



# MIDDLE YEARS



River East Transcona  
SCHOOL DIVISION

*creating student success*



# WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE YEARS!

Middle years education is an exciting time when teachers work to instill a sense of hope and optimism in students.

This stage of a young person's life marks a period of important change. Students between the ages of 10 and 15 are undergoing significant physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth. Middle years educators demonstrate a commitment to guiding students through these changes in their lives in ways that inspire them to be positive, productive, socially-conscious and well-informed citizens.

An emphasis on building relationships characterizes the best middle years experience for students. We build strong relationships by:

- knowing our students
- relating to our students
- understanding how our students learn
- investing in our students' communities
- striving to be excellent middle years educators for our students





*“It’s hard not to laugh at least five times a day in a middle school. If you’re not, you could be missing out on a critical aspect of the middle school teaching experience. Enjoy the ups and downs of working with young adolescents—ride the roller coaster ride.”*

(adapted) Jack C. Berckemeyer – Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grade Classrooms (2009): p. 22

## Who are middle years learners?

Middle years learners are a “work in progress,” moving between childhood and adulthood. During this time they undergo significant changes in their physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. A deep understanding of these developmental attributes is essential to foster strong relationships and connections between school staff and students that ultimately lead to a positive school experience.

### Middle years learners are students who...

- experience significant brain growth and development that influence both their actions and interactions with others.
- prefer active and interactive learning that is challenging by design.
- need to be accepted, understood and respected in order to feel comfort, trust and a sense of belonging.
- possess a developing understanding of fairness and justice.
- are dependent upon adults to provide structures, boundaries and rules. as they develop their independence through their curiosity and risk-taking behaviour.
- are preoccupied with self-image and a perceived ability in comparison to others.
- seek social acceptance and validation from both peers and adults.
- are highly social; sensitive to rejection, exclusion and embarrassment.
- demonstrate impulsive behaviour and may not grasp the consequences of their actions.
- are developing abstract reasoning skills in the classroom and beyond.
- exhibit strong emotional highs and lows, requiring compassion and understanding from all.
- benefit from having their ideas, thoughts and opinions valued.
- are developing a capacity to appreciate a more sophisticated level of humour.

*“No matter how creatively we teach, and no matter how earnestly we engage in differentiated instruction, authentic assessment, and character education – the effects will be significantly muted if we don’t create an environment that responds to students’ developmental needs.”*

Rick Wormeli – “Teaching the Tweens” Differentiating for Tweens (April 2006): 14-19



*“Schools are like airport hubs; student passengers arrive from many different backgrounds for widely divergent destinations. Their particular takeoffs into adulthood will demand different flight plans.”*

Dr. Mel Levine

## Who are we?

As professional educators, we are people who consistently pursue and implement current research-based practices. We are flexible, putting the interests of the students ahead of the daily plan. As educators, we are caring, dynamic adults for our middle years students, empowering them and appreciating their diversity. We know a strong commitment to our professional practice will result in a positive school experience for all.

### Middle years educators are people who...

- take risks to foster new instructional practices.
- take a team-oriented approach to teaching and problem solving.
- teach in an inter-disciplinary fashion and develop lessons and units of study that are challenging, integrated and exploratory by design.
- work closely with other adults to best meet the needs of the students.
- model positive and appropriate relationships.
- commit to a process of professional development that enhances our practice.
- reflect on professional practice with the goal of continual growth.
- contribute to a positive school culture through active involvement in the life of the school.
- promote and model healthy and active lifestyles.
- provide students with opportunities to take ownership, take risks and develop leadership.
- develop the skills of co-operation, decision-making and goal-setting within students.
- provide learning experiences that develop resilience and invite curiosity and creativity.
- recognize and work with the diversity in maturation of adolescents.
- are committed to the academic, social-emotional and behavioural success of all learners.

*“I am always ready to learn although I do not always like to be taught.”*

Sir Winston Churchill





*“Your willingness to listen to young adolescents is key to your success as a teacher. Let middle school students know they are valued, and don’t be afraid to smile as you share the precious commodity of time with them.”*

Jack C. Berckemeyer – Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grade Classrooms (2009) p. 19



# What do we need to do for them?

## Relating to the middle years learner

Educators understand that they must be advocates for all students and enjoy being in their presence. Advocacy involves an ethic of caring and concern that is both genuine and continuous; it guides daily interactions with all students and is often non-reciprocal. When teachers advocate for students, they actively support them and take responsibility for providing resources and assistance, if needed. Advocacy is not a singular event or period in the schedule; rather, advocacy is ongoing action.

