



DEVELOPMENTAL DESIGNS®

## Informational Packet prepared by ORIGINS

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### **DEVELOPMENTAL DESIGNS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

#### **Purpose**

To appropriately meet the combination of social, emotional, physical, moral, and intellectual needs of young adolescents, *Developmental Designs for Middle School* offers an array of strategies designed to keep young people safe, connected, responsible, and engaged in learning. Our approach is based on our research-grounded belief that healthy, enjoyable relationships are the foundation for success in school. In order to establish and maintain those relationships, teachers must know their students, students must come to know and appreciate each other, clear parameters for acceptable behavior must be drawn and consistently maintained, and learning must be active, exploratory, relevant, and varied.

#### **Challenging Developmental Stage**

Middle school is a time of enormous physical change. It is also the dawn of the capacity to think conceptually, and a time of great curiosity about life, the world, and peers. It is a time of preoccupation with self, when many young adolescents are full of self-doubt. At this time of insecurity, young people are taken from the safety of self-contained classrooms and asked to switch focus, environment, and teachers every 50-90 minutes. It is a time when some young adolescents declare family to be irrelevant to what's really happening, and yet family has never been more important. In middle school, students whose bones are rapidly growing and realigning, whose proportions seem designed for anything but desks, are asked to sit all day, often without an opportunity to do what their bodies and nerves are asking for most—move!

In the *Developmental Designs* approach, we draw from Rudolf Dreikurs, Abraham Maslow, William Glasser, and the recent work of psychologist Edward Deci. Here are four needs that must be fulfilled in order to engage young adolescent minds and hearts in learning—social *or* academic:

#### **Four developmental needs**

✧ Relationship: *I want to connect with others.*

To reduce fear and aloneness, young adolescents need to build and maintain relationships that provide a safe context in which to make mistakes. These relationships focus on peers in a way that they never have before, but they also include powerful and reliable adult support. Young adolescents can't make it alone!

✧ Autonomy: *I want to be independent.*

The adolescent drive to function separate from adults is a powerful motivator. It works for school success when it drives middle level students to show that they can be given big responsibilities and freedom, but against success when it turns into rebellion. They need maps from caring adults to help them find their own way.

✧ Competence: *I want to experience success in what I do, and feel like a worthwhile, significant person.*

Young adolescence feels like a make-or-break time for young people, a time when you have to demonstrate that you've got the right stuff or be seen as a loser. Adult scaffolding can make a crucial difference.

✧ Fun: *I want to have a good time.*

The need for pleasure drives much adolescent behavior. Students will find their own fun during school hours (and sometimes pay a big price for it) if adults don't channel the need constructively.

### **Six Principles of *Developmental Designs for Middle School***

The DDMS approach is founded upon six researched principles of good practice that form the core of successful teaching and learning:

1. Social learning is as important to success as academic learning.
2. We learn best by constructing our own understanding through exploration, discovery, and application.
3. The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interactions within a supportive community.
4. There is a set of personal/social skills that students need to learn and practice in order to be successful socially and academically: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control
5. Knowing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs of the students we teach is as important as knowing the content we teach.
6. Trust among adults is a fundamental necessity for academic and social success in a learning community.

### **What Does *Developmental Designs* Look Like in a School?**

What does a middle school look, feel, and sound like when adolescent needs are met appropriately? A school implementing *Developmental Designs* makes respectful, caring relationships a high priority. Every day begins with a homeroom in which students circle up to greet each other respectfully, share what's happening in their lives, and sometimes move around a bit in activities that teach important skills in a lively way. The morning meeting (we call it the Circle of Power and Respect) helps students make the transition from home to school and establishes a clear path into the learning day.

Transitions between classes are taught and practiced, as are all the routines of the school day. Nothing is taken for granted; everything is modeled and rehearsed. The goal is the development of self-control through proactive strategies that put the emphasis on the prevention of rule-breaking. Also carefully introduced and consistently upheld are consequences for all rule-breakers, no matter who, and no matter how small the infraction. The consequences clarify the expectations, provide a chance to restore order, safety, and relationship, and maintain the dignity of the rule-breaker.

Each class the students attend uses the same language and routines to preserve a caring community. Each class has an opportunity for students to get to know each other, to do meaningful work, and to reflect on work afterwards. There is respect for the environment and materials. There is closure for students and teachers at the end of each period and at the end of the day. Students ask and answer open-ended questions. They have frequent opportunities to help design and make choices in assignments that

are meaningful to them. There is a balance in each class between teacher-directed lessons and independent and group work on skills and projects.

## New Research for Developmental Designs

Origins is working with Dr. David Hough, Dean College of Education, Missouri State University, and Director, Institute for School Improvement. He has extensive experience with evidence-based program evaluation and research. Previously the editor of *Research in Middle Level Education* for the National Middle School Association for twelve years, Dr. Hough is now the founder and editor-in-chief of the *Middle Grades Research Journal (MGRJ)*.

