiences
- Interest in interacting with peers during learning activities
- An ability to be self-reflective

HOW TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS:

- Differentiate instruction.
- Focus on complex thinking skills that ask students to apply their knowledge and skill to worthwhile tasks.
- Ask students to make choices and pursue their own interests.
- Provide cooperative learning opportunities, one-on-one feedback, and time for personal reflection.

- Have regular student-teacher conferences.
- Provide opportunities for individual projects such as Expert Studies and I-Search papers.

Social Development

If young adolescents seem egocentric and overly concerned with what others think of them, it's because they are! This is the developmental work of the young adolescent. Needing to belong to the peer group is probably the strongest single characteristic of early adolescence. Young adolescents are becoming aware of the larger world around them for the first time. They are beginning to consider themselves as individuals outside of their families. A strong sense of group identity and acceptance by one's peers can have an overriding effect on all other aspects of the young adolescent's development.

Acceptance by one's peers is probably the strongest social impetus of the young adolescent.

Who am I? How do I fit in? What does everyone think about me? are questions constantly running through young adolescents' heads as they experiment with their new independence and develop strong relationships with their peers—all the while avoiding embarrassment and self-exposure at any cost. It's no wonder, then, that social and emotional concerns often block out academic issues. The young adolescent's primary lens is that of social interaction: finding one's place in the social context. This is the lens through which much learning occurs in early adolescence. As the world of young adolescents expands and they begin to develop their own beliefs, attitudes, and values, the media, adults outside the family, and peers influence their decisions more and more. These conflicting influences often contribute to intense feelings of vulnerability, confusion, rebelliousness, and insecurity. As young adolescents strive to figure out how the world works and what their role in it is, sometimes they experiment with attention-getting behaviors. Learning how people respond to their actions, both positive and negative, is a challenging part of growing up. For students who are different from the dominant group—in terms of race, ethnicity, primary language, class, sexual orientation, or gender—the challenge is that much greater.

African-American students and students of other racial and ethnic groups often begin to explore questions of racial identity intensively for the first time. As Beverly Daniel Tatum writes in *Why Are All the*

Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? "Why do Black youths, in particular, think about themselves in terms of race? Because that is how the rest of the world thinks of them. Our self-perceptions are shaped by messages that we receive from those around us" (Tatum, 1997, 53–54). At the same time as they are entering the social turmoil of early adolescence, students of color may also be experiencing racism more intensely. The seventh grader who grew four inches over the summer may notice that store clerks follow him closely when he shops for CDs. An eighth-grade girl who is the only person of color in her class finds she is not invited to the coed dance parties in the community. Students of color will often seek peers who share these experiences and can help them form their own racial/ethnic identity (Tatum, 1997, 52–74).

For gay and lesbian students and those struggling to understand or define their sexual orientation, the early adolescent years are often a time of intense feelings of estrangement from the dominant social world. Because their difference is often invisible, gay students may be extremely isolated and are at high risk for depression as they contend with sexual identity. If they are open about their identity or are just "outside the norm" in terms of how they express masculinity or femininity, they are at risk for harassment and physical abuse. Again, support from peers and teachers will help gay students contend with their questions of identity and cope with challenging social dynamics.

Teachers can provide opportunities for the social interaction necessary to navigate this phase of life, both with peers and adults, so that young people can be influenced positively at a time when they can be deeply affected by those around them. For students of diverse backgrounds and identities, effective support can come in formal and informal ways as teachers demonstrate empathy and take time to learn about and openly discuss issues facing students. Teachers themselves serve as powerful role models simply by regularly modeling academic tasks such as writing, problem solving, reading critically, and being honest and self-questioning with students. Teachers also play a critical role in modeling acceptance of differences, being willing to learn and talk about difficult issues, and confronting racism, prejudice, and homophobia whenever they occur.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- Modeling behavior after that of older students, not necessarily that of parents and other adults
- Immature behavior when social skills lag behind mental and physical maturity
- Experimenting with ways of talking and acting as part of searching for a social position with peers
- Exploring questions of racial and ethnic identity and seeking peers who share the same background
- Exploring questions of sexual identity in visible or invisible ways
- Feeling intimidated or frightened by the initial middle school experience
- Liking fads, and being interested in popular culture
- Overreacting to ridicule, embarrassment, and rejection
- Seeking approval of peers and others with attention-getting behaviors

HOW TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS:

- Provide cooperative learning opportunities as well as time for large-group and one-on-one discussions.
- Require students to apply their knowledge and skills to social issues and topics of concern to young people.
- Provide positive examples from history and literature, and positive role models for different groups.
- Maintain clear expectations for social interaction.

- Create learning experiences in which students practice democracy, governance, and conflict resolution.
- Foster classroom and team identity, and provide time for regular student-led meetings to discuss issues, plan events, and make important decisions regarding the team.
- Foster opportunities for personal reflection and for students to share their concerns and feelings with teachers.
- Create structured support groups to enable students of color and gay and lesbian students to share their experiences and concerns.
- Create separate focus groups for girls and boys to explore issues of gender, body-image, relationships, health, feminine and masculine identity, etc.
- Create mixed forums (such as a “Gay-Straight Alliance”) to build mutual understanding between groups and a common agenda of unity, acceptance, and antiracism.

Physical Development

Young adolescents are painfully self-conscious about the changes in their physical appearance.

Along with changes in social development, the physical development of young adolescents is probably the most striking to any onlooker. Rapid and irregular physical growth, bodily changes that cause awkward and uncoordinated movements, and varying maturity rates, especially between girls and boys, mark the young adolescent’s physical growth. Girls tend to mature one and a half to two years earlier than boys, and development rates among both girls and boys vary widely, making school look more like a family reunion than classes of students of the same age group.

“Everyone’s looking at me!” a young adolescent thinks as he or she walks through the halls, stands in front of the class to give a report, or dribbles a ball down the basketball court. Young adolescents are painfully self-conscious about their appearance. All they want is to blend in and look like everyone else, but the range of physical appearances found during this age group makes that impossible. Some young people seem to shoot up in height overnight, while oth-

ers grow barely an inch during the middle school years. While one boy has lost his baby fat, developed broad shoulders, and speaks with a deepened voice, his best friend since elementary school despairs at still sounding like a girl and being shorter than most of his female classmates. Some young adolescents have learned to move with ease, while others clump around school with feet that are suddenly too big and limbs that are uncoordinated and awkward. To add to the problem, young adolescents worry about what's happening to their bodies and wonder how it will all turn out.

These intense and unfamiliar changes not only affect the student physiologically, but bring a host of social and emotional issues to the fore as well. A teacher sensitive to the physical changes his or her students are experiencing can make a world of difference to a young person.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- Restlessness and fatigue due to hormonal changes
- A need for physical activity because of increased energy
- Developing sexual awareness, and often touching and bumping into others
- A concern with changes in body size and shape
- Physical vulnerability resulting from poor health habits or engaging in risky behaviors

HOW TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS:

- Respect and understand the physical changes that students are going through.
- Vary instructional methods to allow for physical activity and movement.

- Allow for open and honest discussion about issues of development, puberty, and sexuality.
- Allow for stretch, bathroom, and snack breaks during long blocks of time.
- Allow ample time in the school schedule for developing physical fitness.

Emotional and Psychological Development

For the middle school student, daily life is an emotional roller coaster marked by unpredictable mood swings and changing best friends.

One minute young adolescents are fretting about what to wear to school, and the next they're tackling global issues such as world hunger, pollution, and a cure for AIDS. Excitement about a topic they're studying makes them overly ambitious and creative about presentations complete with skits and costumes, slides and handouts; then anxiety sets in, with stomachaches and sweaty palms when the time comes to stand in front of the class. A new sense of humor brings laughs and acceptance from classmates, but those good feelings are quickly forgotten when the contents of one's lunch tray spill onto the cafeteria floor. For the middle school student, daily life is an emotional roller coaster marked by unpredictable mood swings (often due to hormonal imbalances) and changing best friends. At no other stage of development are young people more likely to encounter so many differences between themselves and their peers. This, coupled with the intense physiological changes common to early adolescence, makes most students this age vulnerable and self-conscious, both mentally and physically.

Young adolescents are enthusiastic and eager, angry and anxious, shy, outgoing, depressed, frustrated, proud, stressed, confident, scared—all in the same day. Feeling all these emotions at any given moment, young adolescents often don't know where to position themselves or how to get their bearings. Moody and restless, they are often frightened by a gamut of emotions they can neither name nor understand. They exaggerate seemingly small concerns and think they're the only ones in the world ever to experience these feelings. This may cause regression to more childish behavior patterns and can also translate to low self-esteem and risky behaviors.

By taking time to listen to students and personalize their learning, schools can help young adolescents feel safer and less vulnerable to criticism, less concerned with their changing bodies, and more aware that they are not alone with their personal problems and feelings, that these are natural and often shared experiences among people.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- Mood swings marked by peaks of intensity and by unpredictability
- Needing to release energy, with sudden outbursts of activity
- A desire to become independent and to search for adult identity and acceptance
- Self-consciousness and being sensitive to personal criticism
- Concern about physical growth and maturity
- A belief that their personal problems, feelings, and experiences are unique to themselves

HOW TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT THE EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS:

- Create opportunities for small-group discussions.
- Include reflective journal writing as part of the learning experience.
- Offer individual positive feedback.
- Vary instructional strategies to address different learning styles.
- Create peer editing, tutoring, and mentoring activities.

- Teach students about goal setting and conflict resolution. (For more on how teachers can personalize learning, see *Teaching Literacy in the Turning Points School.*)
- Invite experts from the community, such as nurses and counselors, to answer students' questions about their own development.
- Provide training in peer mediation and other interpersonal skills.

Moral Development

In Susannah's eighth-grade humanities class, students are learning about human rights. When her teacher, Ms. Gaines, first asked the class what they thought their rights were, Susannah didn't really know if she'd ever heard the word "right" used that way before. But after weeks of working on a campaign for the International Conference on the Rights of the Child, Susannah could now say what her rights were, which ones were being violated, and what could be done to change things, both here in the United States and in her home country of Angola.

For this project Susannah chose to be in the "poverty" group because she wanted to do something to help kids who don't get enough to eat. Susannah knows what it means to go hungry, and she wanted to help students at her school see how they could help other kids. But how? Each group was told they had to prepare a presentation on one of the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that connected to the issue they were researching. Susannah's group chose Article 24, which describes the right to the highest attainable standard of health. As part of her research, Susannah learned how the UN and the government in her native country of Angola used traditional street theater to teach parents about nutritional foods available to them to feed their children. So, her group planned a skit focusing on Article 24 and showing kids in her school how they could help kids in poverty.

Embracing idealism—having a desire to make the world a better place—and wanting to be socially useful is how one might characterize the young adolescent's moral development. In making the transition from a focus on one's own needs and interests to considering

the feelings and rights of others, young people have a profound ability to feel compassion and concern, and to act boldly on moral grounds. Because young adolescents are also developing keener intellectual abilities, they are more apt to notice and be concerned about the inconsistencies between what they are taught (i.e., the values and morals espoused by adults) and the conditions they actually see and experience in society. Young adolescents are moving away from simply accepting at face value the moral judgments of adults. By reflecting on values, motives, and right and wrong, they are experiencing, for the first time, what it means to form their own independent personal values. Adults can capitalize on this when designing learning experiences for young people.

Young adolescents have a profound ability to feel compassion and concern, and to act boldly on moral grounds.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT MORAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- An understanding of the complexity of moral issues, and not seeing everything in "black and white"
- Being capable of and interested in participating in democracy
- Impatience with the pace of change, and underestimating how difficult it is to make social changes
- Needing and being influenced by adult role models who will listen and be trustworthy
- Relying on parents and important adults for advice, but wanting to make their own decisions
- Judging others quickly, but acknowledging one's own faults slowly

HOW TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS:

- Create learning experiences that are focused on complex and real problems.