### Middle years educators need to...

- start everyday as a new beginning.
- collectively foster a climate of respect and caring.
- create positive, meaningful relationships through listening and engaging students in conversations.
- make daily connections with students that focus on their interests, abilities and life circumstances.
- encourage students with frequent, positive and descriptive feedback.
- listen actively to students and value their ideas and concerns.
- show compassion by considering individual needs and circumstances when determining an appropriate course of action to support a student.
- demonstrate an understanding that “fair isn’t always equal” and that each student is unique.
- actively share responsibility for supporting students’ academic and personal development.
- provide a consistent response to students that both supports and redirects learning and behaving.
- hold students accountable for the choices they make without passing a value/judgment.

*“Relationships are all there is.”*

Margaret Wheatley – Turning to One Another (2002) p. 19



*“Effective programs engage young people in a variety of ways, so that they are not just physically present, but intellectually immersed, socially connected, and emotionally centered. Above all, they help them gain a sense of control over their own lives and take an active role in shaping the programs and activities around them through their words and actions.”*

Youth Development Institute, New York

## **Learning in the middle years classroom**

As middle years educators, we engage students through relevant and responsive instruction that incorporates student voice and choice. We provide experiences that honour student diversity, interests and ability. As a result, students assume greater responsibility for their learning, becoming more self-directed and independent.

### **Middle years educators need to...**

- create a structure for collaboration that provides all students with opportunities to interact with others.
- plan and implement developmentally appropriate lessons that use a variety of teaching and learning strategies.
- integrate ethical use of technology with curricular outcomes and teach its responsible use.
- support students to develop socially appropriate behaviour through modelling, explicit teaching and clearly defined expectations.
- foster continual growth by challenging students with appropriate supports.
- incorporate students' own questions, issues and values.
- explicitly teach literacy and numeracy strategies throughout all subject areas.
- allow students to communicate and represent their understanding in multiple ways.
- implement current research-based instruction and assessment practices that emphasize individual growth.
- incorporate goal-setting, criteria-setting and reflective practices for learning.





*“Parents and community members who are involved in the life of the school provide positive interactions with young adolescents and support the school’s efforts in making middle years education more responsive and engaging.”*

Engaging Middle Years Students in Learning, Transforming Middle Years Education in Manitoba (2010), p 27-28

## Community relationships

The building of positive and meaningful relationships among school, family and community is crucial for middle years learners. In order to prepare students to be effective participants in society we, as middle years educators, need to be responsive to the unique needs of individual students, their families and the community.

### Middle years educators need to...

- intentionally create opportunities to welcome families into the school.
- appreciate and accept the diversity that families represent and be sensitive to their needs.
- provide meaningful opportunities for families to be involved in the learning processes of their children.
- involve community supports, including businesses and organizations, to make learning engaging and relevant.
- inspire students to be aware of their potential to effect change in the community and society.
- empower students to strive for active citizenship and social justice both locally and globally.
- facilitate ongoing conversations between home and school which foster the creation of strong, positive relationships.
- educate families about the importance of continued active involvement and support of their children and of the middle years school.

*“The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about children’s families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children’s education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in, and responsibility for, children and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students.”*

Joyce L. Epstein

## VISIT OUR SCHOOLS

There are 12 middle years schools in River East Transcona School Division. Detailed booklets describing course and program offerings can be obtained at each location. Individual school websites can be accessed through the division website ([retsd.mb.ca](http://retsd.mb.ca)).

### **Arthur Day Middle School**

43 Whitehall Blvd.  
204.958.6522  
Grades 6–8

### **Bernie Wolfe Community School**

95 Bournais Dr.  
204.958.6532  
Grades K–8

### **Chief Peguis Junior High**

1400 Rothesay St.  
204.668.9442  
Grades 7–8

### **École Regent Park**

411 Moroz St.  
204.958.6830  
Grades 5–8

### **John G. Stewart School**

2069 Henderson Hwy.  
204.338.3670  
Grades 5–12

### **John Henderson Junior High School**

930 Brazier St.  
204.661.2503  
Grades 6–8

### **John Pritchard School**

1490 Henderson Hwy.  
204.339.1984  
Grades K–8

### **John W. Gunn Middle School**

351 Harold Ave. W.  
204.958.6500  
Grades 6–8

### **Munroe Junior High School**

405 Munroe Ave.  
204.661.4451  
Grades 6–8

### **Robert Andrews School**

3230 Manlius St.  
204.661.5838  
Grades 6–8

### **Salisbury Morse Place School**

795 Prince Rupert Ave.  
204.668.9304  
Grades K–8

### **Valley Gardens Middle School**

220 Antrim Rd.  
204.668.6249  
Grades 6–8







## OUR PURPOSE

The River East Transcona School Division exists to educate students to be inspired, skilled, responsible citizens.

## OUR VISION

The River East Transcona School Division will be forward-looking, innovative, and service-oriented, offering superior, comprehensive programming to meet the emerging needs of our students and community.

## OUR BELIEFS

We exist to serve students and community.  
Everyone is unique and can achieve success.  
Individuals excel where there are high expectations and challenging learning opportunities.  
Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.  
Working together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of our students.  
People thrive in safe and caring environments.

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