

When the Only Constant is CHANGE!

What is Change?

Most middle school teachers spend countless hours studying the developmental changes that every middle school student undergoes during their preadolescent years. In doing so, it becomes quickly evident that with middle schoolers, change is the only constant. This therefore requires a developmentally responsive school as well as curriculum. Because of this constant study of developmental change, many teachers do a phenomenal job at addressing the developmental needs of students. However, there is one need in particular that I have observed is often left out. While educators are prepared to understand developmental domains and the rapid changes that come with that change leading to displays of particular behaviors, needs, and desires across all domains, I have noticed that most students, though they are the ones experiencing the change, fall short of that same knowledge that we as educators have. From observations in previous education courses as well as a child study performed in my middle school philosophy class, I noticed that many students leave their middle school years proclaiming them as their worst years of life because they simply never understood the “symptoms” they were displays as after effects of their development growth. For this reason, I propose that students developmental needs should not only be address in curriculum and school programs but that students themselves should be taught to embrace change as an opportunity for growth.

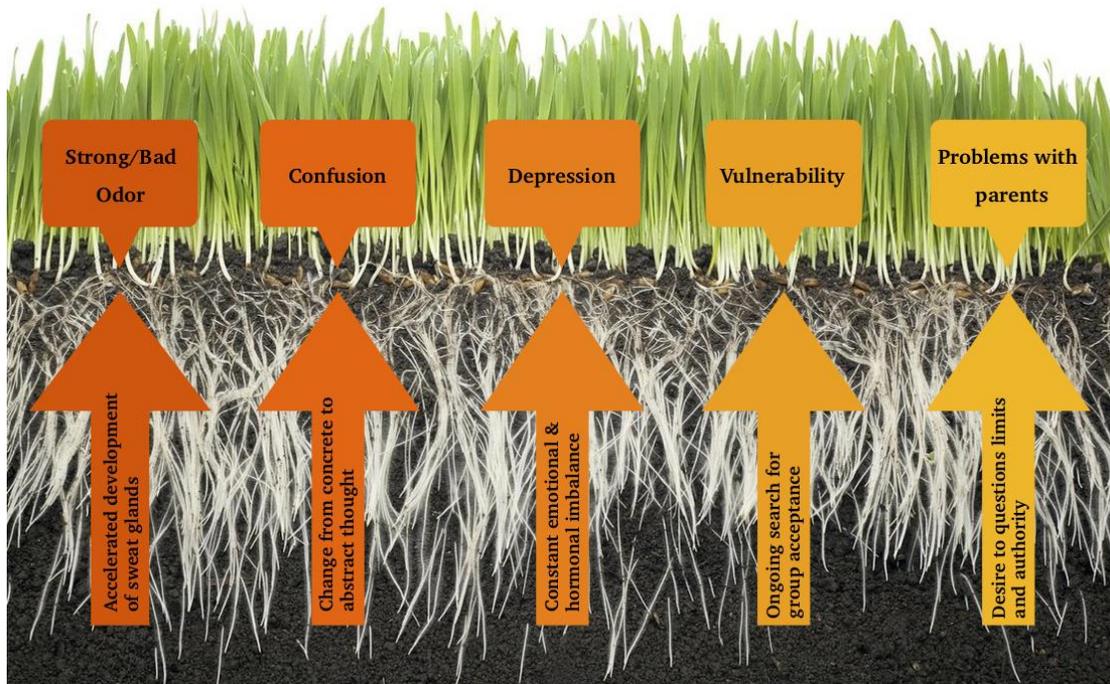
Musings is circulated by the Campbell University's Middle Grades Program of Study.

For more information, to contribute or to get on the direct mailing list, contact Dr. Lorae Roukema at roukema@campbell.edu.

Looking Deep

Every child is a beautiful garden. Over the years, seeds that are planted begin to grow and blossom. However, many times, there are weeds that grow around the beautiful flowers of growth and knowledge. These weeds reduce productivity by invading plants around them and smothering open areas while aggressively competing for water, nutrients and sunlight, resulting in reduced plant yield and quality. Weeds can easily be cut but unless they are uprooted, they will continue to grow and soak up nutrients from the plants around them. Many times, as young preadolescents transition into middle school, they are like a garden that is starting to grow. However, in the midst of this growing, weeds often begin to grow as well; they can be the forms of emotional turmoil, insecurities, disorganization, peer acceptance, fatigue, acne, etc. All of these weeds begin to consume the attention of preadolescents leaving the beautiful plants and flowers around the weeds without nutrients to grow, and sadly, this often occurs without our students even realizing it. Let's take a look at a garden example!

Middle Grades Musings



Let's Rewire

From my observations, students often find themselves in stressful emotional, social, moral, <insert other domains here> situations simply because they do not understand what is happening in their bodies as much as we as educators do. Students see the symptoms, but do not know the roots and therefore shift their energy from growing healthy plants to having to deal with the weeds instead. Students need to be taught to embrace change as an opportunity for growth by knowing what lies beneath the surface of their developmental symptoms. It is in the midst of change that they will be able to find the roots of their weeds and cut off their source of nutrients therefore returning it to the plants and flowers. However, to embrace such a paradigm shift, they must first be taught to look deep. Every symptom comes from a root. As students begin to understand their developmental changes at a deeper level, they will be able to process the change and continue growing into beautiful gardens of knowledge. For example, let's teach students to not only see the acne on their forehead but to instead understand the changes their body is experiencing by using this change as a time to grow into healthier and more complete adults by making healthy food and exercise choices! Ultimately, let's educate our students to rewire their thinking by knowing that *change* is what allows us *grow*. Henceforth, what better time is there to grow than.....

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