Dr. Hough will implement a three-phased research and evaluation approach for *Developmental Designs*: **Phase 1** assesses the effectiveness of DDMS training and consulting by examining teacher implementation.

**Phase 2** is a descriptive study looking at and describing all schools who have trained teachers in DDMS.

**Phase 3** combines Phases 1 and 2 to establish an evidence-based comprehensive research study examining *Developmental Designs'* impact on student, teacher, and school outcomes.

## DEVELOPMENTAL DESIGNS WORKSHOPS

DDMS offers training to help educators develop and hone practices integrating social and academic learning in the following fundamental areas:

### **Community-building**

- Advisories that build relationship and establish trust
- Setting and maintaining goals
- School-wide social contracts
- Modeling routines
- Social-skills development
- Encouraging language
- Structured play

### **Engaged learning**

- Constructivist approach
- Engaging lesson design
- Strategies for cooperative group work
- Routines to support rigorous learning
- Probing and reflective language

### **Needs-based behavior management**

- Pathways to self-control
- Redirecting strategies
- Development of responsible independence
- Problem-solving structures
- Redirecting language

Where to Begin (detailed workshop descriptions are provided below)

✓ **Read more about *Developmental Designs***

www.OriginsOnline.org contains introductory information about *Developmental Designs*. Within the area of the site dedicated to the approach, explore articles to find in-depth and practical ideas about implementing the DD approaches; reading them will give you a better understanding of what teaching and learning in a DD school is like. The site also offers hundred of teaching ideas and activities to support implementation. Read *Developmental Designs: A Middle School Newsletter*, published twice per year by Origins. Subscribe to this free newsletter via the website or give us a call.

✓ **Send a few teachers to a One-day Overview**

They can report back to the whole staff, begin practicing a few aspects of the approach, and share the results with others.

The One-day Overview provides participants

- An experience of community-building through the Circle of Power and Respect
- An introduction to the Six Principles that guide the work of DDMS
- Insight into the developmental needs of young adolescents and practices designed to meet those needs, both socially and academically
- Demonstrations and a chance to try out several of the practices: the signal for silence; modeling; cooperative game-playing; the Reflective Loop; Engaged Learning Strategies; and a closing meeting

The Overview is designed to introduce the basic philosophy of both approaches, not to teach implementation of the practices. Others of the 10 classroom practices (for example, working with repeated rule-breakers) are introduced in the weeklong workshops DDMS1 and DDMS2.

✓ **Host an Overview for a school's entire staff or your assessment committee**

An Origins Consultant can provide a full day, half day or 90-minute informational session on the *Developmental Designs* approach to interested educators at your school site. The full day content is the same as in the Origins-hosted One-day Overview or we can customize to meet your individual school's needs. Please contact our Administrator for School Services for quotes and additional information.

## Next Steps

Teachers may attend a weeklong workshop, either at an Origins-hosted Institute during the summer or at a contracted weeklong workshop at their school site, to continue their training. Sometimes, schools send a few teachers to a weeklong workshop and then have the One-day Overview on-site for the other teachers. This way, all the teachers have some exposure to the approaches and a small group of teachers (usually 4 or 5) provide leadership and support for advancement of the work. Ideally, all teachers eventually receive the weeklong training, but the cost can be spread over years without halting the progress of the work.

✓ **On-site Weeklong Workshops**

Schools may hold weeklong workshops on-site for staff. The content is the same as in the summer Institutes. There are advantages to each. An on-site advantage is that during the workshop you can discuss with many of your colleagues how the content applies to your school. It is convenient, and it might reduce travel costs when the consultant comes to you. An advantage of Institute training is that teachers have the opportunity to exchange ideas with educators from other schools at their own grade level.

## Workshop Descriptions

Origins offers the following DDMS workshops for educators. Training is available in various locations throughout the year.

### **Overview: An Introduction to *Developmental Designs for Middle School***

(See Where to Begin above.)

### ***Developmental Designs for Middle School Level 1 Weeklong Workshop***

During the weeklong DDMS1 workshop, educators learn how to implement needs-based, developmentally appropriate social, academic, and behavior-management practices that include:

- Developing classroom and school-wide cultures that honor cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control as the context for the development of independent, competent learners
- Meeting young adolescents' social needs by starting each day with a Circle of Power and Respect or related advisory activity
- Starting the year off right by creating goals (Hopes and Dreams) and rules (Social Contract) with students
- Showing specific examples of the social contract in action through modeling routines, creating "look-sound-feel" charts, using social action theater (Role Play), and other strategies
- Introducing and using behavior-management strategies (Pathways to Self-Control) that help students to act responsibly and with self-control
- Understanding many ways to problem-solve with more challenging behavior issues

Workshop participants are immersed in constructivist, engaged learning all week.