- Allow students to facilitate text-based discussions on topics of interest.
- Involve community leaders and other adults in authentic projects.
- Engage students in the community.
- Provide equitable access to learning opportunities for all students.
- Encourage students to identify and pursue their own interests, passions, and strengths.
- Allow students to work at their own pace, make choices about their learning, and take responsibility for important tasks and decisions.
- Structure learning experiences that utilize democratic processes—debate, discussion, and giving voice to diverse perspectives.

Responding to the Needs of Young Adolescent Learners

He was old as a basket
and he carried more
than a basket carries.

Where he was going
tasted green and sweet
as the inside of a melon
that sleeps for days
in the sun….

—Naomi Shihab Nye, "Tío Pete"

Twelve-year-old Marguerite listened as her teacher, Mr. Morales, read a poem to the class. Mmmmmm. It felt good to think of home. Marguerite loved Haiti. Every day as she walked to the bus stop and went to school, she left a piece of herself in the apartment with her mother and grandmother. And every day when she came home, it returned to her, as if the ocean breeze itself greeted her at the door.

After reading the poem, Mr. Morales asked his students to write about an important memory as part of their Oral Histories unit. Marguerite knew instantly that she would write about her grandfather's mango tree. It was only a homework assignment, but she couldn't stop herself from writing and writing and writing. Oh, how she missed him. When he died, Marguerite, her mother, and grandmother came to live in New York. Now, this poem has brought her back to Haiti and the lingering smell of mangoes close by. She remembers the stories Grandfather told of how his mango tree helped Grandmother to fall in love with him, and how it was the

only part of his farm that survived the revolution, and of what happens to a mango pit when you place it under a steppingstone in the river.

Marguerite wrote down all these memories and more. And Mr. Morales wrote back. Now home doesn't feel so far away when she's at school.

A teacher never knows what will inspire a student's imagination or motivation, or what will connect teacher to child, or child to school. Effective teachers know that no single topic or activity will draw every student in or meet every student's learning needs. But recognizing that each student comes to school with a host of memories, experiences, relationships, and skills can be reassuring to teachers who know they can use these to help students make important connections. This is an especially important consideration in poor urban schools, where too often the students are seen solely as "deprived" and the assets they bring to school are ignored.

To create a learning environment that motivates and engages young adolescents, Turning Points schools and teachers look to their students for ideas. *What important themes and issues interest my students? What experiences have they had that we can build on in this unit? What teaching strategy can I use to get more kids thinking at a higher level? What responsibilities can students take on in this project?* Enabling students to succeed in middle school means drawing on all their developmental qualities to create a dynamic and personalized place for students to push themselves, and allow others to push them, to learn at high levels. In the end, creating such a responsive environment will enable schools to achieve the twin goals of equity and excellence in education and provide all students with a safe place to grow and succeed.

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT LEARNERS: SIX AREAS

Turning Points teachers and schools can support their students on their oftentimes tumultuous and challenging journeys through young adolescence by responding to their unique developmental needs in the following six areas. The model presented in the following pages is based on the belief that young adolescents bring many assets to the middle school. Teachers need to meet learners where they are in all aspects of their development.

1

Developing students' intellectual capacities

2

Differentiating instruction to meet students' diverse learning styles, languages, and cultures

3

Shaping the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of students

4

Developing students' leadership and voice

5

Creating a safe and challenging learning environment

6

Engaging students in the community

1. Developing Students' Intellectual Capacities

KEY STRATEGIES:

- Building Complex Thinking Skills
- Building Metacognition and Reflection Skills

The primary goal of formal schooling has been to develop the intellectual capacity of young people. While this goal has not changed with the shift toward a middle school model, how it is achieved has changed dramatically. With new information from brain research, psychology, and a host of other disciplines, teachers have more tools at their disposal for nurturing students' intellectual capabilities.

Students need to develop the skills and attitudes of effective thinking through explicit instruction and practice in order to realize intellectual growth and improve academic achievement.

During their middle school years, young adolescents experience an explosion of cognitive development. By understanding and building upon particular aspects of intellectual growth, teachers can capitalize on what is occurring naturally in every child. Helping students to think abstractly and teaching students about their own learning process (metacognition) are examples of how teachers can support the young adolescent's intellectual development.

OVERVIEW OF THINKING SKILLS

Middle school students display a wide range of thinking skills, from basic to advanced levels. Development of thinking skills does not follow a linear progression; rather, students go in and out of different levels at different times and in different subject areas. Adults involved in developing students' intellectual growth learn to assess where learners are in different situations and engage them at that level. They provide opportunities for students to use multiple skills in different areas with an eye toward moving students to more complex thinking.

OVERVIEW OF THINKING SKILLS

Purpose: *This chart provides an overview of areas of thinking with related sample skills and prompts teachers can use to develop these skills.*

THINKING AREA	SAMPLE SKILLS STUDENTS USE IN THIS AREA	SAMPLE TEACHER PROMPTS TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN THIS AREA
Knowledge	Observe and recall information Name dates, events, and places List major ideas Master some subject matter	List Define Tell Describe Identify Show Label
Comprehension	Interpret facts Compare and contrast Predict consequences Order and group	Explain Discuss Compare and contrast Interpret Predict Describe Summarize Outline
Application	Use information Use methods, concepts, and theories in new situations Solve problems using previously acquired skills or knowledge	Apply Demonstrate Calculate Complete Illustrate Show Solve Examine Modify Relate Change
Analysis	Recognize patterns Recognize hidden meanings Identify components	Analyze Explain Arrange Select Separate Connect Divide Infer Order Classify Compare Debate

OVERVIEW OF THINKING SKILLS (CONTINUED)

THINKING AREA	SAMPLE SKILLS STUDENTS USE IN THIS AREA	SAMPLE TEACHER PROMPTS TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN THIS AREA
Synthesis	Generalize from given facts Relate knowledge from different areas Make predictions Draw conclusions	Combine Rearrange Create What if? Rewrite Integrate Substitute Design Compose Prepare Modify Plan Invent Formulate Generalize
Evaluation	Assess value of theories Make choices based on reasoned arguments Verify value of evidence Recognize subjectivity Compare and discriminate between ideas	Assess Grade Recommend Judge Decide Test Convince Support Rank Measure Select Conclude

BUILDING COMPLEX THINKING SKILLS

Traditional thinking held that students were not ready to engage in complex assignments until they had acquired certain basic skills and knowledge. They had to memorize multiplication tables before learning algebra. Before analyzing the causes of war, they had to master names and dates of important battles. Before applying their knowledge of symbolism to their own writing of a poem, it was common for students to first memorize a definition of symbolism and identify its use in a published work.

This "basic skills first" approach to learning tends to put an artificial ceiling on learning, especially for students who come from low-income, immigrant, African-American, or Latino families, because assumptions about the low basic skills of these students can mistakenly lead to learning environments devoted to addressing skills deficits instead of the many strengths students bring to the classroom. When students are expected to apply their knowledge, which represents a more complex level of thinking than defining and identifying, they are, in fact, building their cognitive skills at a much higher level. "To some degree, lower expectations of poor students and students of color has been a result of viewing cognitive growth (in the traditional way). But new evidence… suggests that schools should focus on complex, meaningful problems and embed basic skills within more interesting and challenging content" (Scales, 1996, 37).

"To some degree, lower expectations of poor students and students of color has been a result of viewing cognitive growth (in the traditional way). But new evidence … suggests that schools should focus on complex, meaningful problems and embed basic skills within more interesting and challenging content" (Scales, 1996, 37).

The ability to think abstractly accelerates during early adolescence. Of course, complex thinking skills take time to develop fully, and their growth varies from student to student and from subject to subject. The same student who may be able to draw conclusions about an issue of social justice may be completely baffled by having to write a conclusion to a scientific lab report. Similarly, while one student is ready to think about why a situation exists, another student is still wondering what exactly happened. Differentiating tasks according to students' intellectual needs fosters their growth and success.

Young adolescents develop and use more advanced thinking skills when they work with material that is familiar to them and is interdisciplinary in nature.

Integrated subjects of study that are relevant to the young adolescent and that require students to apply their skills to real world challenges offer the best opportunities to build important thinking skills. By differentiating instruction and scaffolding lessons[3] so that students are able to connect new material to familiar concepts and experiences, teachers help students develop complex thinking skills (Scales, 1996). Learning experiences, therefore, must be designed with enough substance to require complex thinking: all learning experiences should offer opportunities to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate content.

The following chart links complex thinking skills with sample student tasks and ways teachers can help students make connections across disciplines.

3. Scaffolding is a structured way to introduce, build, and develop new skills and concepts; scaffolding uses past lessons to build new ones.

BUILDING COMPLEX THINKING SKILLS

Purpose: *The following chart lists some important thinking skills, examples of student tasks, and ways teachers can help students make connections. While it's important for students to practice these skills in each discipline, creating lessons that encourage interdisciplinary, as well as personal, connections will foster students' success.*

ABSTRACT THINKERS ARE ABLE TO:[a]	GENERIC TASKS THAT BUILD SKILLS	LESSON EXAMPLE
Connect to prior knowledge and experience	Journal or free writing Creating mind maps or semantic maps Making KWL charts[b] Questioning and inquiry	**Math:** Begin teaching a lesson on "balancing equations" with a discussion of balance. When a student suggests you have to balance on a beam, the teacher asks him to come to the front of the class and demonstrate. The teacher asks students to describe what they saw. The teacher then uses another concrete example with a scale and weights. She then moves to the abstract concept of balancing equations.[c]
Reconcile contradictions Envision and justify exceptions	Developing counterarguments (in debate and essay) Generating thesis statements Journal writing focusing on HOTS[d] Conducting research	**English:** A teacher asks students to debate whether or not they think the character in a novel should have left home. Each side develops three reasons and points of evidence from the book to support its argument. In addition, each side has to prepare a counterargument that might be used against it by the other side. They must then draw a conclusion that justifies their argument in light of the exception or contradiction.
Imagine the future or hypothetical situations Predict long-term consequences of behavior Generate hypotheses	Using the scientific method Answering "What if …?" questions Writing fiction Solving statistical problems Mapping concepts Taking part in small group discussions	**Science:** Students are studying deforestation. A teacher asks students to write a proposal to submit to a lumber company outlining how it might improve its logging practices. The proposal contains graphs that show current rates of deforestation. Students show their calculations for predicting future rates and for determining possible consequences. Their proposal concludes by explaining what they think will happen if logging continues at current rates, and by proposing alternatives to current logging practices.
Draw conclusions	Identifying main ideas and themes Using the scientific method Relating content to own experiences	**Social Studies:** A class is studying the civil rights movement. After identifying some important themes associated with the period, as well as some current examples of intolerance, students design a mural that teaches about the history of intolerance and shows ways in which people, both in the past and the present, have protested against it.

a: From Peter C. Scales, *Boxed in and Bored: How Middle Schools Continue to Fail Young Adolescents and What Good Middle Schools Do Right* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1996), 24.

b: This is a common acronym that stands for "What I Know, Want to Know, and Learned."

c: From David Van Hoose and David Strahan, *Young Adolescent Development and School Practices: Promoting Harmony* (Columbus, Ohio: National Middle School Association, 1988), 42

d: This is a common acronym that stands for "Higher Order Thinking Skills."

BUILDING METACOGNITION AND REFLECTION SKILLS

During adolesence, students develop skills of self-reflection and metacognition, or thinking about their own ways of thinking. Being able to reflect on one's behavior and how one learns marks an important intellectual milestone for the young adolescent, but it also adds to the difficulty of the age because self-awareness is felt so acutely. While elementary school children "can move on to another task when they are experiencing difficulty without dwelling on feelings of frustration" (Van Hoose and Strahan, 1988, 16), young adolescents are painfully aware when they do not understand something. They often dwell on their inability to perform a task, act defensively, and create a cycle of not taking risks that inhibits learning (Van Hoose and Strahan, 1988, 16).

