Working with the Adolescent Brain

Please note this is considered a Fall 2015 course for reporting purposes, due to the start date occurring before the official start of the UW-Green Bay Spring 2016 semester.

This course is open to middle and high school educators employed with the Plymouth School District.

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Course #: ED & HUD 795-9, section 7411 (#0341D)
Credits: One (1) Graduate Credit
Prerequisite: Graduate Standing (must have earned a bachelor’s degree); this course is open only to Plymouth School District high school and middle school educators.

Schedule: Mondays, January 18; February 15 & 29; and March 28, 2016 (3:00-6:00 PM); and an additional 3 hours of outside class activity time.

Location: Plymouth School District

Course Description: Educators will increase their knowledge about the adolescent brain to better understand the students in their classroom. The course will delve into the science behind what makes up this stage of development. It will teach realistic expectations about the social and academic processes of a teen. Teachers will reflect on how they currently build relationships with students and strategies they can use to improve student engagement.

Course Emphasis and Rationale: The mind process of adolescents is often confusing and frustrating. Not only do adolescents have to deal with the overall growth process, today’s teens face the challenges of the physical (stress, drugs, environmental) and digital (social media, bullying) worlds. Those that work with adolescents often find themselves saying, “What were they thinking?” Understanding the development of the adolescent brain will provide educators strategies in effectively meeting the needs of the individual child. Educators will learn research-based strategies for having a profoundly positive impact on brain development and in guiding of the mastery of new skills and abilities.

Course Objectives:
● Participants will explore adolescent brain research.
● Participants will gain knowledge on the importance of student/teacher relationship building to impact learning.
● Participants will learn strategies to build relationships.
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- Participants will learn community building activities to create a positive school climate.
- Participants will learn different strategies and approaches when meeting the needs of students.
- Participants will gain knowledge on how educator collaboration/communication impacts student success.
- Participants will create a shared resource bank of strategies and experiences.
- Participants will reflect on their practice and pedagogy and how it impacts student learning.

Required Readings:

Sturtevant, J.A. (2014). *You’ve gotta connect: Building relationships that lead to engaged students, productive classrooms, and higher achievement*. Incentive Publications.

Siegel, D.J. (2014). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*. Tarcher.

Additional Possible Resources:


Articles:


Course Requirements:

- Attendance
- Active participation
- Learning activities which will include reading, discussion, design exercises, and peer critique
- Creation and presentation of a course project

Evaluation and Assessment:

- Guest Blog Writer – Create blog post to be shared with district staff – 30%
- Participation in class and online discussions - 20%
- Reflection and future goals - 20%
- Reflective Project (poster, infographic, comic) - 30%
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Assessment Descriptions:

- **Blog Post** - Participants will create a blog post about an activity they tried, one they might want to try, newly learned content from the class (anything you would find beneficial to share with other staff members) to be posted on a district blog.
- **Participation in class and online discussion** - Participants will contribute to discussion in class and respond to other participants’ posts in the resource portfolio providing constructive feedback and criticism.
- **Reflection and future goals** - Participants will be required to reflect after each face-to-face meeting and create goals for implementing their learning after course completion.
- **Reflective Project** (poster, infographic, comic) - The poster will be a reflection and the biggest takeaway from the course. The goal of this project is to provide the participants with a resource that they can post in their work area as a daily reminder of best practices, understanding, and patience with the students with whom they work. The poster can be shared to impact other educators and parents on their knowledge of the adolescent brain.

Outline:

**Monday, January 18 (3:00-6:00 PM) -- Getting Connected and Acceptance**
- You’ve Gotta Connect Chapters 1-2
- Why should I care?
- What can I do to impact student learning and success?
- Benefits and challenges of Adolescence
  - Mindset and Myths
- You’ve Gotta Connect Read Chapter 5

**OUTSIDE Class Activity (1 hour)**

**Monday, February 15 (3:00-6:00 PM) -- Communication**
- Communication verbal/nonverbal (You’ve Gotta Connect Chapters 3-4)
- Brainstorm part 1
- Collaboration
- You’ve Gotta Connect Read Chapter 6

**OUTSIDE Class Activity (1 hour)**

**Monday, February 29 (3:00-6:00 PM) -- Social / Emotional Health**
- Media/technology
- Risk taking/impulsive behaviors
- Brainstorm part 2
- Discuss Blog Post
- Discuss Reflective Poster

**OUTSIDE Class Activity (1 hour)**

**Monday, March 28 (3:00-6:00 PM) -- Reflection of Learning**
- Collaboration
- Advocacy
Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure

1. Teachers know the subjects they are teaching.
The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines she or he teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for pupils.

2. Teachers know how children grow.
The teacher understands how children with broad ranges of ability learn and provides instruction that supports their intellectual, social, and personal development.

3. Teachers understand that children learn differently.
The teacher understands how pupils differ in their approaches to learning and the barriers that impede learning and can adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including those with disabilities and exceptionalities.

4. Teachers know how to teach.
The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies, including the use of technology, to encourage children's development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

6. Teachers communicate well.
The teacher uses effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques as well as instructional media and technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

9. Teachers are able to evaluate themselves.
The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on pupils, parents, professionals in the learning community and others and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

Updated 10/19/15 by D. Budrecki; finalized 10/21/15 - CL