

Teaching Between: Reimagining Learning for the Transition from Childhood to Adulthood

Overview

Teaching Between argues that many forms of adolescent disengagement are not failures of motivation, but evidence of developmental transition. As learners move toward adulthood, they increasingly seek relevance, autonomy, identity formation, and experiential meaning-making. Yet educational systems continue relying on instructional assumptions designed for dependency-oriented childhood cognition. The result is a widening mismatch between emerging adult brains and institutional learning structures. This book proposes immediate solutions, new visions for the future, and a very human take on these complex systems.

Chapter Outline

1. The Problem Students are Asking us to Fix
 - a. The problem of motivation created by a lack of relevance in teaching methods and content considerations is often mistaken for a disruption.
2. Getting it Right in Elementary School
 - a. The stellar good examples of applying pedagogy in elementary schools
3. Emerging Cognitive Gaps in Middle School
 - a. The effective middle school example, where the intervention to cognitive needs starts to move out of the classroom.
4. Realized Motivational Crisis in High School
 - a. The struggling model that focuses too much on college preparation and not enough on development needs.
5. Missing the Mark in Undergrad
 - a. The floundering model that attempts to use low quality adult methods for scale and pacing but loses the opportunity to respond to developmental needs.
6. Reversing the Trend in Adult Learning
 - a. The business model that exists in a different world but still contributes to the reasons behind our existing strategies and has answers to the problems.
7. Metaxagogy and Teaching Between
 - a. A practitioner's model and guide to changing teaching methods in the classroom.
8. If Relevance was the Goal
 - a. Imagining a future where the institutions optimized towards a new relevance and identity driven experience.
9. Institutional Change
 - a. Why innovation in educational settings is hard and slow to be adopted.
10. We are Doing this Already
 - a. Examining where progress is underway and ideas have already been tested.

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11. The purpose of Education

a. The inspiring conclusion

Audience

The primary audience for Teaching Between consists of educators of future teachers, secondary teachers, undergraduate faculty, and educational thought leaders. Those who are currently working with learners in transitional developmental stages between childhood and adulthood, particularly ages 12–24, will get the most out of the material.

Core readership segments include:

- Secondary educators (grades 6–12)
- Undergraduate instructors and faculty
- Graduate education students
- Teacher preparation programs
- Instructional designers
- Educational leadership professionals
- Learning and development practitioners working with emerging adults

The book is particularly positioned for readers seeking frameworks that bridge adolescent development, adult learning theory, neuroscience, and instructional design.

Market Analysis

Current educational literature tends to separate instructional philosophy into two dominant categories:

- pedagogy, associated with child learning,
- and andragogy, associated with adult learning.

However, comparatively little literature addresses the developmental transition period in which learners increasingly seek autonomy, identity integration, relevance, and experiential application while still operating within structured educational systems.

As a result, educators working with adolescents and emerging adults lack a cohesive framework for adapting instruction to developmental shifts occurring between secondary education and adulthood.

Teaching Between positions itself within this unresolved space.

Why Now?

The book enters ongoing conversations surrounding:

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- student disengagement in secondary and postsecondary education
- learner autonomy
- workforce preparation
- relevance-centered instruction
- neuroscience-informed teaching
- and developmental approaches to educational design

Educational institutions increasingly face pressure to prepare learners for adaptive, self-directed participation in rapidly changing social and professional environments. At the same time, many instructional systems continue relying on models originally designed for highly structured child-centered learning environments.

This tension creates growing demand for frameworks capable of addressing transitional learning stages between dependency and self-direction.

Selling Potential

The book is positioned for use in:

- graduate education seminars
- teacher preparation coursework
- instructional design programs
- educational leadership programs
- adolescent development courses
- and professional learning communities

Rather than functioning as a traditional textbook, the manuscript is designed as a discussion-oriented conceptual framework text appropriate for supplemental assignment in graduate and professional education settings. I want to put in the same classrooms as the comparable titles.

Comparable Titles

Drive — Daniel H. Pink

Drive popularized discussions of autonomy, mastery, and purpose in learning and work. However, its focus is motivational psychology rather than developmental instructional philosophy. *Teaching Between* extends these ideas by examining how educational systems fail to adapt instruction during adolescence and emerging adulthood.

The End of Average — Todd Rose

Rose critiques standardized educational systems and advocates for greater recognition of learner variability. *Teaching Between* similarly challenges institutional assumptions but focuses

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specifically on developmental shifts toward autonomy, identity formation, and relevance-seeking learning.

Brainstorm — Daniel J. Siegel

Siegel reframes adolescence as a period of neurological growth and opportunity. While *Brainstorm* centers on psychological and relational development, *Teaching Between* applies these developmental insights directly to instructional philosophy and educational design.

Age of Opportunity — Laurence Steinberg

Steinberg synthesizes neuroscience research to highlight adolescence as a critical developmental stage. *Teaching Between* builds upon similar research but focuses specifically on how educational systems should adapt instructional approaches during this transition.

The Smartest Kids in the World — Amanda Ripley

Ripley examines high-performing international educational systems and instructional cultures. Unlike its comparative and journalistic focus, *Teaching Between* centers on developmental learning theory and the instructional transition between pedagogy and andragogy.

Why Don't Students Like School? — Daniel T. Willingham

Willingham applies cognitive science research to classroom instruction and student engagement. *Teaching Between* expands this discussion beyond cognition to include identity development, learner autonomy, and developmental transitions in instructional philosophy.

The Adult Learner — Malcolm Knowles

Knowles established the foundational principles of andragogy and adult self-directed learning. *Teaching Between* positions itself within the gap between pedagogy and andragogy by focusing on learners transitioning toward adulthood but still operating within structured educational systems.

Make It Stick — Peter C. Brown

Make It Stick synthesizes research on retention, retrieval, and evidence-based learning practices. While focused on cognitive performance and study strategies, *Teaching Between* addresses broader developmental and philosophical questions surrounding learner maturation and instructional design.

Academically Adrift — Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa

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Arum and Roksa critique limited intellectual growth and engagement in higher education.

Teaching Between complements these concerns by examining whether instructional models fail to align with the developmental needs of emerging adult learners.

Teaching to Transgress — Bell Hooks

Hooks advocates for engaged, liberatory, and human-centered teaching practices that emphasize agency and participation. While grounded primarily in critical pedagogy and social philosophy, *Teaching Between* focuses more directly on developmental neuroscience and instructional transitions between childhood and adulthood.

Distinct Contribution of the Manuscript

Existing educational literature typically examines pedagogy, adolescent psychology, workforce readiness, neuroscience, or adult learning separately. *Teaching Between* synthesizes these domains into a unified developmental framework for learners transitioning between childhood dependency and adult self-direction.

Teaching Between contributes a developmental instructional framework positioned between pedagogy and andragogy, integrating:

- adolescent and emerging-adult neuroscience
- identity development
- instructional design
- motivational theory
- and systems-level educational analysis

About the Author

Nathan Shehorn was once a middle school and high school teacher in rural Iowa, who became an adult educator in Oregon. After 22 years of working in the field of education with every age bracket from 5–70-year-olds, he hopes to turn his experience across the larger system into tools for real educators in every classroom.

Additional Details

Manuscript Word Count: 35175

Estimated Completion Date: Book is effectively complete, minus a professional editor.