By explicitly developing skills of self-reflection and metacognition, teachers can help students gain confidence about learning new things and learning in new ways. Student portfolios and student-led conferences are two good examples of middle school assessment strategies that build metacognitive abilities. These strategies give students the opportunity to formally reflect on their learning and their work. Having to identify and articulate the struggles they face and the strengths they demonstrate in doing their work promotes students' intellectual growth.

With teacher guidance, young adolescents can often identify their mistakes and find ways to correct them, think creatively, and use thinking strategies to solve problems for the first time.

When a student writes in her "Letter to My Roundtable," for example, that she is good at making connections between a text and herself, but struggles to make connections between the text and other texts, she is learning about an important cognitive skill, that of making connections. She is also learning about her own learning style, her new ability to make connections, and where her strengths and challenges lie. This empowers her to take ownership and responsibility for her own learning. In another example, a student may include a series of science lab reports in his Graduation Portfolio. When a student can show how he improved, year to year, in writing lab report conclusions, he is not only learning more about what makes a good lab report conclusion, he is learning about his own personal writing process.

Young adolescents need the support to use self-reflection in positive and structured ways that nurture them both intellectually and emotionally.

Teachers need to create opportunities for students to reflect on their learning in a variety of ways. The following chart gives examples of strategies teachers can use to help students reflect on their intellectual and emotional abilities. (For more on metacognition, see the Turning Points newsletter, *Conversations*, Fall 2001.)

METACOGNITION: THINKING ABOUT THINKING

Purpose: *Academic success is often contingent upon feeling comfortable taking intellectual risks. Having the self-awareness to know when something is difficult or uncomfortable is a common stumbling block for young adolescents. The following list offers examples of ways schools and individual teachers can foster a climate of positive self-reflection and understanding.*

ACTIVITY	WHEN IT MIGHT BE USED	HOW IT MIGHT BE USED
KWL chart [a]	At the beginning and end of an assignment or unit	It asks students to list things they **know**, things they **want to know**, and things they **learned**.
Journal writing	Prior to a discussion, pair share, or one-on-one teacher conference At the beginning of an assignment or unit At the end of a unit Upon completion of an assignment	Students regularly reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their work during a unit or on an assignment. Students reflect on challenges they might face, what they are excited about, what they see as their strengths.
Protocols[b]	As part of the drafting process At the end of a unit Upon completion of an assignment	A student meets with a small group of students, one of whom facilitates the discussion. She asks the group to use the Consultancy protocol to help her think of ways to research her project.
Self-evaluation and teacher conferences	At the beginning, middle, and end of the year More frequently at significant checkpoints, or for major assignments and projects	Students identify their personal learning styles and reflect on their areas of strength and challenge. Students work with the teacher to identify strategies to address challenge areas and formulate specific goals. Students complete a self-assessment using the project criteria prior to the teacher's using the criteria to assess the students' work.
Portfolios and student-led conferences	At the middle or end of the year Prior to graduation	Each student presents a portfolio of evidence and written reflections of her learning to a small group of "advocates" (teacher, parent, peer). The student leads a discussion about what she has learned and accomplished, her strengths and weaknesses in skills, insights into her preferred learning style and needs, and her future goals. Students might solicit ideas about how to advocate for their needs.

a: This is a common acronym that stands for "What I Know, Want to Know, and Learned."

b: For more on the use of Protocols, or "structured conversations," see the Turning Points guides to *Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership* and *Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work.*

2. Differentiating Instruction to Meet Students' Diverse Learning Styles, Languages, and Cultures

KEY STRATEGIES:

Understanding Students' Learning Styles

Differentiating Instruction

Ms. Santiago's sixth-grade class is holding Literature Circles to talk about the book they're reading. One group is trying to make sense of J. T., a main character from a novel they've read.

"J. T. reminds me of my brother," says James. "It's not like he's a liar. He just kind of tells stories to cover his tracks because he's in a hurry all the time. My brother's not bad, but he's always getting in trouble with my parents, just like J. T."

"That's ridiculous. Everybody knows J. T.'s a liar," Sarah says. "Look in the book how he lied to get out of school!"

"But that wasn't a lie to J. T.," says James.

"A lie's a lie," Sarah says, her voice rising.

"Stop it, you two. I have another question," says Miguel. "Why's Stacey hanging out with J. T. anyway? He's nothing but trouble and Stacey knows it."

Alicia interrupts. "Wait, I drew a picture of J. T. arguing with his dad. You can't really see it, but J. T. looks scared. His dad's yelling and holding up his arm like he's about to swing at him. J. T.'s scared. That's what I think."

Alicia is Group Observer this time, and she's having trouble keeping track of things, mostly because she likes to think and talk about the book more than worry about how the conversation is going. Her idea to draw a picture of J. T. to show the group what she meant pulled her even further from her role of observer.

Ms. Santiago can see the group is getting aggravated, and she can hear Sarah's impatient tone with James. She steps away from her individual conference with another student to check in. "Who's the observer today?" she asks. "And how's it going?"

Nothing reveals differences in students' learning styles more than a group conversation. James relates J. T. to someone in his own life, his brother, to try to get a handle on the character. Sarah refers to one of J. T.'s actions in the book to form her opinion of him. Miguel wasn't sure about J. T. until he heard the others talking about him, and that helped him remember the character Stacey and what she said. To reach her understanding of J. T., Alicia's been drawing a picture of him with his father.

Ms. Santiago chose to use Literature Circles, a cooperative learning group strategy, to help her students write character analyses of different characters in the novel they're reading. She knows that the many different opinions her students have and the way they arrive at them collectively will enhance the group project and bring a deeper understanding about the characters to her students. In this way she is using what she knows about her individual students and how they learn to the benefit of all learners.

Teachers continuously make decisions about how to structure learning activities to match instruction with students' diverse learning styles, posing questions such as:

- Who should meet in pairs and who works better independently?
- Should everyone read the same article, or do I need to create reading groups with texts at different levels for each group?
- Should I set up work stations?
- Should students read silently or should we have a "read aloud"?

Selecting teaching strategies and structuring learning activities effectively are some of the most challenging aspects of teaching. Given the rapidly changing nature of the young adolescent's intellectual readiness, developing an awareness of the learning differences among their students is a particular challenge to middle school teachers. However, despite the challenge, "evidence suggests that when instructional methods and students' primary learning styles mesh, students have more positive attitudes toward school and learn more, improving their chances of success" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, 77). In order to understand students' different learning styles, it is

important to recognize how students' culture, language, race, class, ethnicity, and intelligence preferences influence how they learn.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES

Understanding Student Diversity

> To find one's racial or ethnic identity, one must deal with negative stereotypes, resist internalizing negative self-perceptions, and affirm the meaning of ethnicity for oneself. If educators and parents wish to foster these positive psychological outcomes for the children in our care, we must hear their voices and affirm their identities at school and at home. And we must interrupt the racism that places them at risk (Tatum, 1997, 165).

The young adolescent's newly forming awareness of his or her own identity and place in the world makes the middle school years a crucial period for both students and their teachers to understand how a student's background shapes his or her concerns, interests, and learning style. Cultural background, language, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation are powerful influences on learning, and can be viewed both by the teacher and the learner as strengths or deficits. How these traits are viewed effectively defines the learning experience for students, and also determines future learning opportunities.

Teachers need to understand how their own backgrounds influence their teaching and interactions with students. For example, a White, middle-class female teacher may bring with her a set of assumptions about students' backgrounds and how people learn based on her own background and membership in a majority group. In a classroom with a diverse student body, these assumptions do not always serve students well. "The dilemma is not really in the debate over instructional methodology, but rather in communicating across cultures and in addressing the more fundamental issue of power, of whose voice gets to be heard in determining what is best for poor children and children of color" (Delpit, 1995, 46). Schools are reflections of society at large and of the dominant culture. Delpit calls on educators to openly address the issues of power that are enacted in classrooms, including the power of the teacher over the students, and the power of one group to determine another's intelligence or "normalcy" (Delpit, 1995, 24). Such power makes the acquisition of the culture of those who are in power a prerequisite for student success. Yet students frequently

are not given the tools and skills to achieve success as defined by the "other." In fact, in ways both subtle and obvious, schools prevent some students from achieving at high levels by denying that students' backgrounds profoundly affect their learning needs, and by labeling those backgrounds as lacking or deficient.

Incorrect preconceptions about students' backgrounds can hamper student learning. If one uses the deficit lens, a student's culture, language, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender can negatively bias teacher expectations, both in terms of academic performance and behavior. Low teacher expectations based on race, for example, have greatly contributed to the academic achievement gap between White students and Black and Hispanic students. Low expectations affect teachers' decisions and choices on the level of academic challenge of the curriculum, work assignments, and class participation. In *Other People's Children*, Lisa Delpit points out that teachers often make assumptions about students' academic weaknesses (a student's inability to write a five-point essay, for example), attributing their weaknesses to their cultural background. An African-American student's inability to write "standard English," for example, is perceived as a deficit without acknowledging the language skills the student does bring to the classroom and which he might display in a variety of literary forms both oral and written—stories, poems, songs, letters, and the like. Too often, teachers then "excuse" a student's perceived inability with lowered expectations (*"Lamar didn't have proper literacy training in the home. This is the best he can do."*), rather than building on each student's assets to push him or her to the next level. By ignoring those strengths students do bring to the classroom, and by having lower expectations of students based on their background, teachers often become gatekeepers, preventing students from passing to the next level (Delpit, 1995).

In addition, stereotyping a group's lack of ability in certain areas—girls do poorly at math; African-Americans' overall academic achievement is low; boys have trouble learning languages; urban students don't understand the natural world; the limited English proficiency of students whose first language is not English means they can't achieve high levels of literacy; students who live in poverty can't achieve at high levels—often causes students in these groups not to invest themselves in their own education. Poor performance, then, may be more a measure of a group's lack of interest in a subject, or its detachment from school, rather than a sign of its inability

to master that subject (Singham, 1998). The teacher's job is to hold high standards for all students and to find ways to help students reach them.

As discussed earlier ("Social Development"), the early adolescent years are when many students of color begin to intensely explore their racial or ethnic identity, and to become more aware of racism and discrimination. Schools often stand in the way of students' developing a positive sense of their identity. Perceiving the implicit and explicit negative messages of teachers and the society at large, students who are different from the dominant group often assume an oppositional stance (Herb Kohl captured this stance with the title "I Won't Learn from You"), pushing away adults and seeking support only from peers.

Another path is possible. In mixed schools, students of diverse backgrounds and identities can benefit greatly from explicit support from teachers and from programmatic structures that bring peer groups together in positive ways. For example, a voluntary desegregation program known as the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) buses students of color from Boston to mostly White suburban schools. One middle school began a mandatory daily class for Boston students that brought them together to discuss social issues, racism, homework, and other concerns. It was found that these students were much more successful academically and socially than similar groups in schools without such structured support (Tatum, 1997, 71–74). It is easy to see how such programmatic structures would benefit students of any background that is different from the dominant group.

When teachers acknowledge, understand, and value the differences among their students, the backgrounds and attributes of students become strengths upon which to build the culture and curriculum of the classroom. A second language learner, for example, may have weak English language skills, but a flexibility of thinking and ability to go back and forth between primary and secondary languages and cultures that, when viewed as an asset, can be tapped into to assist learning. Cultural background, language, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender all influence how students learn and how adults perceive how they learn. These factors also affect teacher expectations of students and how students interact with each other. Do students see time as fixed and rigid, or flexible and fluid? Are they more effusive or reserved in expressing emotions? Do students

prefer to learn material that is more contextual and personal, or impersonal? Do they value creativity or conformity more (Tomlinson, 2001, 60–63)? While these factors may be culturally based, there are also great variations within cultures. Within each group, therefore, variations in learning styles exist. The goal is to "come to understand the great range of learning preferences that will exist in any group of people and to create a classroom flexible enough to invite individuals to work in ways they find most productive" (Tomlinson, 2001, 62).

