

# Section 1: Introduction

## Statement of Philosophy

Strategies and approaches for young people in the middle/intermediate grades should address all learners and take into account their characteristics as developing adolescents, their interests, and their needs as learners.

The learning environment should be student-centred and characterized by care, respect, collaboration, involvement, and engagement on the part of the learner and the teacher.

Strategies can, and should: promote relevance and connection with life outside school; allow learners to take ownership and have a voice in their own learning; promote relationship building among teachers, students, and the community.

## About this Document

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*Teaching and Learning With Young Adolescents: Celebrating Diversity, a Working Document*, is based on the philosophical position described above. Because this position emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature of young adolescent learners, Section 2 deals with the “Adolescent Learner”.

Section 3 outlines the “Theoretical Perspectives” that follow from the statement of philosophy and includes constructivism, multiple intelligences, and brain development.

Both the statement of philosophy and the theoretical perspectives direct the selection of the teaching and learning approaches and strategies described in Section 4. These approaches and strategies are organized under three major headings: *Teachers as Learners*, *Teachers and Students as Learners*, and *Teachers, Students, and the Community as Learners*. The first, *Teachers as Learners*, views the teacher as a continuing learner and includes some examples of ways in which the teacher’s learning can be supported. The second, *Teachers and Students as Learners*, views the classroom as a community of learners in which the teacher and students share in the learning experience and includes examples of how this view of learning can be supported through a variety of approaches and strategies.

The third, *Teachers, Students and the Community as Learners*, examines the community at large and how the school might work to broaden the classroom learning community.

Section 5 provides a list of references and resources used in the preparation of the document. These can provide additional information and support to users.

### ***Using this Document***

At times, documents such as this one tempt teachers to skip to the practical information—the ‘good stuff’—without giving due consideration to theoretical perspectives. It is extremely important, though, to understand why the particular approaches and strategies included in Section 4 have been chosen. As well, if teachers understand the nature of the adolescent learner and the theories underlying the selection of strategies and approaches, then they likely will feel greater confidence in deciding on and developing strategies and approaches for themselves.

It also is important to understand that the suggested strategies and approaches do not constitute an exhaustive list. They have been selected solely because they exemplify the theories described in Section 3, because they are practices which are in tune with the nature of the adolescent learner, and because they help to illustrate the major categories into which Section 4 has been divided.

Finally, don’t feel that you have to use everything suggested in this handbook in order to be a successful teacher of adolescent learners. Rather, see it as a resource from which you can make choices that assist students in attaining the essential graduation learnings. See it, too, as a starting point for some action research—as a way to begin to make change and experiment with different ways of meeting students’ needs.