



# Middle Years

## Education in Manitoba

Grades 5 to 8

***Students at the Centre***

*Successful learning in the Middle Years  
has a vital impact on students' high school  
completion and lifelong learning.*

## Middle Years Learners

Middle Years learners are young adolescents, aged 10 to 14, who are at the centre of their Kindergarten to Grade 12 years in school, usually in Grades 5 to 8. They are most engaged and successful in their learning when their needs, strengths, and interests are at the centre of educational planning, instruction, and assessment.

Young adolescents are highly motivated to gain knowledge, skills, and independence and to establish their place in social relationships, in classrooms, and in the world around them. During adolescence, they also experience profound developmental changes. Physical, cognitive-intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual changes occur more rapidly in adolescence than at any other time in life.

As young adolescents experience these developmental changes, they require ongoing understanding and support from teachers, parents/guardians, and the community so that they can learn successfully and live healthy, responsible, and fulfilling lives.

## Physical Development

Middle Years learners experience many physical changes. Every child, regardless of gender, orientation, or age, has a unique pattern of growth and development. Differences in physical development are most noticeable in a Middle Years classroom.

### Middle Years learners

- experience hormonal changes that result in signs of puberty, with girls usually reaching puberty earlier than boys
- may display inconsistent behaviour, restlessness, or fatigue as a result of the rapid physical changes they experience
- become increasingly aware of and concerned about personal appearance and hygiene
- require adequate rest and regular nutrition breaks
- have a need for movement to release energy and to refocus



## Cognitive-Intellectual Development

Middle Years learners exhibit a wide range of intellectual interests, strengths, and needs. They want to be challenged but not overwhelmed or defeated in learning. When a topic interests them or they see a personal connection, young adolescents work hard to gain knowledge and understanding.

### Middle Years learners

- are more engaged when provided with choice and opportunities for hands-on and experiential learning
- are developing deeper abstract thinking skills
- show increasing openness to giving and receiving feedback
- need to develop effective skills and strategies to become more independent and self-directed learners
- respond to explicit teaching about study skills, organization, and time management
- feel a sense of security with established classroom routines
- appreciate special events, celebrations, and rites of passage, such as school assemblies and graduations
- thrive when given an opportunity to explore a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular experiences
- benefit from seeing how their learning in school connects to life outside of school



## Social, Emotional, Moral, and Spiritual Development

Middle Years learners are at a critical time in their lives when they are developing a deeper understanding about who they are and about the world around them. They want to know where they belong and where they can make a difference. Young adolescents want to be independent, but they also want to belong to a peer group. Even though they seek to be independent, young adolescents still desire and need the support of their parents/guardians and teachers.

### Middle Years learners

- value positive relationships with teachers and peers
- have a strong need to belong
- need adults to respect, accept, and appreciate them
- are sensitive to criticism and feelings of rejection
- need positive role models
- are highly focused on themselves and on how they are perceived by others
- begin to be interested in sex and romantic relationships
- search for personal identity, purpose, and spiritual awareness
- want to make a difference in the lives of others
- build resilience by learning and practising positive coping skills
- are influenced by media and popular culture
- may challenge authority and test boundaries
- demonstrate a growing sense of social justice, citizenship, responsibility, fairness, and empathy





## Middle Years Educators

Middle Years educators enjoy teaching young adolescents and believe in their ability to learn. They create safe, engaging, challenging, and flexible learning environments where all students feel they belong and can succeed.

### Middle Years educators

- understand and respond to the strengths and developmental needs of their young adolescent students
- plan collaboratively with team members to support student success
- establish caring and supportive relationships with their students
- are advocates and positive role models for their students
- nurture students' growing independence and decision-making skills
- make connections between curriculum content and its relevance and application to students' lives and the world around them
- provide active, hands-on, and experiential learning experiences
- apply appropriate strategies and interventions to address identified needs
- differentiate instruction and assessment
- infuse technology into the curriculum to connect with more learners and to promote creative and critical thinking skills
- integrate health and wellness practices into the daily life of the classroom
- appreciate the role of humour in learning and engagement
- recognize that successful learning in the Middle Years has a vital impact on students' high school completion and lifelong learning
- build positive relationships with parents/guardians and the community

## The Middle Years Classroom Environment

The Middle Years classroom is an inclusive place that enables everyone to feel accepted, valued, and safe. It accommodates diverse learning needs and ensures equity and access for all students. It is a place where learners of all abilities, genders, cultures, religions, and social groups see themselves included and respected. As well as being welcoming, the Middle Years classroom environment is supportive of learning, exploration, and risk taking.



**Middle Years classrooms** that optimize student learning and engagement include

- organizational structures that support student engagement, productivity, and shared responsibility for the space and the work
- work stations that provide opportunities for students to sit, stand, move, and work independently or in groups
- visible evidence of expectations and learning, including samples of student work that exemplifies both the process and end products
- artifacts that enrich learning and enable students to make real-life connections
- technology that is purposefully used to support student learning, interactivity, and engagement
- print and digital literacy resources that promote inquiry and critical thinking
- a variety of resources that support differentiation and personalization
- design features, such as layout, colour, visuals, and natural light, to improve students' focus and imagination

## Middle Years Environments beyond the Classroom

Middle Years environments beyond the classroom support, enhance, and extend the learning that takes place inside the classroom and have a powerful impact on the development of healthy minds and bodies of young adolescents. Middle Years students look forward to opportunities to be outdoors, explore nature, visit and learn about their community, and connect with others through technology.

**Middle Years environments beyond the classroom** include

- a common area to encourage positive student interactions
- resources to support extracurricular opportunities, such as participation in sports, the arts, student leadership, social justice initiatives, and other student interests
- age-appropriate and accessible equipment to promote physical activity, health, and well-being for all students
- designated areas to display information and examples of student work and achievement
- a library where learners of different reading levels and with varying interests find a wide range of engaging resources
- access to information and communication technology (ICT)
- space to facilitate student support services
- safe and supervised opportunities to spend time outdoors or in the community
- opportunities for education for sustainable development (ESD) or service learning projects
- guests and visitors from the community who share their performances, experiences, or expertise with students



## Middle Years Resources



Refer to the Manitoba Education and Training website for resources to support Middle Years learning and engagement in Manitoba, including the following:

*Middle Years Education in Manitoba: Improving Student Engagement* (Website) [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/midyears/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/midyears/index.html)

- *My Students in the Middle Years* [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/midyears/educators/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/midyears/educators/index.html)
- *My Child in the Middle Years* [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/midyears/parents/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/midyears/parents/index.html)

*Engaging Middle Years Students in Learning: Transforming Middle Years Education in Manitoba* [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/my\\_foundation/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/my_foundation/index.html)

*Five Key Actions to Improve Student Engagement in the Middle Years* (Poster) [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/my\\_foundation/my\\_poster.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/my_foundation/my_poster.pdf)



This brochure is available on the Manitoba Education and Training website at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/my\\_brochure/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/my_brochure/index.html).