SAMPLE WAYS TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT STUDENT DIVERSITY

Middle schools that are successful in creating a culture that embraces the diversity within their schools tackle questions relating to student diversity head-on, putting equity at the forefront of their discussions about improving teaching and learning. The following suggestions have been adapted from "A Common Intent to Understand: Boston Pilot School Directors Talk About Diversity: Summary of Findings" (Center for Collaborative Education, 2002).

Know thyself. Become aware of biases and assumptions you have about different groups and how these affect your teaching.

Talk about it. Do not avoid talking about sensitive topics associated with race, culture, class, sexual orientation, and gender. Silencing conversations and student concerns about these topics is detrimental to student success. Provide students and teachers with ways to deal with these issues safely and openly. Encourage conversations that go beyond defining diversity to arrive at deeper understandings of diversity.

Set norms of respect. All reflections and conversations about one's own and other people's cultures should be grounded in respect.

Ask for help. Honest discourse about diversity often does not come easily to groups who are not used to such conversations. Professional development can help students and staff members examine cultural differences in structured ways.

Examine ways of knowing each other. Examine cultural differences that exist in communication and values, including what it means for people of one culture to be educating people of another.

- **Develop curriculum that is culturally sensitive.** Make sure curriculum reflects the backgrounds and histories of the students.
- **Choose effective teaching strategies.** Students perceived as weak academically can narrow the achievement gap with challenging and interesting problems to work on that are relevant to their lives, instead of traditional remedial instruction (Singham, 1998). Use active learning strategies where students solve complex and challenging problems through their own efforts.
- **Assess interactions with students.** Continually practice and reflect on treating students equitably. Make sure all student voices are heard.
- **Learn with your students.** Model curiosity and open-mindedness by learning with your students about diverse backgrounds and their effects on learning.

Intelligence Preferences and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

"Intelligence preferences" refers to brain-based predispositions for learning. Howard Gardner expanded the limiting notion of intelligence that suggested, for example, that some students have strengths in the sciences while others are good at languages, to a theory of multiple intelligences that recognizes that people can have strengths and talents in many areas. Gardner's theory names eight such intelligences, or "frames of mind," inherent in every person (1983, 1991, 1993). Gardner defines intelligence as an "ability to solve genuine problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (Stevenson, 1992, 102). While all humans possess these intelligences, each person has his/her own particular blend or combination of intelligences.

During early adolescence, students continue to acquire and build upon these intelligences. Teachers of young adolescents can apply Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences by recognizing the intelligences in their students and finding ways to further develop and support all intelligences through specific classroom strategies and materials. The chart that follows gives some examples.

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

Purpose: *The following chart defines each intelligence, describes some propensities of students who exhibit this intelligence, and provides sample materials and strategies that support and help develop that intelligence. Teachers should use this chart to become aware of the intelligences their students exhibit and to find ways to support and develop all intelligences for all students. (See Appendix 1 for more tools related to multiple intelligences.)*

DEFINITION OF INTELLIGENCE[a]	STUDENTS WHO EXHIBIT THIS INTELLIGENCE...	MATERIALS AND STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT INTELLIGENCE
Linguistic intelligence allows individuals to communicate and make sense of the world through language.	Enjoy playing with rhymes Always have a story to tell Quickly acquire other languages	Books, tape recorders, computers, storytelling, tape-recorded books, writing, discussions, debates, public speaking. **Sample task:** Tell or tape a story.
Musical intelligence allows people to create, communicate, and understand meanings made out of sound.	Are drawn to birds singing outside the classroom window Tap out intricate rhythms on the desk with their pencils	Percussion; metronomes; computerized sound systems; recorded music; instruments to strum, tap, pluck, and blow into; singing; sounds of nature. **Sample task:** Compose a piece of music.
Logical-mathematical intelligence enables individuals to use and appreciate abstract relationships.	Love baseball statistics Analyze the components of problems—either personal or school-related—before systematically testing solutions	Strategy games such as chess and checkers, logic puzzles, science kits, computer programming software, brainteasers, detective games, Cuisenaire rods. **Sample task:** Formulate a timeline or design a puzzle.
Spatial intelligence makes it possible for people to perceive visual or spatial information, to transform this information, and to recreate visual images from memory. (Note: Although usually tied to the visual modality, spatial intelligence can also be developed to a high level in individuals who are visually impaired.)	Turn first to the graphs, charts, and pictures in their textbooks Like to "web" their ideas before writing a paper Fill the blank space around their notes with intricate patterns	Films, slides, videos, diagrams, charts, maps, art materials, cameras, telescopes, microscopes, graphic design software, building supplies, optical illusions, machines, drama, video games. **Sample task:** Create a poster.
Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence allows individuals to use all or part of the body to create products or solve problems.	Enjoy gym class and school dances Prefer to carry out class projects by making models rather than writing reports Toss crumpled paper with frequency and accuracy into wastebaskets from across the room	Playgrounds, obstacle courses, hiking, swimming, gymnasiums, model building, arts, crafts, woodcarving, modeling clay, animals, carpentry, machines, drama, video games. **Sample task:** Create a model.

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES IN THE CLASSROOM (CONTINUED)

Interpersonal intelligence enables individuals to recognize and make distinctions about others' feelings and intentions.	Thrive on small-group work Notice and react to the moods of their friends and classmates	Clubs, committees, after-school programs, social events, cooperative learning, interactive software, group games, discussions, group projects, simulations, drama, competitive and noncompetitive sports, peer teaching, tutoring, and mentoring. **Sample task:** Organize a tour.
Intrapersonal intelligence helps individuals to distinguish among their own feelings, to build accurate mental models of themselves, and to draw on these models to make decisions about their lives.	Capitalize on their strengths Recognize their weaknesses Consider carefully the decisions and choices they make	Self-paced instruction, individualized projects, solo games and sports, lofts and other "private" spaces, diaries, journals, meditation, reflection, self-esteem activities. **Sample task:** Write an I-Search paper. (See Appendix 2.)
Naturalist intelligence allows people to distinguish among, classify, and use features of the environment.	Can name and describe the features of every make of car around them Enjoy classifying and cataloging information Have extensive collections (of rocks, stamps, CDs, for example)	Classroom collections of articles from nature; field trips to local zoo to categorize animal families; classroom garden with student journals to document plant growth. **Sample task:** Organize websites as resources for a research project.

a: Adapted from http://www.pz.harvard.edu/sumit/MISUMIT.HTM, accessed 7/29/02

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

Students are as different in the way they learn
as they are in the way they look

—Trudy Knowles and Dave Brown,
What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know

Differentiating instruction employs:

- Flexible groupings of students
- Varied learning and assessment activities
- Varied learning environments
- Opportunities for student choice

Teachers can apply their understanding of their students' learning styles, languages, and cultures by differentiating their instruction, or varying instructional strategies to meet the needs of the different types of learners. Teachers have a wide variety of strategies to pick from to help foster student creativity, exploration of themes and subject areas, curiosity, and development of social skills. By creating flexible groupings of students, using an array of learning and assessment activities, setting up varied learning environments, and providing opportunities for student choice, teachers can effectively differentiate instruction. This doesn't mean teachers are creating individual lesson plans for each student. Rather, as Tomlinson puts it, "differentiated instruction offers several avenues to learning, [but] it does not assume a separate level for each learner" (2001, 2).

Flexible groupings of students

Teachers group students according to their learning needs and the requirements of the content or activity presented. Flexible groupings of students include whole class, small group, and individual instruction. These groupings are predominantly heterogeneous, reflecting the learning characteristics of all students, including learning style, academic achievement, personal interests, and prior knowledge. A visiting writer might address the whole class about how he or she writes a novel. Small groups could work cooperatively to create a story and assign different scenes to each student. A teacher might work with an individual student to revise his or her piece as needed. At times it is also appropriate to form short-term groups of students for specific purposes such as building a particular numeracy or literacy skill. (See Turning Points guide *School Structures That Support Learning and Collaboration* for more information about student groupings.)

Cooperative Learning Groups are one of the most common flexible groupings middle school teachers use to engage all learners. Cooperative learning typically refers to a process in which small groups of students work together on a project or task to construct new knowledge. It involves the highly structured orchestration of a number of different activities that teachers must build step-by-step before students understand their responsibilities and how to work together effectively. No doubt learning to manage small-group work is as hard as mastering any other teaching strategy, but because cooperative learning strategies are versatile and adaptable to so many learning situations, and because they can address so many of the learning needs of the young adolescent, finding ways to incorporate cooperative learning into the classroom is worth the effort.

There are a number of considerations to be made any time students work in cooperative learning groups: *Why form cooperative learning groups for this task? How big should the groups be? How long should the groups stay together? How will tasks be divided up and will there be assigned roles? How will students be assessed, individually or as a group or both?* All of these factors, and others, play a part in how effective the groups are.

Group Roles and Descriptions: Assign complementary and interconnected roles to group members to ensure interdependence and accountability (Johnson, 1984).

Summarizer: Ensures that everyone in the group understands what is being learned/taught.

Runner/Researcher: Retrieves needed materials for the group and communicates with the other groups and the teacher.

Recorder: Writes down the group's decisions and edits the group's report.

Encourager: Reinforces members' contributions.

Observer: Keeps track of how well the group is collaborating.

Varied learning and assessment activities

Two ways teachers can differentiate instruction are through process and product. To differentiate by process, teachers select different materials and activities to help students make sense of what they are learning. To differentiate by product, teachers provide several opportunities for students to demonstrate and show evidence of what they have learned. In differentiating process, for example, the teacher keeps the content and product consistent for all students, but the activities that lead to completion of the task will vary, depending on the learner. A teacher might assign all students the same product—for example, writing a children's story—but the process students use to create the story will differ. Some students may have an individual conference, some may meet in groups to peer critique each others'

drafts, and others may work in a small group with the special education teacher on a storyboard template that helps them develop their plot ideas. In assessing students' stories, the same assessment criteria is used for all students. Knowing students well allows teachers to create the varied instruction that helps all students achieve at high levels.

Varied learning environments

Elements of the physical learning environment of a classroom include the noise level in the room, whether student activities are static or mobile, and how the room is furnished and arranged. Obviously, teachers can't create individual learning environments for each student. They can, however, create learning stations or portion the room into sections with different looks, have students work sometimes in groups and sometimes independently, and provide a variety of learning and assessment activities.

Opportunities for student choice

Offering students choice not only is a powerful way to meet their varied learning needs, but it also helps motivate them to learn. When learning goals are clearly defined, it is easier to determine whether students should have a free choice, a guided choice, or no choice (see chart on the next page) in their learning experiences. For instance, a teacher may allow students who have already developed videography or PowerPoint presentation skills to demonstrate their understanding of new concepts using one of these mediums. In this example of guided choice, students are responsible for learning the stated concepts and skills of the unit. The teacher isn't focusing instruction and assessment on the videography or technology skills, however, as these have already been assessed as part of another unit. In another example, students may conduct individual research projects in which it is an explicit learning goal that they define their own research questions about a topic in which they are personally interested. (See Appendix 2 for Independent Student Projects: Expert Studies and I-Search Reports.)

THREE TYPES OF CHOICE TO OFFER STUDENTS ON A REGULAR BASIS

Free Choice: A free choice might allow students to choose whether or not to work with a partner, and with whom to work. Or, a free choice might mean they can choose whichever novel they want to read, what assessment task they want to do, or select their own topics for independent projects.

Guided Choice: Guided choice asks students to choose from carefully selected options. The teacher identifies three articles on ecology, for example, and students choose which one to read based on which topic they are interested in.

No Choice: Sometimes it makes the most sense for everyone to do the same thing. Students can learn to understand and accept not having a choice about a learning activity if the teacher offers choices on a regular basis.

