

National Middle School Association

Understanding Adolescents



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NOTES

Understanding Adolescents

1. The Unique Nature of Young Adolescents

- Desire to feel powerful
- Humor and attention
- Boredom
- Physical Changes and Physical Activity
- Fear and loneliness
- Changes in the brain
- Need for movement
- Constant cravings
- Social and emotional needs
- Dram-ma vs real life drama
- Structure and clear limits
- Creative expression
- Understanding compassion

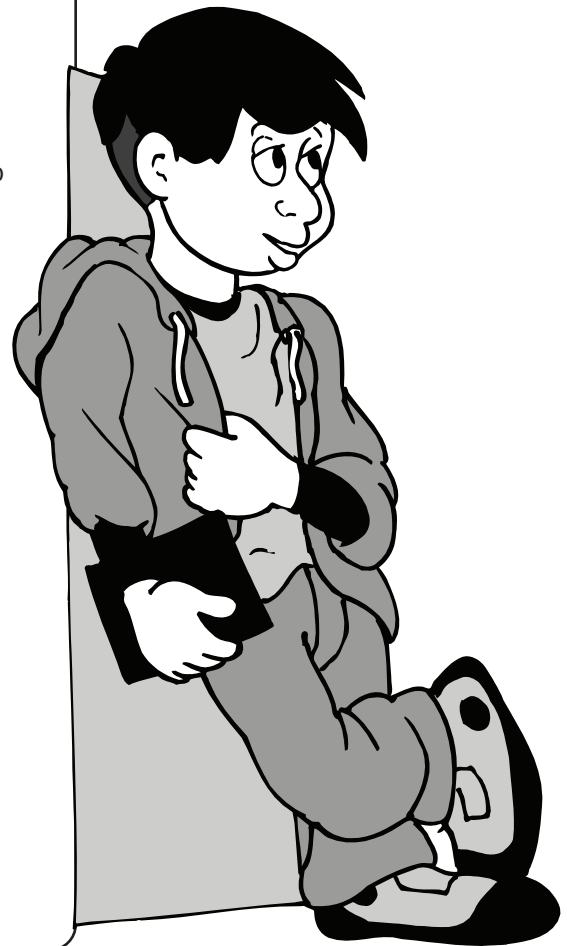
- Listen, then react
- Use of humor
- Reward the positive
- Know your limits
- Consistency
- Policeman attitude
- You elevate they elevate
- Don't stop teaching
- The power of touch
- Understand their life
- Be inviting—Stand by the door
- Relationships
- Let them know they make good company
- Identify rude behaviors
- Wait time, wait time, and more wait time
- Affirmations
- Student work around the room—use the ceiling and floors
- Practice new things in small amounts
- Ownership, ownership, ownership
- I messages
- Follow up discipline, social issues, personal conflicts, and rewards
- Provide options
- Don't be afraid to deviate from the lesson
- Hands on learning—Paper Plates
- Be an advocate



Understanding Adolescents

3. The Middle School Classroom

- The closer the better
- Seating options
- Teacher is always on the move
- Have a phrase that pays—STOP, FREEZE, and LOOK at ME —
"Come to the carpet of love and acceptance"
- Repeat what they say
- Do not multi-task—look at them when they are speaking
- Always ask this question to yourself; "Would I like this class if I were an adolescent?"
- Teacher does the follow up after a discipline action
- Handout procedures—Permission slips, homework, and other items that need passed back
- Use of folders for journals and student work
- Board of missing work and other student updates
- Helpful hints when doing assignments
- Work until the end of the hour
- Eliminate extra credit—add enhancements
- Provide options for learning—Example "Today you need to get to 50 points, "then provide five options with varying point value
- Get to know your activities
- Don't overwhelm the overhead
- Discuss pet peeves—share some of yours
- One place for homework and other items that need to be handed in
- Tubs, buckets, and other storage articles
- Attention signals
- Use of students names when you need attention
- Vocal inflection
- Repeat after me
- Assign student to provide make up work and assignments
- Organization
- Dealing with tardies—guest book
- Keeping your hands clean



The Middle School Classroom

Is your classroom a middle school classroom? Do you provide lessons that meet the needs of young adolescents?

