

St. Louis Graduates March 1, 2012 Talk on Adolescent Development-
by Brett Newcomb, M.A., L.P.C.

Basic developmental concerns:

1. Mirroring: The Heinz Kohut concept of reflecting back to children their emotional and physical reality. Benefit is that they are grounded in their own reality and that they develop a vocabulary which lets them manipulate their environment more accurately and successfully
2. Attention and awareness: Invisible children in classrooms are a result of a failure of the system. Children need to be accurately seen by the adults in their lives. For many of those we teach, we are the adults who have the greatest opportunity to accurately see them. One of the best developmental benefits children receive from you is a relationship which is based on accurate and congruent awareness of them.
3. Challenge and encouragement to grow and take appropriate risks:
 - A. cognitive dissonance offset deliberately but sensitively the drive to homeostasis
 - B. set and demonstrate your own good model. Do you grow? Are you challenged by life to stretch and take appropriate risks? How do you demonstrate this?
 - C. learned helplessness: if we do too much for them, and do not let them fail and experience the consequences of their choices, they learn to just let life happen to them.

Basic Developmental Concerns going into adolescents:

1. Physical Changes (disparate rates) disparate impact
2. Cognitive Process Change: concrete to abstract, metacognition
3. Social Changes: cliques form and peer pressure develops
4. Growth in self ownership and independence: the optimum goal

According to Erik Erickson, adolescents must rework four earlier developmental crises:

1. Establishing Trust
People to have faith in, people to whom one can prove one's own trustworthiness
2. Establishing Autonomy
Choosing one's own path in life instead of going along with decisions imposed by one's parents
3. Taking initiative
Setting goals for what one might become rather than settling for the limited reality that adults have arranged for you
4. Industry
No longer will the child's tasks be set by the teacher or the parents, the relative independence of adulthood carries with it the duty to take responsibility for setting one's own goals and for the quality of one's work

Erickson contends that these are the steps in identity formation that occur in adolescence. Marcia (1966) identifies four patterns of coping with the task of identity formation. They are:

1. Identity Achievement
the adolescent has gone through a series of choices regarding occupation, political or religious commitments, social contacts, and are now pursuing their own path or goals.
2. Foreclosure
Young people who display this pattern are also committed to occupational and ideological positions, but they show no signs of having gone through an identity crisis. They just put on those of their parents.
3. Moratorium
This pattern is displayed by adolescents who are currently experiencing an identity crisis. They claim not to care or not to know what they feel and want.
4. Identity Diffusion
These adolescents have tried out several identities without being able to settle on one that fits them. They are like chameleons who change with their environment.

What does this mean for Teachers:

1. Change within a stable environment must be facilitated. Build a box, let them Roam within it.
2. Modeling of a value system that appears to work.
Teachers are above all else role models. Anger management, impulse control, a sense of what matters, the ability to make difficult choices based on a value system, etc.
3. Creation of a safe holding environment.
Adolescence is a practice environment. We cannot fail to remember that.
4. Not getting lost in the story.
You must know the facts of their life or situation, but remember the box. What are the goals and the lessons that you are teaching?
5. Holding the hands of the parents.
Help them understand what is going on and what they can expect from their children as they go through these cycles. Remember, you see a different child than they do. Remember that even though you are emotionally involved, you are a trained professional. What does your professional training tell you about what the child is going through and what will come next?

Last thoughts about Mirroring:

1. Teachers generally respond more favorable to the students they perceive as high achievers!
High Achievers:
 - a. receive more response opportunities
 - b. get more time to answer questions

- c. are less likely to be ignored
 - d. get more positive non verbal feedback
2. Common ways teachers respond differently:
- a. seat low-expectation students farther away, or seat them in a group
 - b. pay less attention to lows in academic situations
 - c. calling on lows less often
 - d. waiting less time for lows to answer
 - e. not staying with lows in failure situations: providing fewer cues, asking fewer follow-up questions
 - f. criticizing lows more frequently for incorrect public responses
 - g. praising lows more frequently for marginal or inadequate public responses
 - h. demanding less work and effort from lows
 - i. interrupting performance of lows more frequently
3. Guidelines for Effective Praise
- a. it is delivered contingently
 - b. specifies the particulars of the accomplishment
 - c. shows spontaneity, variety, creditability
 - d. rewards attainment of specific performance criteria
 - e. provides information to students about their competence or the value of their accomplishment
 - f. orients students toward thinking about problem solving
 - g. uses students own prior accomplishments as the standards of measure
 - h. is given in recognition of noteworthy success
 - i. focuses their attention on their own task relevant behavior
 - j. attributes success to effort and ability
4. Ineffective Praise
- a. is delivered randomly or unsystematically
 - b. is restricted to global positive reactions
 - c. shows a bland uniformity that suggests a conditioned response made with minimal attention
 - d. rewards mere participation
 - e. provides no information or gives students negative information about their status
 - f. orients students towards comparisons with others and competition
 - g. uses the accomplishments of peers as a standard of measure
 - h. is given without regard to effort expended
 - i. focuses attention on the teacher as an external authority figure who is manipulating them
 - j. distracts attention from task related behaviors.