See Appendix 1: Multiple Intelligences

Multiple Intelligences Sample Lesson-Planning Form

Multiple Intelligences Self-Test and Score Sheet

See Appendix 2: Differentiating Instruction

Guidelines for Differentiating Instruction

Independent Student Projects: Expert Studies and I-Search Reports

3. Shaping the Curriculum to Meet the Needs and Interests of Students

STRATEGIES:

The Turning Points Model for Curriculum Development

Because young adolescents are developing a wider sense of the world and want to place themselves in socially relevant and useful situations, students' questions can lead teachers toward making the curriculum more authentic and meaningful. Students don't often come to school expecting to ask questions. They expect to give and be given answers. Correct answers. But educators know that the ability to ask questions, both to clarify and to deepen understanding, is at the core of learning. How then do teachers create learning environments fueled by students' questions, not just driven by answers? Inviting students to shape inquiry and construct their own learning is difficult, and challenges even the most confident teacher to "let go" of the curriculum enough to share its creation with those who stand to gain the most.

"Interdisciplinary, theme-based curriculum may provide more interesting, less boring subject matter for young adolescents because connecting life's experiences to a meaningful whole is such an important part of the developmental work of ten-to fifteen-year-olds." (Scales, 1996)

To meet the needs of the young adolescent learner, a middle school curriculum needs to go beyond simply offering traditional school subjects; it needs to challenge students intellectually, make connections across subject areas, and reflect the needs and interests of students. Such a curriculum provides students with opportunities to develop their communication skills, work collaboratively with others, and apply their emerging problem-solving and decision-making skills.

When Turning Points teachers work as a team to integrate the curriculum, they are able to create powerful explorations that span traditional subject-area boundaries. Integrated curriculum links together the themes, concepts, content, and skills associated with the various disciplines. By looking at a theme in a way that integrates the disciplines, students learn to see patterns, contradictions, and varying perspectives across time periods and in different contexts. For example, the theme "how ideas spread" can be examined in the context of democracy in Ancient Greece, or when studying a novel about the Nazi Holocaust.

The Turning Points Model for Curriculum Development

The Turning Points model for developing curriculum specifically responds to the needs and interests of the young adolescent learner. The following components comprise this model. (See the Turning Points *Guide to Curriculum Development* for more information.)

Theme: This is the concept, or "big idea," that a unit of study is centered around. It should be a concept that is important to humanity and that can be explored across disciplines, eras, and cultures. For example, power, balance, force, relationships, patterns, and freedom are all appropriate themes.

Essential Questions: These help focus students on the most important aspects of the theme. Teachers and students consider two or three substantive questions throughout the unit and look at them from a number of perspectives. These questions lead to other questions that will engage students and deepen their inquiry.

Learning Goals: These describe what students should learn, be able to do, and be like as a result of the unit of study. They are based on the standards for learning, thinking, and being that the school or district adopts. Learning goals are divided into three areas: habits of mind, skills, and content.

Habits of mind The ways of thinking and being that the school values. Habits of mind will assist students in all content areas and help them become lifelong learners.

Skills What students will be able to do by the end of the unit of study.

Content The facts students will learn and the knowledge they will gain during the unit.

Assessment: Divided into ongoing assessments, culminating assessment, and reflection, assessment is designed so that students and teachers know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

- *Ongoing assessments* The work and assignments that show how students are doing as the unit progresses.
- *Culminating assessment* A project or performance that asks students to apply the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind they developed throughout the unit. All effort and learning in the unit is applied to creating the culminating assessment.
- *Reflection* This occurs throughout the unit as a part of ongoing assessment, and at the end of the unit when students and teachers look back to see what worked well and what could be improved.

- **Sequence of Learning Experiences:** These are the ways in which students engage with the content, learn the skills, and develop the habits of mind that are the learning goals of the unit. This sequence of activities should be designed to move students toward achieving the established standards and learning goals, and should build toward the culminating assessment.

The Importance of Teaming and Curriculum

In order to develop a challenging and integrated curriculum that meets the needs of all learners, middle schools set up organizational structures so that teachers and others can work together in teams. (See the Turning Points *Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership* for information on working in teams.) When a teacher team deliberately and collaboratively develops its curriculum with its students in mind, it can create dynamic and relevant learning opportunities.

See Appendix 3: Curriculum

- Designing Integrated Curriculum: A Continuum of Options
- Examples of Integrated Curriculum
- Themes and Issues Important to Young Adolescents

4. Developing Students' Leadership and Voice

STRATEGIES:

Including Students in the Collaborative Culture of Turning Points Schools

Individual Goal Setting with Students

Developing Assessment Criteria with Students

Some of the most overlooked agents of school change are the students themselves. Respecting student input and increasing student voice in making decisions about their school seems an obvious strategy for improving schools, yet many schools do not take advantage of these passionate and concerned experts in their midst. From developing their assessment criteria, to setting standards for hallway behavior, to designing programs to increase parent participation, students can offer a unique perspective on how their school should or should not be run. When included in efforts to improve their school, young adolescents become creative, motivated, and active problem solvers. They contribute insightful and well-informed opinions on a range of school issues including curriculum, instructional strategies, and student-teacher relationships.

Increasing student voice in school matters provides students with a strong sense of ownership of their school and education. When students have a voice in how and what they learn, they become more aware of themselves as learners, thus helping to build metacognitive skills. They become more motivated and engaged in their learning, thus making classroom interactions between teachers and students more productive and enjoyable. As active participants in schoolwide decision making, students become invested in helping to create a healthy school climate that encourages learning for all. Providing ongoing and meaningful opportunities for their input motivates students to do well. When students are motivated to achieve and to keep their school a safe and healthy place, the school can't help but become a better place in which to work, teach, and learn.

Student input in matters such as curriculum, discipline, and how the cafeteria is run is particularly powerful with young, urban adolescents who, typically, are not used to having their voices heard and taken seriously.

The young adolescent learner's developing sense of identity makes having an element of autonomy particularly important in her school experience. Middle school students "actually experience fewer opportunities for self-determination than they did in elementary school" (Midgley and Feldlauder, 1987). They need and want to be included in decision making so as to have some sense of control over their learning. Developing autonomy is a positive aspect of young adolescent growth that can enhance students' learning and allow them to take responsibility for their own learning.

INCLUDING STUDENTS IN THE COLLABORATIVE CULTURE OF TURNING POINTS SCHOOLS

Young adolescents can play an active role in the collaborative culture of a Turning Points School. (See the Turning Points *Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership* for more information on collaborative cultures.) In a structure of shared leadership, students become trusted and respected partners in all endeavors. Student involvement is not limited to planning the next school dance or decorating the hallways for a parent open house. Students can have a role in many aspects of the Turning Points model for middle school change, including vision setting, focus groups, and data-based inquiry and decision making. Students may participate on collaborative teams and focus groups to discuss schoolwide issues such as improving learning and teaching, adult-student relations, school facilities, and schoolwide literacy. In all groups, student representation should reflect a broad range of academic achievement, different school "cliques," and diverse backgrounds.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL SETTING WITH STUDENTS

At the beginning of each year, team 6G teachers each write a letter to their students. In it, they relate something about themselves—their interests, passions, and talents—maybe a bit about their summer, maybe some comments on a book that enthralled them. But they also write about their goals and aspirations for the year—not the goals they have for their students, but their own goals. This year, Mrs. Gomez's letter talked about how she planned to grade fewer papers and to spend more time giving feedback on her students' writing and responding to their ideas and thoughts. Mr. Chapman wrote that he knew students sometimes had trouble understanding his directions, so he would model, or demonstrate, new activities first.

Also at the beginning of each year, team 6G teachers ask their students to write a letter back. Thus begins the ritual of goal setting that helps fuel students' independence and create the personalized atmosphere that will prevail through the year.

Early adolescence is a time of breaking out and establishing independence, or at least of testing the waters. "At a time when they are trying to define themselves, establish relatively greater independence, and assert their individuality… we can develop partnerships with students by showing them how to set reasonable personal goals, work purposely toward accomplishing them, and at appropriate times monitor their progress" (Stevenson, 1992, 266). Individual goal setting not only supports the transition adolescents are making toward greater autonomy and self-awareness, it also helps create a personalized learning environment that will enable teachers to keep tabs on students' learning needs. Having an awareness of one's strengths, weaknesses, and needs provides a powerful tool for learning. By asking students to shoulder some of the responsibility for their own learning, we are showing them that we respect their ability to do so and expect them to develop self-awareness as learners. (For more information on goal setting, see Appendix 4 and the Turning Points *Guide to Curriculum Development*, pages 19–26.)

DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA WITH STUDENTS

It's easier to identify something done poorly than to say what makes a piece of work good. Teachers know better than anyone that writing specific and concrete feedback on students' work is extremely helpful, but to write *positive* specific and concrete feedback is hard. A typical paper returned to a student might have comments such as "incorrect punctuation," "run-on sentence," or "paragraph needs a focus." We don't often find feedback that says, "nice use of vivid imagery," or "good use of quote and historical reference."

By involving students in the process of determining the evaluation criteria for an assignment, teachers can address critical intellectual and emotional developmental needs. Being able to articulate what constitutes high-quality work gives students information that empowers them to achieve. Sharing with students, *up-front*, the information they need to build their skills can also help build trust between students and teachers because it breaks down one of the biggest barriers here: grading criteria. Making grading criteria public and explicit also allows for the establishment of equitable expectations for all students.

Developing assessment criteria and rubrics with students helps build trust between teachers and students by creating clearly understandable grading parameters and learning expectations. It helps students see what they need to do to produce quality work. When a teacher is able to involve students in the process of deciding what makes a piece of work good, she is helping students apply their knowledge and skills to articulate what they know. This process also helps students to look at their own work more objectively.

See Appendix 4: Setting Goals

Goal-Setting Activity—Student Sample

Activity for Developing Assessment Criteria with Students

5. Creating a Safe Learning Environment

STRATEGIES:

Setting Norms for Collaborative Work

Building Strong Relationships Between Adults and Young Adolescents

Alana hated cooperative learning groups. She remembers how in her old school the teacher used to make her work with kids she didn't like. It seemed as if the teacher made them get into groups for every assignment, and she was always with the same group of kids. There was always this one kid who took over, thinking he knew all the answers. Then there were the kids who wouldn't do their share of the work. As for Alana, she usually didn't say anything. She ended up doing what the group leader assigned her. She always did her part, but it was never very satisfying. Why couldn't she work with whom she wanted? Why couldn't she work alone? Why couldn't the teacher just teach them?

Mr. Moore, a sixth-grade math teacher, sits in the back of the library during an in-service workshop on classroom management. The Turning Points coach asks the staff to brainstorm in small groups to define the ideal learner. Mr. Moore is reluctant to join a group, but it's easier to sit near one and look involved than to stay where he is. On large chart paper, the group lists qualities such as being curious, cooperative, respectful, and organized. This should be interesting, he thinks, is the coach going to tell him where to find such a student? She opens the discussion with the question: "If this is what you think the ideal learner looks like, how are you helping students develop these qualities when you teach?"

School can be terrifying. And when it's not terrifying, it can be frustrating or boring. Young adolescents are excited about being with their friends, about meeting new people, about being liked by adults, and about doing real life things that matter. But sometimes, school just gets in the way. Taking the time to lay the groundwork for positive learning in social and active ways, and making sure students know the expectations for learning and behavior, are important to creating safe and challenging learning environments.

Laying a foundation of respect, trust, inclusion, and communication is essential for students to learn effectively.

What makes cooperative learning groups work? What makes collaboration productive? What makes authentic assessment effective? How can these learning strategies be used to capitalize on the natural inclination of young adolescents to be social, interactive, and curious without threatening their vulnerabilities? Laying a foundation of respect, trust, inclusion, and communication is essential for students to learn effectively. A truly safe learning environment in which kids can take risks must be built day in, day out throughout the year or over years together as a class, but some important strategies exist to help establish common expectations for behavior and learning among teachers and students alike.

SETTING NORMS FOR COLLABORATIVE WORK

Marco grabbed the huge piece of paper and markers the teacher had given his group for their project and ran out into the hall with them. One person was supposed to lie down on the paper while the other members of the group outlined his body with markers. Marco didn't wait for his group to follow him. He wanted to be the one to lie down on the paper and have his outline drawn. No one seemed to care that Marco got to be the one. In fact, both Julianne and Pedro were relieved that they didn't have to do it. Julianne read the task to the group: "With your group, brainstorm a list of guidelines for or 'ways of being' a good group."

