

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Audience

Engaging Middle Years Students in Learning: Transforming Middle Years Education in Manitoba is an initiative of Manitoba Education. This resource is intended for use by school and school division leaders, school board trustees, teachers, teacher candidates, and faculties of education. It provides a deeper understanding of and direction for the transformation of Middle Years education in Manitoba in order to maximize student engagement. It is meant to affirm and inspire educators for whom transformation is already underway and to assist others who are beginning the process.

“Transformation requires an interruption to the regularities of school life—a rupturing of the ordinary—that enables teachers and students to ‘see’ alternatives; and it requires, ultimately, a coherent institutional commitment: it will not happen by accidental goodwill or establishing ad hoc projects. It requires new structures, new activities and the rethinking of the internal workings of each institution.”

~ N. Watson and M. Fullan (cited in Fielding and Ruddock 5–6)

An increasing number of Middle Years educators in Manitoba are turning their attention to the question of how to meet the needs of Middle Years learners more effectively. Locally, nationally, and internationally, Middle Years educators are generally in agreement that early adolescence is a unique and special time in students’ lives and that change is needed to transform Middle Years education to meet the needs of Middle Years learners more effectively.

Middle Years educators who understand and support the cognitive, physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, and moral development that occurs during adolescence are better able to provide for the needs of their learners. Schools that offer learning experiences and environments that meet the needs of young adolescents are better able to foster students’ engagement in and commitment to learning.

Key Action Areas to Improve Middle Years Education

Engaging Middle Years Students in Learning: Transforming Middle Years Education in Manitoba identifies and elaborates on five key action steps that Manitoba educators may undertake to improve Middle Years education:

- 🔑 Develop a deeper understanding of young adolescents.
- 🔑 Provide teaching and learning experiences that are more responsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents.
- 🔑 Nurture stronger learning relationships among students, peers, and educators.
- 🔑 Increase opportunities for student voice and choice and support young adolescents in becoming more independent and responsible for their own learning.
- 🔑 Involve parents,* community members, and other stakeholders more purposefully in the education of young adolescents.

* In this document the term *parents* includes biological parents, foster parents, legal guardians, and extended family members. It is used with the recognition that, in some cases, only one parent may be involved in a child's education.