Take some time and list classroom activities and lessons that relate to the characteristics of a middle school student

Characteristic

Classroom Example

Rapid growth changes

Restlessness and fatigue

Need for physical activity

Over use of junk food

Intensely curious

Prefer active over passive learning

Curious about the world

Real life learning situations

Issues that relate to peer-pressures

Issues that relate to morals

Dealing with shades of gray

Compassion for others

Often impatient with pace and setting

See flaws in others very quickly

Vocal about inconsistencies

Preoccupied with self

Seeking independence

Self esteem issues

Personal problems

Self-conscious

Recognition for their positive efforts

The Middle School Classroom *(continued)*

Characteristic

Classroom Example

Strong need for approval

Often over-react

Like fads and current pop culture

Need for time alone

Need for social interactions

Mood swings

Bullying and other harassment issues

Developing new beliefs and attitudes

Seek new academic challenges

Need academic reminders

Seek one on one time with the teacher

Interrupt class at the wrong time

Need to build positive relationships with peers

Need for organizational ideas and strategies

What do young adolescents crave?

- Positive social interaction with adults and peers
- Structure and clear limits
- Physical activity
- Creative expression
- Competence and achievement
- Meaningful participation in families, school, and communities
- Opportunities for self-definition

All of these require successful risk-taking. In order to fulfill their needs, then, we must proactively teach positive risk-taking by overt skill development, personal example, instructional design, classroom atmosphere, and coaching. If we don't teach positive risk-taking and we don't meet the needs, students become alienated from school, lack self-esteem and belonging, and choose destructive methods of coping, including delinquency and drugs. Early adolescence is the last point of effective intervention before the irreversible downward spiral toward self-destruction that can occur if we do not provide a developmentally responsive learning environment. Teaching students how, when, and why to take positive risks is one of the greatest gifts we can teach them

— Wormeli, 2002

Student Behavior Reflection Sheet

Name _____ Class Period _____ Date _____

Describe the situation that happened—

How did your involvement help or hurt the situation?

If you had the chance to do it all over again, what would you have done differently?

What consequences should be given?

What ideas do you have to make sure this situation does not happen again?

Teacher/Team Notes

Consequences given—

Additional comments—

Team Member

Student



Classroom Connections

Linking National Middle School Association to middle level classrooms around the world

Evaluating Your Classroom and Implementing Change

This edition of *Classroom Connections* focuses on how teachers review aspects of their classroom. Taking time to look at how we structure our classrooms is key to improving our teaching. We also need to determine what makes our classrooms successful. How do we take time to review our classroom and how do we implement changes? This edition will help you answer some of your questions and concerns about evaluating and changing your classroom.

Benefits of Evaluating Your Classroom

- Provides opportunities for professional growth
- Allows you to review what is effective in your classroom
- Generates ideas for change
- Ensures that you are in tune with adolescents' needs
- Opens communication with your teammates, mentors, and administrators



Evaluating Your Classroom

Complete this survey by yourself, and then share with your teammate or mentor. You may pick more than one answer.

<p>1. Does the physical aspect of my classroom meet my needs as the teacher, or does it meet the needs of my students? <input type="checkbox"/> meets my needs <input type="checkbox"/> meets my students' needs <input type="checkbox"/> meets both</p> <p>2. How often do I change my teaching strategies? <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> once in a while <input type="checkbox"/> I stick with the same strategies</p> <p>3. Do students reflect on and evaluate my teaching lessons and units? <input type="checkbox"/> only big units, not daily assignments <input type="checkbox"/> I ask informal questions to some students <input type="checkbox"/> I never have students evaluate my lessons <input type="checkbox"/> I would consider having students provide feedback on lessons and units</p> <p>4. Does my team spend time evaluating lessons and units? <input type="checkbox"/> only big units, not daily assignments <input type="checkbox"/> we never spend time evaluating lessons or units <input type="checkbox"/> my team should be evaluating lessons, units, and assignments</p> <p>6. I adapt lessons based on student needs. <input type="checkbox"/> always <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> I need more help in this area</p> <p>8. My class is inviting to adolescents. <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>7. I do the following in my classroom: <input type="checkbox"/> display student work <input type="checkbox"/> create posters and displays <input type="checkbox"/> have students create displays <input type="checkbox"/> make sure adolescent interests and issues are represented <input type="checkbox"/> spend little time on the atmosphere of the classroom</p> <p>8. How is my classroom set up? <input type="checkbox"/> straight rows <input type="checkbox"/> desks and tables <input type="checkbox"/> clusters of desks <input type="checkbox"/> more rows with less depth (Example: 10 rows around the room that are only three desks deep) <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers around the room <input type="checkbox"/> teacher's desk in the center of the room <input type="checkbox"/> places for students to work in groups or individually</p> <p>9. I follow up with students concerning: <input type="checkbox"/> personal issues <input type="checkbox"/> discipline referrals <input type="checkbox"/> academic concerns <input type="checkbox"/> specific assignments</p> <p>10. I have tried the following three new strategies this year: _____ _____ _____</p> <p>11. Five words that describe my classroom: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>
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After reviewing your answers to this survey, answer these two questions.