Pedro, Lizette, and Marco, who was still lying down on the paper, bombarded Julianne with responses before she even finished: "Do your share of the work." "Be respectful." "Don't interrupt." "No dissing or putdowns." "Everybody helps clean up." "No cheating." *When nobody could think of any other "ways of working together to be more thoughtful and productive," Julianne started handing out the post-it notes, and each person wrote down the behaviors that were most important to him or her. Then, wild with giggles, everyone began sticking their post-its on the paper, both inside and outside Marco's outlined figure.*

Norms define ways of working together that help groups be more thoughtful and productive.

Young adolescents can be acutely aware of their own behaviors and those of others. Both their self-consciousness about their own behavior and their emerging sense of justice and fairness make norm setting a powerful activity for this group. Setting norms at the beginning of the year, within both whole classes and smaller cooperative groups that meet regularly over time, can be an empowering way to

include students in creating a classroom environment in which they feel safe to take risks and to challenge themselves and each other.

Norms define ways of working together that help groups be more thoughtful and productive. Some norms have to do with procedures and how the group is run, while others have to do with how people interact with each other. Once norms have been established, it is important that the entire group, not just the teacher, take responsibility for making sure that they are respected. Norms can change and evolve as the group develops and matures, or as new groups are formed. Students and teachers should take the time to check regularly to see if the class is living up to the norms, especially early in the school year. (See Appendix 5 for tools for setting norms with students.)

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ADULTS AND YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Turning Points schools strive to create small, caring communities for learning in which every child is known well by at least one adult. Such relationships support and reinforce student learning, and help students grow into productive, responsible adults.

Getting to Know Your Students

This may seem an obvious strategy, but it is the one most important to creating a safe learning environment for young adolescents. When teachers get to know their students by listening closely to their interests, stories, needs, and dreams, and by sharing parts of their own lives, they make strong personal connections that enhance personal and academic growth.

Advisory and Mentoring Programs

Schoolwide approaches for creating caring and personalized learning environments include advisory and mentoring programs. Advisory programs in middle schools often take the form of structured programs that meet at regular times during the week. In these programs, groups of ten to twelve students meet with one adult to work on academic issues, help in the community, discuss social and developmental issues, and/or share common interests. Mentoring programs provide a one-to-one relationship between an adult or older student and a middle school student for tutoring, help on individual projects,

SAMPLE WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUNG ADOLESCENTS[4]

Share: Don't leave your concerns, passions, and stories at home. Students respond to genuine face-to-face interaction and personal connection.

Listen: Make yourself available to students to listen to their interests, stories, needs, and dreams.

Ask: Ask students about their families, their neighborhoods, their friends. Ask students what they like to do and what's on their minds.

Observe: Watch your students: how they work, together and independently; how they socialize in the cafeteria and hallways. A lot can be learned from careful observation.

Be flexible: Allow students' interests and concerns to become part of the curriculum.

4. Adapted from *Teaching Literacy in the Turning Points School*

and/or personal support. (See the Turning Points guide to *School Structures That Support Learning and Collaboration* for more information on advisory and mentoring programs.)

See Appendix 5: Setting Norms

Activity for Setting Norms

Sample Ground Rules or Norms for Behavior

Group Process Questions

6. Engaging Students in the Community

STRATEGIES:

Service Learning Projects

Internships

Project-Based Learning

> *There are three ways of trying to win the young. There is persuasion, there is compulsion and there is attraction. You can preach at them, that is a hook without a worm; you can say "You must volunteer," that is of the devil; and you can tell them, "You are needed," that appeal hardly ever fails.*
>
> —Kurt Hahn

That young adolescents are both becoming aware of the larger world around them and have a desire to have an impact on this larger world makes the middle school years an ideal time to engage students with their communities. Intellectually, students need opportunities to reason through complex problems. Morally, students need to contribute to building a just society. Emotionally and socially, they need opportunities to make decisions and to be held accountable in real ways. These important adult-like experiences help build the bridge to adulthood by laying a foundation of skills, knowledge, identity, and self-worth. Involving students with the community, both in and out of school, becomes a key component of their middle school education.

SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS

Service learning projects link specific learning goals with volunteer activities in the community. Service tasks combined with structured learning experiences allow students to reflect on their service through individual, small, and large group work. The value of service learning derives from a reciprocal relationship in which the service performed reinforces and strengthens the learning, and the learning reinforces and adds to the value of the service. Service learning projects foster the development of empathy, personal values and beliefs, awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, social responsibility, and a

sense of caring for others. Service learning is most effective if students have choices about what they pursue so as to better form connections with the curriculum and see real value in the actions they take. Two examples of service learning projects are: removing litter from a nearby stream and analyzing the debris in order to share the results with the community and make recommendations for preventing recurrence of the situation; or preparing a community presentation to commemorate the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr., while learning about his life within its historical context.

SERVICE LEARNING SUPPORTS YOUNG ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT BY ALLOWING STUDENTS TO...

- Focus on complex and real problems
- Take responsibility for important tasks and decisions
- Present different opinions and ideas
- Pursue their passions and draw upon their strengths
- Develop positive relationships with adults outside family and school
- Participate in their community
- Gain experience in democratic and cooperative decision making
- Develop individual values and self-identity
- Broaden their notion of what is possible for themselves

INTERNSHIPS

Student internships, which can take place during school, after school, or during the summer, help build positive mentor relationships with the community and give students invaluable "real life" experiences that they can connect to their own learning. Through

internships students also learn about future career opportunities. To determine internship possibilities, faculty and staff members first help students decide the kinds of skills they would like to learn and the type of environment best suited for that learning. Individual students may be placed in internships with local businesses or social agencies, or in other settings in the community. Schedules and time commitments vary for internships. Some schools may choose to have all eighth graders do an internship for three hours weekly; other schools may design programs of shorter duration and include all students on a staggered basis.

PROJECT-BASED CURRICULUM

Project-based learning emphasizes learning activities that are long-term, interdisciplinary, student-centered, and connected to real world issues. It motivates students by engaging them in their own learning and providing them with opportunities to pursue their own interests, form their own questions, and make decisions about how they will find answers. Project-based learning connects what students learn in school with a real world issue in the community. It taps into young adolescents' growing sense of moral responsibility by giving them the chance to make a difference in their own community. For example, one school group used math and geographic skills to study asthma rates in their community. They also used writing and presentation skills to develop a report and make recommendations to the community. In another example, students studied geometry and measurement, and used their new math skills to work with architects to create floor plans for a proposed aquarium. They also conducted research about aquatic animals and their habitats. Their written proposals demonstrated high-quality writing and reflected a synthesis of what they had learned.

Getting Started

Developing a Schoolwide Approach to Supporting Students' Learning

So many complex strategies have been touched on in this guide that it may be daunting to imagine where to begin. The following entry points are meant to complement the data-based inquiry and decision-making process engaged in by all Turning Points schools.

1. SUGGESTIONS FOR TEAMS AND WHOLE FACULTIES

Read *At the Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner* and discuss it in academic teams. Consider the following questions:

How well do we know our students?

How can we strengthen a culture of trust and respect among students on our team?

In what ways do our curriculum and instruction reflect the needs of the young adolescent?

What gaps can we identify?

What strategies would we like to experiment with?

- Form a study group—include student members—focused on increasing student voice and leadership. Examine all aspects of the school's organization and culture (e.g., governance, curriculum, community involvement, etc.) Consider the following activities:
  - Read and discuss this guide using the same questions as above.
  - Create, administer, and analyze the responses of student surveys.
  - Have adult members shadow student members for a day and debrief the experience as a study group.
  - Conduct mutual interviews between teachers and students.
  - Ask students to conduct "community tours" of their neighborhoods for faculty members.
  - Create a proposed action plan for increasing student voice and leadership, and present it to the full faculty for feedback.

2. SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS

- Read this guide and use the team discussion questions (above) as a starting point for personal reflection about one's own curriculum and instruction.
- Take time, using a survey or more informal approach, to get to know students better: what they are most passionate about, how they think they learn best, who their greatest influences are, and the like.
- Select one area to explore further (e.g., cooperative learning, using reflection to build students' metacognition skills, etc.).
- With a colleague, develop an "action research question" to pursue (e.g., What difference will giving students input into a curriculum project have on their performance?). Document the results and share with the team or larger faculty.

3. TOOLS/ACTIVITIES

Concentric Circles

A variety of structures or protocols can help foster good conversation between adults and students. "Concentric circles" is a good introductory activity for a large group meeting. Form two concentric circles with equal numbers of teachers or students on the outside and the other group on the inside. Every teacher should face a student. The designated facilitator will read the group a question or prompt and the pairs should talk for a minute or so. The facilitator will call time and everyone will rotate to find a new partner. Continue sharing and moving until everyone has had the chance to talk with several different people.

Sample questions/prompts:

What's your favorite activity outside of school?

What do you think is the greatest strength of our school? Biggest weakness?

Describe a teacher you found helpful in elementary school. What made them a good teacher for you?

If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?

Take a Walk in Each Other's Shoes

Windsor Middle School in Colorado developed this activity in response to a newspaper column that was full of negative stereotypes about adolescents. Teachers and students created and then shared lists of things they wanted each other to know, writing the lists on cutouts of shoes: "Ten Things Students Should Know About Teachers" and "Ten Things Teachers Should Know About Students." The shoes were hung on banners around the school for Family Night.

From the teachers:

It's OK to talk to us when you see us in public. We like that.

We were once teenagers too.

- We love what we do.
- We are real people too!

From the students:

- I don't like pressure.
- Don't embarrass me.
- I don't want to grow up too fast.
- TV is not my life.
- We listen to your advice about drinking, drugs, etc.
- We are real people too!

Data in a Day

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) developed a tool for a one-day investigation of data that is carried out collaboratively by students and teachers. A design team (or leadership team) coordinates the day and forms teams of students, teachers, and community members to serve as researchers. After selecting key themes that they will examine during the day, adult and student pairs conduct informal observations in classes and other areas of the school. Each team records examples of observations that illustrate the themes.

Team members regroup at lunch to analyze the notes from the observations and summarize their findings about the theme. The groups report back to all staff at the end of the school day. Each team writes up a short report of their findings, and the design team (or leadership team) collects them and plans ways to use the data in ongoing data-based inquiry at the school.

For more information, see the following page on NWREL's website: http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/diad.shtml

Appendix 1: Multiple Intelligences

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES LESSON-PLANNING FORM – SAMPLE

This sheet provides a sample format to help teachers record how to address students' multiple intelligences while planning learning experiences. In this example, the lesson topic is Photosynthesis in a science unit on the life cycle of plants. The Essential Question for the unit is: "How do plants live?" This form can be adapted to other topics and Essential Questions.

INTELLIGENCE	SKILL/CONCEPT	ACTIVITY
Verbal-Linguistic	Learn and use new vocabulary. Summarize a written passage.	Pairs read aloud a section of the text that describes photosynthesis. Each pair is responsible for finding a vocabulary word and using it appropriately in a sentence.
Logical-Mathematical	Create a timeline.	Create a timeline of the steps in photosynthesis.
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Role-play.	Role-play the "characters" involved in the process of photosynthesis.
Visual-Spatial	Understand tint and shade.	Use watercolors to paint the process of photosynthesis.
Musical-Rhythmic	Relate musical sounds to both real life and abstract objects or events.	Create a musical collage with different musical selections that represent the sequence of steps involved in photosynthesis.
Interpersonal	Participate in small-group discussions. Explore point of view.	In small groups, discuss the transformative role of chloroplasts in photosynthesis and draw parallels to your own lives.
Personal	Use reflective journal writing.	Write a journal entry that reflects on a personally transformative experience and compare it to the process of photosynthesis.
Naturalist	Create a window-ledge garden and chart the growth rate of different plants.	Observe and log growth of plants according to different variables (e.g., water, light, nutrients, soil).

