



FIVE KEY AREAS

- **Intellectual**
- **Social**
- **Physical**
- **Emotional and Psychological**
- **Moral**

Characteristics of young adolescent **Intellectual Development** include:

- Moving from concrete to abstract thinking.
- An intense curiosity and wide range of intellectual pursuit, few of which are sustained over the long term.
- High achievement when challenged and engaged.
- Prefers active over passive learning experiences.
- Interest in interacting with peers during learning activities.
- An ability to be self-reflective.
- Demand the relevance in learning and what is being taught.
- Developing the capacity to understand higher levels of humor, some of which may be misunderstood by adults to be sarcastic or even aggressive.

Characteristics of young adolescent **Social Development** include:

- Modeling behavior after that of older students, not necessarily that of parents and other adults.
- Experimenting with ways of talking and acting as part of searching for a social position with peers.
- Exploring questions of racial and ethnic identity and seeking peers who share the same background.
- Exploring questions of sexual identity in visible or invisible ways.
- Feeling intimidated or frightened by the initial middle school experience.
- Liking fads and being interested in popular culture.
- Overreacting to ridicule, embarrassment, and rejection.
- Seeking approval of peers and others with attention-getting behaviors.
- As interpersonal skills are being developed, fluctuates between a demand for independence and a desire for guidance and direction

Characteristics of young adolescent **Physical Development** include:

- Restlessness and fatigue due to hormonal changes.
- A need for physical activity because of increased energy.
- Developing sexual awareness, and often touching and bumping into others.
- A concern with changes in body size and shape.

- Physical vulnerability resulting from poor health/dietary habits or engaging in risky behaviors.
- Bodily changes that may cause awkward, uncoordinated movements.

Characteristics of young adolescent **EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT** include:

- Mood swings marked by peaks of intensity and by unpredictability.
- Needing to release energy, with sudden outbursts of activity.
- A desire to become independent and to search for adult identity and acceptance.
- Self-consciousness and being sensitive to personal criticism.
- Concern about physical growth and maturity.
- A belief that their personal problems, feelings, and experiences are unique to themselves.
- Overreacting to ridicule, embarrassment, and rejection.
- Seeking approval of peers and others with attention-getting behaviors.

Characteristics of young adolescent **MORAL DEVELOPMENT** include:

- An understanding of the complexity of moral issues (question values, cultural expressions, and religious teachings).
- Being capable of and interested in participating in democracy.
- Impatience with the pace of change, and underestimating how difficult it is to make social changes.
- Needing and being influenced by adult role models who will listen and be trustworthy.
- Relying on parents and important adults for advice, but wanting to make their own decisions.
- Judging others quickly, but acknowledging one's own faults slowly.
- Show compassion and are vocal for those who are downtrodden or suffering and have special concern for animals and environmental issues.

Sources

1. *At the Turning Point The Young Adolescent Learner: Turning Points Transforming Middle Schools.* www.turningpts.org
2. *Teaching and Learning with Young Adolescents; Section 2: The Adolescent Learner.* www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/sp/intermed/diversity/sec2.PDF
3. *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents.* National Middle School Association.