



Yale-New Haven  
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume IV: How We Learn about the Brain

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## **How We Learn about the Brain: Teaching the Infant Brain**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.04.04  
by Jennifer B. Esty

The unit is structured to follow the development of the brain and nervous system of a child from just after conception through about age five. This time period covers most of the more interesting developments in brain structure and function. The timeline allows for an organized way to study a very complex set of structures. It is intended for high-school anatomy and physiology students although aspects of it could certainly be used to teach anatomy and physiology to younger students. Because the unit covers the time period before birth, it will necessarily include some aspect of embryology. However, the unit continues with brain development in neonatal infants through a child's entry into kindergarten. As a result, it also includes information on the development of the senses as well as the development of skills, such as motor, social, language and math skills, that children need to succeed in school.

The unit also includes several ideas for classroom implementation. These lesson suggestions include a project for the students to create a book designed to teach young children the skills they are ready to learn at a particular age. This is a project that might translate well to younger grades if it is simplified for them.

(Recommended for Anatomy and Physiology, grades 11-12, and Parenting, all grades)

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