

Foreword

Education is a vast and complex set of interactive processes for teachers and students alike. Teachers have the daily challenge of educating and preparing students' minds and talents for what lies ahead. Teachers must also remain current with new discoveries in how different age levels learn and understand how to translate these findings into viable classroom procedures. Students must learn to understand each new level of the curriculum and how to use these new understandings to progress to the next level.

These challenges and classroom procedures are perhaps most difficult with adolescents. Many parents fear the onslaught of adolescence in their children. Many teachers believe they should receive hazardous duty pay for teaching adolescents. Adolescence is for many—adolescents, parents, and teachers alike—a time of turmoil, rapid growth and learning, as well as shifting emotions and searching for personal and social identities. But, at the same time, adolescence is a time when new capabilities open new vistas and learning opportunities. It is a time when learning levels increase in dramatic fashion. It is a time when intellectual, social, emotional, and academic development is ripe for blossoming. During these often tumultuous years, adolescents need a trusted guide and a haven for exploring new learning, as they begin to understand their needs, interests, and changing emotions and come to grips with their personal identities.

Glenda Crawford addresses these issues in an integrated and interactive manner in this book. The primary focus of the book is how to improve learning in adolescents. This is, obviously, a complex task that demands learning and understandings from a variety of areas. She treats these issues in a concise and understandable manner. She integrates those important factors that impact adolescent learning and development that mutually interact with teachers of adolescents in their efforts to assist their students' continuing development.

Dr. Crawford also identifies and addresses critical new findings. These include recent brain research centered on changes occurring in adolescent brain structure that allow more reasoned emotional judgments and social controls in adolescents. She also discusses how brain operations affect learning in adolescents. She describes the importance and need for having a safe and secure classroom for learning where each individual student is respected by the teacher and peers alike. The importance of a classroom climate that encourages and supports learning and emotional/social development is strongly related to an adolescent's need for academic understanding and personal meaning.

Dr. Crawford goes beyond just describing these critical issues and discussing how they are interrelated. Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a model, she describes how differentiated instructional approaches can capitalize on student variability to maximize learning in all students. She provides excellent instructional techniques that are consistent with brain function, effective learning, the UDL principles of differentiated instruction, and the developmental needs and interests of adolescents.

Two other elements of this book need to be noted. First, Dr. Crawford discusses how the principles of UDL can be used effectively with three types of student groups: fast learners, English language learners, and those that may have learning challenges. She assumes that most classrooms will have students from each of these groups in them. The suggestions for curriculum and instructional approaches are practical and possible for all teachers and, in fact, can be used in any classroom.

Second, Dr. Crawford utilizes technology extensively in her suggestions for implementing UDL in classroom instructional practices. Her suggestions and the many technological references she provides offer a teacher of adolescents a rich and varied set of excellent resources.

This is a must read book for teachers of adolescents. It would also be an excellent guide for parents and parents-to-be of adolescents.

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Glenda Beamon Crawford's experiences with young adolescent learners span nearly thirty years. She has taught Grades 4 through 12 and currently coordinates the Middle Grades Education Program at Elon University where she is a professor. She has written three books, one in its second edition, and published several articles on structuring classrooms for adolescent thinking and learning. Dr. Crawford consults and presents regularly at state, national, and international conferences. She has conducted professional development in Tajikistan and has taught in London and at Southeast University in the Peoples Republic of China. Her research and teaching honors include the 2002 North Carolina Award for Outstanding Contribution to Gifted Education and the 2004 Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the School of Education at Elon University.