

Instructional Approaches to Support Adolescents

Dual enrollment is when high school students take college courses. This approach provides students with early exposure to college experiences and coursework while still in a supportive high school environment. Dual enrollment offers educators a unique opportunity to examine and refine instructional practices because it brings together pedagogical strategies suited for adolescents with the demands of higher education. This blending of educational frameworks invites educators to consider how best to support adolescent developmental needs by fostering development of identity, encouraging community involvement, and offering structured opportunities for risk-taking in a safe environment.

Instructors who are new to dual enrollment often ask for professional development on pedagogy for adolescents. Because adolescence spans a wide range, from age 10 to age 25, pedagogy designed for high school students can be helpful for instructors in their on-campus classes as well. In the video [Stages of Adolescent Brain Development](#), Dr. Adriana Galván, Director of the Galván Laboratory for Developmental Neuroscience at UCLA, describes key developmental stages and needs. Studies of adolescent brain development tell us that adolescents have particular needs that instructors should support in the classroom experience. The chart below describes these needs and offers examples of classroom approaches to meet those needs. See also: Galvan, Adriana. *The Neuroscience of Adolescence* (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Developmental Need of Adolescents	Classroom Approaches
Warmth and support from adults who are caring.	Build in class time to check in with students and allow for authentic interaction. For example: Start class with check-in questions or end with quick writes that reflect on the assignment, and then follow up with individuals.
Being able to define their sense of identity, personal goals, and values through experiences.	Create assignments that allow students to learn about and explore their own culture. For example: Ask students to interview family or community members about important family or historical events or concepts covered in class.

Developmental Need of Adolescents	Classroom Approaches
Ways to develop both meaning and purpose by contributing to communities, families, and peers.	Develop projects that involve families and communities such as service learning or family or peer interaction. For example: Students could teach a concept from the class to a friend or family member and ask that person to write a summary of the concept.
Real world scenarios to help build decision making skills.	Develop projects that utilize data about local issues. Assign projects with real-world audiences emphasizing the importance of managing time and meeting deadlines. For example: Have students write a blog on topics and projects in the course, and ask experts in the field to read and comment on the blog.
Safe ways to explore the world and take risks.	Create situations and assignments where students can take risks. For example: Have students identify in-class strategies for success that they want to challenge themselves to try, such as sitting in the front or raising their hand more often.
Positive ways to earn respect and social status from both adults and peers.	Create assignments where students can meaningfully contribute through service learning or classroom interaction. For example: Volunteering at an animal shelter or going to a city council meeting.

Career Ladders Project is deeply grateful to Dr. Adriana Galván, Director of the [Galván Laboratory for Developmental Neuroscience at UCLA](#), for review of this publication.

Produced by Career Ladders Project with funding from the Sacramento K-16 Collaborative.