- What are the strengths of my classroom?
- What areas need change?

Classroom Connections

Ideas for Creating More Effective Middle School Classrooms

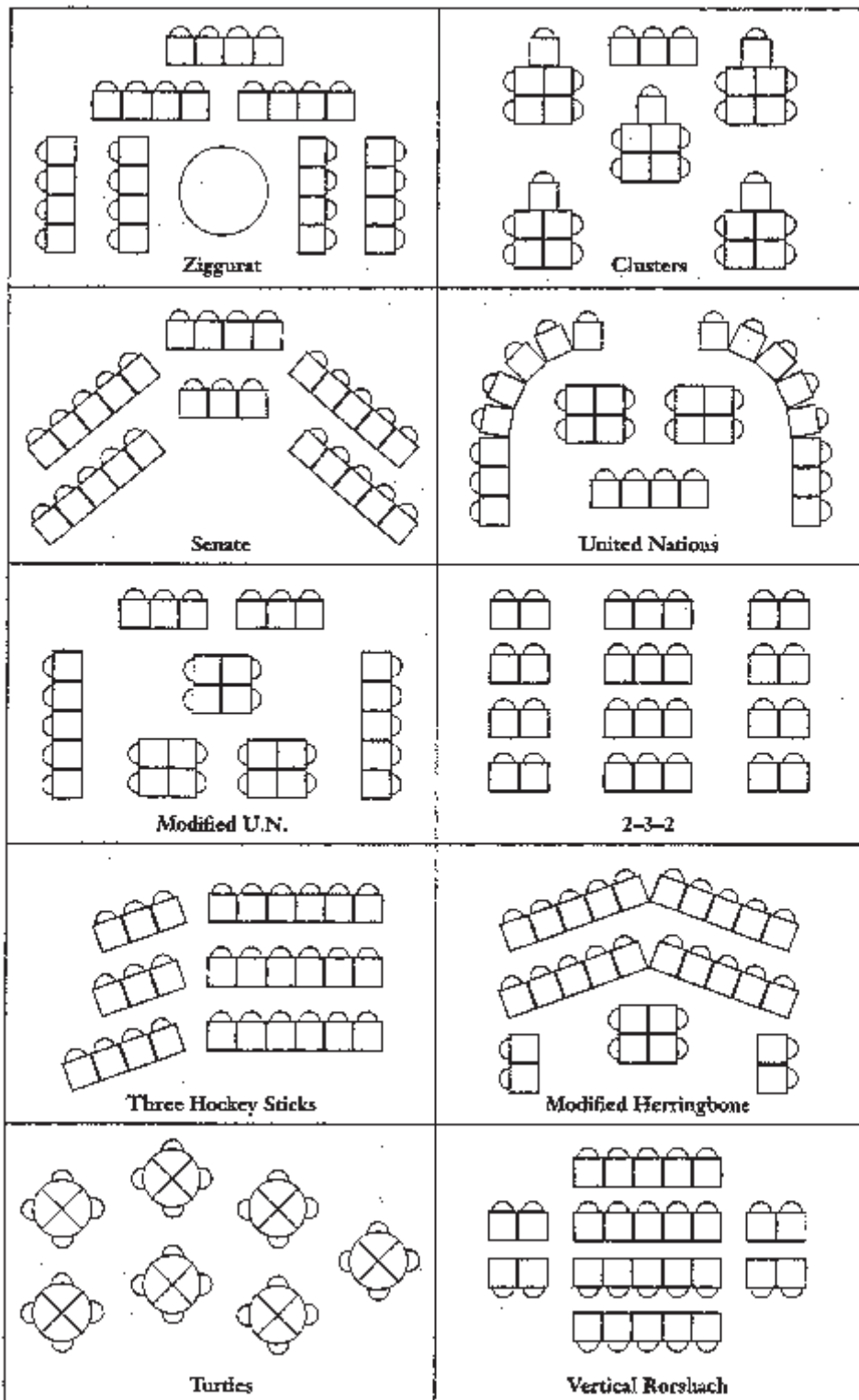


1. Generate a list of the top five teaching strategies you consistently use in your classroom, then share the list with your team. Encourage your teammates to do the same activity. This is a great way to generate a list of the various teaching strategies your team uses. For example, if there are some repetitive strategies that are overused on your team, you can now look to add a few new and different strategies. Working on a team allows you to help each other fill in those teaching gaps.
 2. Review your classroom arrangement. How easy is it for students to work in small groups? Can students find a place in your room to work independently? Is there space for you to have one-on-one conversations with students? Sometimes moving desks around and rearranging the classroom opens up areas and gives you more room to work. Seek student input—they are sure to have some creative ideas on how to organize your classroom. Try to break away from the traditional five rows, seven chairs deep. Set up the room using all wall space to align desks. This allows for a “teaching-in-the-round” format.
 3. There are always new teaching strategies that teachers are expected to understand and implement in their classrooms. At times, this can be overwhelming. Try starting with one new idea and implement it in your favorite or best class. In many cases, these students will be open to new ideas and allow you to make a few errors along the way. Seek the students’ input on how they liked the new teaching strategy. Be ready for all kinds of answers from the students. They might not like it the first time, but after you make some modifications, it may still work. Once you have it down, try it with your other classes.
 4. One of the most effective ways to evaluate your classroom is to videotape yourself teaching. This is a great activity to try. During your personal review of the tape, look for the following:
 - How many students do you call on during the period?
 - Do you stay in one place or walk around too much?
 - Do you call on more boys or more girls? ... More students in the front or in the back of the room?
 - How do you respond to students’ questions? Do you repeat their questions?
 - Watch what students are doing while you are teaching. What motivates them? What causes them to tune out?
 5. If you want to take this process a step further, videotape your entire teaching day. Look for the following:
 - What is your energy level like during first period, third period, and seventh period?
 - What changes do you make to the lesson throughout the day?
 - Do you forget key concepts as the day progresses?
 - Would directions on the chalkboard or overhead have helped the structure of the class?
 - Do students really change throughout the day or do you? Who knows—it might be both!