Note: The activities suggested here are provided by Susie Girardin, educational consultant.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES SELF-TEST: WHERE DOES YOUR TRUE INTELLIGENCE LIE?

This quiz will help you identify your areas of strongest intelligence. Read each statement. If it expresses some characteristic of yours and sounds true for the most part, write "T" next to it. If it doesn't feel true for you, mark an "F." If the statement is sometimes true, sometimes false, then leave it blank.

1.		I would rather draw a map than give someone verbal directions.
2.		If I am angry or happy, I usually know why.
3.		I can play (or used to play) a musical instrument.
4.		I can match music to my moods.
5.		I can add or multiply quickly in my head.
6.		I can help a friend sort out strong feelings because I have had similar feelings myself.
7.		I like to work with calculators and computers.
8.		I pick up new dance steps fast.
9.		It's easy for me to say what I think in an argument or debate.
10.		I like to collect things (e.g., rocks, sports cards, stamps, etc.).
11.		I enjoy a good lecture, speech, or sermon.
12.		I always know north from south, no matter where I am.
13.		I like to gather together groups of people for parties or special events.
14.		If I have to memorize something, I tend to organize it into categories.
15.		Life seems empty without music.
16.		I always understand the drawings in the instructions that come with new gadgets or toys.
17.		I like to work puzzles and play games.
18.		Learning to ride a bike (or skate or ski) was easy.
19.		I am irritated when I hear an argument or statement that doesn't make sense.
20.		I can convince other people to follow my plans.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES SELF-TEST: WHERE DOES YOUR TRUE INTELLIGENCE LIE? (CONTINUED)

21.		My sense of balance and coordination is good.
22.		I often see patterns and relationships between numbers faster and easier than others.
23.		I enjoy learning the names of living things in our environment, such as flowers and trees.
24.		I enjoy building models or sculpting.
25.		I'm good at finding the fine points of word meanings.
26.		I can look at an object one way and see it turned sideways or backwards just as easily.
27.		I often connect a piece of music with some event in my life.
28.		I like to work with numbers and figures.
29.		I like to sit quietly and reflect on my feelings and thoughts.
30.		Just looking at shapes of buildings and structures is pleasurable to me.
31.		For a group presentation I prefer to organize and classify the information into categories so it makes sense.
32.		I like to hum, whistle, and sing to myself.
33.		I'm good at athletics.
34.		I love walking in the woods and looking at the trees and flowers.
35.		I enjoy writing detailed letters to friends.
36.		I'm usually aware of the expression on my face.
37.		I'm sensitive to the expressions of other people's faces.
38.		I can easily identify my moods and am aware of them.
39.		I am sensitive to the moods of others.
40.		I have a good sense of what others think of me.

WHERE DOES YOUR INTELLIGENCE LIE?

Score Sheet

Circle each item number that you marked as "True." Total the columns. If you circled four or more in any category, you have a strong ability in that intelligence.

Category	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Item Numbers	9	5	1	8	3	2	13	10
	11	7	12	18	4	6	20	14
	19	17	16	21	15	29	37	23
	25	22	26	24	27	36	39	31
	35	28	30	33	32	38	40	34
Totals								

WHERE DOES YOUR INTELLIGENCE LIE?

Key

Match your totals for the categories in the score sheet above with the intelligence preferences listed below. A total of four or more in any of the categories indicates a strong ability in that intelligence.

Category	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Intelligence Preferences	Linguistic	Mathematical-logical	Visual-spatial	Bodily-kinesthetic	Musical	Personal	Interpersonal	Naturalist
My strong abilities are:								
What this means for my learning:								

Appendix 2: Differentiating Instruction

GUIDELINES FOR DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

Purpose: *The following guidelines may be helpful in managing a differentiated classroom.*

GUIDELINE	EXPLANATION
Have a strong rationale for differentiating instruction.	Base your rationale on students' readiness and interest, and share that rationale with both students and parents so they can begin to understand the nature of a differentiated classroom and lose preconceived notions.
Begin differentiating at a comfortable pace.	The teacher also has a level of readiness that needs to be considered. For example, teachers can try differentiated instruction in the class where they feel most at ease or with the subject they enjoy best. They can differentiate using multiple resources, or have students work from a single text but at different paces.
Time activities for student success.	Some students work better in groups, while others work better independently. All students should learn to increase their attention span for either group or independent work. For example, the teacher might first give a student just a little less time for an independent activity than her attention span typically lasts. Starting with a shorter time frame allows the student's attention to outlast the task and gives her a sense of success. Then, gradually, the time allotted for similar tasks should increase.
Use "anchor" activities.	Anchor activities free up time to work with students. Reading silently, writing in journals, and practicing skills allow students to work independently and quietly. These anchor tasks should be differentiated based on students' levels of readiness and interest. Gradually, teachers can move toward having part of the class involved in anchor activities while others are involved in newer differentiated tasks that require more teacher attention.
Be strategic when delivering instructions.	Since students will be engaged in different activities at the same time, avoid giving directions orally. Instead, prepare task cards or activity sheets, give instructions to group representatives, or set up learning stations with instructions readily available.
Have a "home base."	Basically, this is a seating chart students use at different times during the class to allow the teacher to organize lessons and materials more quickly.
Share responsibilities with students.	Giving students as much responsibility for their learning as possible is part of creating more independent and motivated learners. This includes distributing and collecting materials, organizing the classroom itself for various activities, reviewing peers' work, establishing goals for their own learning, and developing some of their own tasks.
Have a plan for students to get help.	When the teacher is busy with another student or group, students need to know how to get help. Possibilities include asking for help from others in their group, or putting their name on a list kept next to the teacher.
Set norms with students.	Engage students in talking about classroom procedures that support learning.
Use flexible groupings.	This means sometimes grouping students based on their level of readiness, interests, or learning profiles, sometimes having students work on a brief task with whomever is nearby, and sometimes allowing students to set up their own groups. These changes in grouping strategies prevent the labeling implicit with long-running groups.

Source: Adapted from Anthony W. Jackson and Gayle A. Davis, *Turning Points 2000* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000), 80, citing Carol Ann Tomlinson, *The Differentiated Classroom* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1995), 29–33.

Independent Student Projects: Expert Studies and I-Search Reports

Working independently gives young adolescents a chance to stretch their cognitive muscles while pursuing areas of personal interest. Students gain confidence and come to know their individual strengths as they research and explore themes and topics of their choice. Independent student projects allow students to become experts at something and to be recognized for their accomplishments. Having "at least one area of specialized abilities and talents that are a basis for both personal pride and recognition from others around them" (Stevenson, 1992, 160) is important to young adolescents.

Expert Studies and I-Search are two examples of independent student projects well suited to the middle school learner. Both have inquiry-based formats. They allow for differentiation because students make choices about their learning: the student, in developing his or her "curriculum," determines (with the teacher's coaching) the content or topic he will study, the process he will use to gain understanding and skill, how he will demonstrate his learning, and often, the standards by which his understanding and skill will be evaluated. An Expert Studies project or I-Search paper is an important learning experience for a young adolescent because it meets each student at his current learning level in terms of knowledge and understanding and of thinking and communication skills, and moves him forward.

The teacher's role is to coach students for success by acting not so much as a "content expert" as a "learning expert." As students individually pursue an area of interest to them in an intellectually rigorous manner, teachers must guide them in accessing, synthesizing, and articulating ideas and information. When responsibility for content knowledge rests squarely with the students and is separate from the skills involved in gaining that knowledge, students begin to understand what the abstract process of learning looks like in very concrete and personal terms. Ultimately, teachers help students carry out four basic elements of active research (Zorfass, 1998). They help students to:

Pose questions after becoming immersed in compelling information

Learn how to access varied resources and materials

- Make meaning from the information they have gathered
- Represent their knowledge in effective and varied formats

Expert Studies and I-Search differ in one general way. Expert Studies refers to a broad category of project types that doesn't place formal research and writing at its center, while an I-Search paper relies on some traditional forms of research and researched writing to build and communicate understanding.

EXPERT STUDIES

In an Expert Study, students determine how they can best acquire knowledge and communicate their learning to an audience. For instance, if a student's Expert Study is focused on flamenco dancing, the student might decide that researching in a library is the best way to understand the history of the dance form, and that taking flamenco dance lessons is the best way to learn how to do it. He might also decide that writing a paper isn't as effective a way to communicate their knowledge of flamenco dancing as performing a dance and writing a description of it in the program.

Expert Studies support young adolescent development because they allow for:

- Recognition of expertise and accomplishment
- Individual conversation with adult mentors and teachers
- Community involvement
- Student decision making and autonomy
- Creating relevant and personal connections between the student and the curriculum

The purpose of an Expert Study is to:

- Ask or answer a question about why an event has occurred or why something exists
- Improve the effectiveness of a system or process
- Design something to meet a need
- Respond to a community issue
- Collect data to discover patterns and connections

Some examples of Expert Study projects include:

- Restoring a covered bridge
- Landscaping a cemetery
- Updating the school library system
- Proposing a plan to improve the traffic flow in town
- Choreographing a scene for the school play
- Painting a mural over graffiti on a wall or building
- Producing an information brochure and campaign about healthy nutrition for teens

I-SEARCH REPORTS

An I-Search is an inquiry into an area of personal interest: What do I want to know? What are my questions? The beauty of an I-Search is that it mirrors true inquiry; that is, the more one questions, the more questions arise. The I-Search is built on the premise that the writing process itself builds knowledge, and therefore, charting the inquiry process is just as important as the final product. It invites students to figure out how they learn—what works and what doesn't work for them. It also helps them identify the strategies they need to pursue their inquiry—to find answers and more questions (Zorfass, 1998).

The I-Search supports young adolescent development because it allows:

Thematic and interdisciplinary exploration

Individual inquiry, in which the student pursues his interests and questions

Application to the real world and the larger community

A natural context for technology integration

Cooperative learning

Ongoing assessment

Inclusive and heterogeneous classroom groupings

The purpose of an I-Search paper is to:

Explore an authentic question

Provide an accessible way for students to communicate ideas and information

Enlarge the body of knowledge of the community

Invite students to explore how they learn

A common format for an I-Search paper includes the following sections (Macrorie, 1988):

What I know or didn't know starting out

Why I'm writing and how my search has made a difference

The story of my search: what my hunt looked like, where it led me, the difficulties and the successes

What I learned and didn't learn; questions I still have

Appendix 3: Curriculum

DESIGNING INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: A CONTINUUM OF OPTIONS

Purpose: *Use this chart to determine where your school's curriculum lies on the continuum of options. While other delineations exist, the following three categories cover a wide spectrum of possibilities, from the least to the most integrated approaches. Using the chart will help teachers and other curriculum designers to consider a wide range of options and to move toward developing a more integrated curriculum.*

	DISCIPLINE-BASED	INTERDISCIPLINARY	INTEGRATED
Characteristics	Each subject is taught independently in separate time blocks. Content and skills are presented separately without showing the relationships between them.	Each subject is taught independently and in separate time blocks. Unit topics or lessons are sequenced to correspond to topics or lessons in other disciplines. Content doesn't change, only order. Teachers may or may not emphasize the links between the subjects.	Related disciplines are brought together to explore a theme. Deliberate connections are made between disciplines. Links are deliberately taught. Higher-order thinking skills are required to understand the linkages.
Advantages	This is the most common and familiar. This approach coincides with how curriculum frameworks are organized. Often, teachers' expertise parallels this approach.	Planning is easy. This can feel like a "first step" toward integration. Schedules do not have to be rearranged.	The full array of discipline-based perspectives is used. Scheduling flexibility to meet student needs and unit goals is encouraged. Natural connections between disciplines can be drawn. Higher-order thinking skills are developed.
Disadvantages	This fragmented approach doesn't allow students to practice the higher-order thinking skills of making connections and seeing relationships. This approach does not reflect the reality of life outside of school. Scheduling is rigid and doesn't allow flexibility of time and integration to meet needs.	There is no deliberate connection of themes, skills, and content across fields. Students often are left to find linkages themselves. Scheduling is rigid and doesn't allow flexibility of time and integration to meet needs.	Students and teachers need to reconsider their traditional view of curriculum. Effort and change are required. The making of false or difficult linkages between disciplines is possible.

