

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS



NOTES:



The Unique Nature of Young Adolescents

- » Desire to feel powerful
- » Humor and Attention
- » Boredom
- » Physical Changes and Physical Activity.
- » Fear and Loneliness
- » Need for movement
- » Constant cravings
- » Social and Emotional needs
- » Dram-ma vs real life drama
- » Structure and Clear Limits
- » Creative expression



Ideas and Strategies

- » Listen, react or solve
- » Use of humor
- » Reward the positive
- » Know your limits
- » Consistency
- » Policeman attitude
- » You escalate, they escalate
- » 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 ceilings 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
- » Be an advocate



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 7 or 8 options with a 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 student 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 sign in when late

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

Rapid growth changes
Restlessness and fatigue
Need for physical activity
Over consumption 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
Sees 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
Strong need for approval
Often over-react

Classroom Example

The Middle School Classroom, continued

Characteristic	Classroom Example
Likes fads and current pop culture	
Need for alone time	
Need for social interactions	
Mood swings	
Bullying and other harassment issues	
Developing new beliefs and attitudes	
Seeks new academic challenges	
Needs academic reminders	
Seeks one-on-one time with the teacher	
Interrupts class at the wrong time	
Needs to build positive relationships with peers	
Needs 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. 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 on the greatest gifts we can teach them.

— Wormeli, 2002

Activity	Currently Doing	Never Tried	Need More Information
Am I aware of my students' emotional needs prior to starting a lesson or activity?			
Transitions in my classroom are clear and organized?			
I use movement to liven the energy in my classroom?			
Movement in the classroom relates to the content or activity?			
I use personalized stories for humor or to emphasize a point?			
I have a zest for teaching?			
I have used movie clips or other social media examples that relate to a specific topic?			

Activity	Currently Doing	Never Tried	Need More Information
I show interest in my students?			
I understand the fads, fashions, and slang being used by the age group I teach?			
I use student data and information when creating assignments for my students?			
I use debate as a method of teaching?			
I call on students in an organized manner			
I track student progress over a period of time?			
My students set personal goals?			

Activity	Currently Doing	Never Tried	Need More Information
My students set academic goals?			
Do I have appropriate routines for classroom administrative tasks?			
Do I have something for students when they finish their work?			
I address issues such as bullying and students feeling isolated?			
Do I use verbal praise and wise physical contact to show praise?			
Are my lessons filled with current references?			
I think of several ways to question students about the lesson or activity?			

Activity	Currently Doing	Never Tried	Need More Information
Are projects and assignments in smaller amounts or sections?			
I solicit student input on lessons and activities?			
Students offer suggestions to a lesson or activity?			
I find that my energy is different for morning classes than afternoon classes?			
I find other teachers to share teaching ideas?			
I use the space in my classroom effectively?			
I have established reward systems?			
I have set daily classroom routines?			

Student Behavior Reflection Sheet

Name: _____ **Class/Period:** _____ **Date:** _____

» Describe what 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

Missing Assignment

Subject: _____

Teacher: _____

Title of Work: _____

Student: _____

Student has not turned in the above assignment.

Student Comments: _____

Refusal to Work Form

Student Name _____ Subject _____ Date _____

I am choosing to refuse to do the work that the teacher has asked me to do because:

I understand that in choosing to refuse to pay attention and do my work that I am missing out on learning. I also understand that I will email my parent(s) and my teacher to notify them of my choice.

Student Signature

Teacher Signature

☐ Student refused to complete form.



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: _____



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



A nationally recognized presenter, author, and humorist, Jack Berckemeyer began his career as a middle school teacher in Denver, Colorado. After only two years, he was recognized as the outstanding educator at his school and in his district. Then in 2003, Jack received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Falcon School District. Jack has also served as a judge for the Disney American Teacher Awards and has served on the selection committee for the USA TODAY All-Teacher Team. Jack has a master's degree in Middle Level Education as well as an administrator's degree.

For 13 years Jack served as the Assistant Executive Director for the National Middle School Association. He is the owner of Berckemeyer Consulting Group through which he has presented in hundreds of school district and conference settings both nationally and internationally. Jack is known not only for his keynotes and workshops but is also highly regarded as one of the best long-term professional developers in the country. Jack's presentations and instruction are best-practice focused and research-based. He is in high demand and enjoys working with educators and schools.

Jack's recent release (summer of 2025) of *Elements of Effective Teaming* is a comprehensive, on-line, subscription-based curriculum and is a companion piece to *Successful Middle School Teaming* (released in 2022). He is also the author of *Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grades Classrooms* and has written numerous educational articles for AMLE.org. In addition, he co-authored *Deliberate Optimism: STILL Reclaiming the Joy in Education*, with Dr. Debbie Silver (released in 2023).

Jack lives in Denver, Colorado and has no pets, plants, or people.

Contact Jack directly for special pricing!



Successful Middle School Teaming

by Jack Berckemeyer

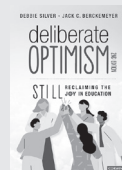
\$24.99



Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grades Classrooms

by Jack Berckemeyer

\$24.99



Deliberate Optimism: STILL Reclaiming the Joy in Education

by Dr. Debbie Silver & Jack Berckemeyer

\$39.95



Elements of Effective Teaming Curriculum

by Jack Berckemeyer

See JackBerckemeyer.com/curriculum for pricing and options



Berckemeyer Activity Book

by Jack Berckemeyer

\$34.99



Webinar Series Yearly Subscription

by Jack Berckemeyer

\$25.00 - Individual
\$500.00 - School



To Order, contact:
Berckemeyer Consulting Group
info@jackberckemeyer.com | www.jackberckemeyer.com

Resources



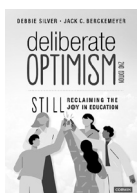
Nuts & Bolts - Never Boring Conferences for Educators

» www.NutsandBoltsSymposiums.com



AMLE - Association for Middle Level Education

» www.amle.org



Deliberate Optimism: STILL Reclaiming the Joy in Education

by Debbie Silver and Jack Berckemeyer

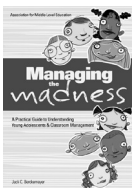
» Available at: www.JackBerckemeyer.com



Successful Middle School Teaming

by Jack Berckemeyer

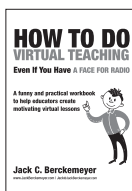
» Available at: www.JackBerckemeyer.com



Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle School Classrooms

by Jack Berckemeyer

» Available at: www.JackBerckemeyer.com



How To Do Virtual Teaching Even If You Have A Face For Radio

by Jack Berckemeyer

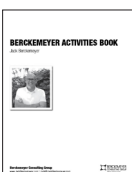
» Available at: www.JackBerckemeyer.com



Webinar Series - School/Individual

by Berckemeyer Consulting Group

» Available at: www.JackBerckemeyer.com



Berckemeyer Activities Book

by Jack Berckemeyer

» Available at: www.JackBerckemeyer.com