 - What aspects of your teaching change during the day?
 6. Help students build ownership of the classroom. Set aside an area for students to hang their work or display their projects. Provide a place for them to express their written thoughts about social issues, school concerns, or lessons you have taught, and have them update the area regularly.
 7. Set up a student review committee to discuss your previously taught lessons and units. Give students a voice on what worked and what didn’t. What would they change in the lesson? You can learn a lot from students. Give them an opportunity to review materials and resources. To help with the sharing rotate the committee every quarter or semester. Conducting a student review committee is something you can do four times a year.
 8. Teaching teams should also have an opportunity to evaluate lessons and units. The biggest mistake educators make is not reviewing a lesson as soon as it is completed. It goes back in the file for next year. Take time as a team to review each lesson. Keep in mind the activities that worked and take out the ones that were not effective.
 9. Set a goal to include more manipulatives in your classroom. Try using more learning centers and hands-on activities.
 10. To help increase independent student contact time have students come in a few minutes early or stay after school for a few minutes. Use seatwork time to call students over to your desk to talk about issues. Get prior approval from other teachers and talk with students during your planning time.
 11. Follow up with all students concerning behavior issues, and when you write a student referral, always speak to the student after a consequence is given.

Classroom Connections is published by National Middle School Association (NMSA) as part of our ongoing commitment to middle level education. For more information about NMSA, to purchase multiple copies, or if you have an idea for a future Classroom Connections please call 1-800-828-NMSA, or write to us at 4161 Executive Parkway, Suite 300, Westerville, OH 43081. You can also visit us on the Web at www.nmsa.org. This issue of Classroom Connections was written by Jack C. Berchert, NMSA Assistant Executive Director.

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Classroom Connections



Missing Assignment

Missing Assignment!

Subject: _____

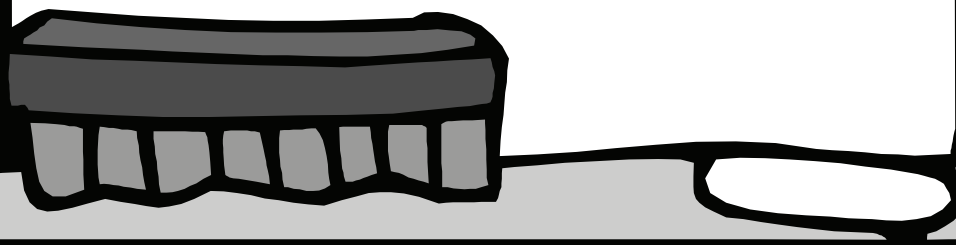
Teacher: _____

Title of work: _____

Student: _____

Student has not turned in the above assignment.

Student Comments: _____



Story Pyramid



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

KEY:

1. Name of main character
2. Two words describing main character
3. Three words describing setting
4. Four words stating problem
5. Five words describing one event
6. Six words describing second event
7. Seven words describing third event
8. Eight words stating solution

Student: _____

Title of Book: _____

Author: _____