Source: Heidi H. Jacobs, *Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum and Assessment K–12* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997).

EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

There are almost as many examples of integrated curriculum units as there are curriculum units. The number of subject areas included in a study, and which disciplines are included, also vary widely. This list is simply meant as a sampling of possibilities.

UNIT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	CULMINATING ASSESSMENT	SUBJECT AREAS INCLUDED
War	What's worth fighting for?	Political rally	Social Studies, English, Art
Bioethics	What's your genetic future?	Debate	Science, Social Studies
Science Fiction	Where's the science in fiction?	Short story	Science, English
Ancient Greece or the Nazi Holocaust	How do ideas spread? Who are the faces of courage?	Panel discussion/ talk show	Social Studies, English
Space Travel	What's summer like on Mars?	PowerPoint presentation	Science, Math, Technology
Evolution	How did we get here? Could humans grow a third eye? Will genetic engineering change our evolutionary future? Should it?	Write and perform a play	Science, Social Studies, English, Music, Art
Forensics, Human Biology	"Who done it?"	Solve a murder mystery	Science, Math, Social Studies, English
Human Rights	What's your right?	Host a conference	English, Social Studies, Art
Migration	Is it really better up north? Why do birds fly south?	Scientific study report	English, Science, Technology
Statistics	What are the odds of something happening? I dare you: What would you do?	Oral presentation of report at a public hearing	Math, Social Studies, Health
The American Dream: the 1920s and 1930s; Immigration	Whose dream is it, anyway? What motivates people to immigrate?	Living history museum	Social Studies, English, Art
Civil Rights	What does it mean to be free?	Poetry anthology, diary/scrapbook, mural	Social Studies, English, Art
Rocketry	Why do objects fall? Why do balloons float? How do I get to the moon?	Design, build and launch a rocket	Science, Math
Anthropology, Prehistory	Where did everybody go?	Anthropological dig and study	Science, Math, Social Studies, English

EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATED CURRICULUM (CONTINUED)

UNIT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	CULMINATING ASSESSMENT	SUBJECT AREAS INCLUDED
Poetry	How do I say so much with so little?	Poetry anthology, performance poetry	English, Technology, Drama, Art, Music
World History/ Literature	How is culture apparent to us? How does it affect who we are?	Multicultural fair	Social Studies, English, Art, Music

THEMES AND ISSUES IMPORTANT TO YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Purpose: *This chart gives examples of themes, personal and global issues, and concerns of particular interest to young adolescents.*[5] *Creating interdisciplinary thematic connections with students enhances learning in a number of ways. Cognitively, young adolescent learners are able and need to make connections across traditional academic boundaries, and between themselves and the content, in order to understand complex concepts. Encouraging students to make personal connections with the subject matter compels them to draw upon their background knowledge, thus enhancing comprehension and motivation.*

Global Issues and Concerns:

Power
Fairness and justice
Beauty
Compassion
Love
Courage
Loyalty
Faith
Independence and interdependence
Change
Growth
Fear
Oppression
Transition
Movement
Prejudice and privilege
Race and gender
Environment
Other cultures and religions
Wealth and poverty
War and peace
Caring and volunteering

Personal Issues and Concerns:

Knowledge of self and one's identity
Physical growth
Relationships
Pressure and stress
Belief systems
The future
Mortality
Sex and health
Family
Transitions and change

5: List is adapted from Vars and Raknow, 1993; Scales, 1996, and Beane, J.A. 1993

Appendix 4: Setting Goals

GOAL SETTING ACTIVITY— STUDENT SAMPLE

The following goal setting activity is an example and can be adapted for varying lengths of time or units. It works well for self-paced units typically in math or reading workshop, as well as for term goal setting. The crucial element is personalized and concrete teacher feedback, whether offered orally in one-on-one conferences, or in written form. Individual teacher feedback is required at each step, especially in helping students identify strategies they might use to achieve their goals, and in listening to students' reflections about how well they achieved their goals. These goal-setting worksheets are kept in student portfolios and are used for student-teacher conferences four times per year, and as part of the student-led conferences at the end of the year.

GOALS FOR: Henry **DATES:** January–March term

GOAL	STRATEGY	EVIDENCE	REFLECTION
Skills and Content: Work on dividing decimals and my multiplication tables.	Do a division worksheet for practice 1x week, and take a mad minute 1x week.	I marked in my planner that I did 8 worksheets and 8 mad minutes this term.	I didn't work well with this one. I kept forgetting to do it. I need to redo it and have Mrs. G. sign off.
Redo the 2's I get on math assignments so I can get more 3's.	Redo 5 assignments that got a grade of 2.	I redid 4 assignments, because all the others got at least a 3.	I feel that I met this goal. I have a lot of evidence. It kept me from getting 2's in the first place. Redoing was harder, though. I need to work more on this.
Communication: Take the facilitator's role in small groups.	Use the student remark sheet, talk about it in my journal once a week, and use teacher observations.	I was facilitator for my math group for 2 projects, and 3 times this term I facilitated jigsaw groups.	I enjoyed working on this. I must have been ready to try it. The goal gave me courage to try. I'm braver now.
Independence: Manage my time better for long-term work.	Use a planning calendar for my I-Search project.	I filled in the planning calendar 3x week, and kept my Checkpoints sheet up to date.	I had to work hard to achieve this goal. I thought the calendar would cause me more stress, but it didn't because I always knew what I had to do. I know I'll go back to my old ways if I don't do this goal again.

Note: Activity sample developed by Susie Girardin, educational consultant

ACTIVITY FOR DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA WITH STUDENTS

In the following activity, students look at samples of student work to develop assessment criteria. The guiding question for this lesson might be, "What makes a good _______ (e.g., lab report, persuasive essay, math problem, map)?" Working in small groups, students first critique the samples. By the end of the lesson, the class will have seen samples of work that will help them look at their own work more objectively, and they will have developed a set of criteria that will guide their progress and inform assessment of their work.

PROCEDURE:

1

Select a set of sample student work based on varying degrees of strengths and weaknesses. The number of samples needed depends on the length of time allotted, as well as the size of the groups arranged.

2

Arrange students into small groups of 3 to 6 students.

3

Give each small group a set of sample work. All groups should receive the same set. (For example, in a class of 20 students, divide students into five small groups of 4 students each. Make five copies of a sample set of work and distribute one set to each group.) It is helpful if there are enough samples in each set for every student to be reading one simultaneously. (For example, if each group has 5 students, make sure you have five different samples of work in each set.)

4

Make sure that each piece of work in a sample set is numbered. (If each set has five papers, label them #1–5.)

5

In their groups, students should individually rank the work in the set, from least effective to most effective. This is a silent reading time, where students pass papers among themselves until each student in a group has read all the sample papers. As they read, they should assign each paper a number-for example, 1 = ineffective, 2 = ineffective but salvageable, 3 = effective, 4 = most effective. They should also jot down three reasons for each score assigned.

6

When all students have had a chance to read and comment on all the samples, they should share their assessments among group members. Students enjoy comparing "grades" among themselves, and are often surprised to see both the commonalties and disparities between them.

7

The final task in their small groups is to reach consensus on the criteria for what makes a piece of work effective, and to compile the criteria into a list to be shared with the rest of the class.

ACTIVITY FOR DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA WITH STUDENTS (CONTINUED)

8

As a large group, synthesize the lists into one set of assessment criteria. At this point, the teacher is able to contribute ideas that may have been overlooked by students, or that represent her/his personal biases. This is also a helpful assessment tool for teachers, as it informs the teacher of areas that need instruction over the course of the unit.

9

Type the list and distribute it to students. It is most helpful to students if the list is given to them at the beginning of a unit or assignment. Because this activity simply asks students to think about what defines a quality piece of work, teachers will develop a scaled rubric, based on the list, to use in evaluating student work (students should also receive this at the beginning of the unit).

10

Ask students to review, or have another student review, their work, using the list of criteria, before revising or submitting the assignment for a grade. This step asks students to apply their understanding of the criteria, and gives them further opportunity to improve their work.

Source: Linda Rief, *Seeking Diversity* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992).

Appendix 5: Setting Norms

ACTIVITY FOR SETTING NORMS

In this activity, students write individual statements on post-its about how they want their class or group to operate. They discuss the statements and reach consensus on norms for their group.

PROCEDURE:

1

The teacher divides the class into groups of four or five students and passes out a handful of post-it notes to each student. She/he may also post or pass out a list of types of norms, sample norms, or a short list of one or two norms that are important to her/him.

2

Each student writes a norm-a statement about how they want the group to work together-on each of the post-its. One norm for each post-it.

3

Each group shares its individual norms and groups together suggestions that are similar. (For example, "take turns talking" and "make sure everyone speaks" should be grouped together.)

4

Each group creates a unified list of norms.

5

To create a list for the whole class, it can be effective first to ask the group to think of an object that is symbolic of the class (e.g., to represent a student, the outline of a human is drawn on the chart paper; other common symbols include a heart, hands, or tree). The teacher, or a volunteer, draws a very large outline of this object on the chart paper. This chart is often posted for the year, so having something visually appealing enhances the activity.

6

Each group contributes one or two norms, placing post-it notes on the chart paper. If a symbol is used, post-its can be placed either inside or outside the symbol: those that the group wants (positive statements such as "listen to others"), on the inside; those that the group doesn't want (negative statements such as "no put downs"), on the outside.

7

As post-its are placed on the paper, the teacher or leader groups suggestions that are similar.

8

After each group has contributed to the class list, the teacher or group leader asks if there are any omissions, deletions, or clarifying questions. (For example, someone might ask, "What does 'show respect' look like?")

9

The group then discusses the norms that have been suggested to see if there is agreement on them. The group should reach consensus on all norms, keeping in mind that too many norms may be difficult to follow.

ACTIVITY FOR SETTING NORMS (CONTINUED)

HINTS:

Students will have greater investment in and understanding of the norms if they generate their own, in collaboration with the teacher. The teacher can, just as any student can, amend the norms or block agreement if there is something in the norms that she "can't live with." For example, a group might decide that it's okay for someone not to participate verbally in group discussions. A teacher can amend the norms to include the ways in which she thinks it's important for individuals to participate (e.g., "verbal participation by everyone in small groups").

Norms should be posted in a visible and permanent location.

Revisit the norms frequently, especially in the beginning of the year or as new groups form. Check in on how the group is doing, and add or change norms as the group evolves and new situations arise.

Note: See the Turning Points *Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership*, pages 31–32 for more information on setting norms with adult teams.

SAMPLE GROUND RULES OR NORMS FOR BEHAVIOR

Specify the desired behaviors of cooperative learning groups and hold students accountable for these behaviors

- Stay with your group.
- Use each other's names.
- Use quiet voices.
- Take turns.
- Have each member explain how to get the answer.
- Check to make sure everyone in the group understands the material before moving on.
- Reach consensus on all decisions.
- Criticize ideas, not people.

GROUP PROCESS QUESTIONS

Leave time at the end of each cooperative group activity to debrief the process. This should be done as a group after individuals have had time to write personal reflections (e.g., in their journals).

- How was leadership established?
- Were everyone's ideas heard?
- How did you manage your time as a group?
- What was most frustrating about the experience of working in a group?
- What helped you get your work done? What got in the way?
- How satisfied were you with your group's performance? Why?
- How much influence do you feel you had on your group's performance? Why?
- What role did you play in your group? How satisfied are you with your own participation? Why?
- Give two adjectives to describe how you are feeling right now.

Bibliography

Turning Points Guides (See www.turningpts.org for prices and more information.)

Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School

Design Overview

Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership

Guide to Curriculum Development

Guide to Data-Based Inquiry and Decision Making

Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work

School Structures That Support Learning and Collaboration

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