### ***Developmental Designs for Middle School Level 2 Weeklong Workshop***

The DDMS2 weeklong workshop reinforces and builds on DDMS1 practices while focusing on how to improve engagement in academics in middle school classrooms. Participants develop a set of practices that allow you to:

- Provide appropriate opportunities to meet the developmental needs of middle school students, especially the needs for autonomy and competence
- Deepen understanding of Pathways to Self-control, with emphasis on problem-solving behaviors of especially challenging students
- Use POWER Learning, a strategy to maximize student engagement, cognitive growth, and achievement. POWER Learning ensures active engagement in every phase of learning: Planning, generating Options, Work, Exhibits, and Reflection. POWER Learning works because it meets adolescent needs for competence and autonomy.
- Choose from many other Engaged Learning Strategies to enhance student engagement in both individual and group learning situations
- Play academic-centered games and activities that build community

### **Leadership Institute**

Participants in the Leadership Institute deepen their understanding of *Developmental Designs* implementation at the classroom, school-wide, and adult community levels; broaden leadership skills, especially in the area of structures for good communication and healthy school culture; and make plans for next steps in the comprehensive implementation of the *Developmental Designs* approach.

Prerequisite: *Responsive Classroom 1* or *Developmental Designs 1*

Registration minimum: 2 participants, including the principal; we recommend no more than 5 from one school.

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS and CONSULTING SUPPORT

*How can I implement Developmental Designs school-wide? What support is available for classroom and school-wide implementation?*

Consistent research results indicate that isolated trainings do not lead schools to excellence. What is needed for comprehensive school growth is a shared vision and consensus on a multifaceted plan to achieve that vision. Good professional growth stands on FOUR LEGS:

### **Training**

DDMS Overview (90-minute or One-day)

DDMS 1

DDMS 2

### **Consulting**

Demonstrations

Observations

Staff Meetings

Team Meetings

School Communities & Study Groups

Parent Meetings

Learning Communities

### **Sustainability**

Study Groups

School-wide Discipline Plan

Reflection: Individual, Partners, Teams, School-wide

Assessment – Classroom

Classroom Visits

Peer Coaching

Family Nights

Meeting Structures

PDP Buddies

Classroom Organization Buddies

Action Plans

### **Leadership**

Principal trained in *Developmental Designs*

Core group supports *Developmental Designs* implementation

Leadership Institute

Reflection Structures

PDP's

Staff Hopes & Dreams and Covenant

Clear and consistent all-school procedures and protocols

Assessment – school-wide and adult community

## More Information about Consulting Support for *Developmental Designs*

When a consultant comes to your school, he or she partners with the teachers to work as a mentor with them on DDMS components so they produce the best result possible. Although there is some assessment each time of how things are going, the consultant is not there to judge but to help produce the desired result. The process we aim for in our consulting is the integration, teacher by teacher, of techniques used because they work well, as well as a comprehensive approach to planning and implementation, until the approaches are widespread in the school and have become a seamless part of the culture. That is when the change goes deep enough to make a lasting difference.

### **Mentoring**

After receiving training, teachers who begin to implement need support. Origins consultants coming to the school do several things:

- Demonstrate techniques in the classroom with the students, so teachers can observe
- Observe teachers using DDMS approaches
- Meet with teachers after demonstrations and observations to discuss all aspects of the techniques and how to improve upon them

Both the planning for the demonstrations and observations and the debriefing afterwards encourage growth in teaching practice.

Consultant visits should be structured in the following way:

- The consultant can work with a maximum of six teachers per day (three in a half-day). The teachers and/or principal create a schedule of visits to between three and six classrooms, and the consultant and the teachers work out the details of who will do what during these visits.
- If the consultant is demonstrating a technique, it is most efficient and effective for as many as possible of the teachers working with the consultant regularly to observe the technique. Optimally, this means that adults are available to cover the classes of teachers who are doing these brief observations.
- It is also important to have a substitute who can follow the consultant's schedule through the day so that after a demonstration or observation, the consultant and teacher can meet to debrief. While the teacher or consultant is demonstrating, the substitute can free up another teacher to observe. This arrangement has successfully been employed in many schools, but the teachers themselves need to agree that it's a good idea and arrange its implementation so that nobody feels s/he is forced to "perform" in front of colleagues. As soon as teachers have reached a level of confidence with the techniques, however, they seem to be eager to visit each other's classes, an opportunity that is rare in most schools.
- It is very useful to conclude the consulting day with a debriefing meeting among all the teachers who have participated in DDMS 1 training, including the core group, and the consultant. This is to work out a schedule for the next mentoring visit and perhaps to specifically plan some of the demonstrations. The after-school debriefing meeting can be short, but it is important in providing the confidence that comes from knowing ahead of time what is expected. Schools also use them for presenting mini-trainings and to answer questions for DDMS practitioners.

## **Administrative Support**

In addition to teacher mentoring, the consultant offers assistance in areas like the lunchroom, recess, movement in the halls, and arrival and dismissal, to support the DDMS initiative school-wide. Most important, the consultant can help administration and staff carefully and thoughtfully design an all-school discipline plan that is both research-based and harmonious with the beliefs held by the school's adult community about how children build and maintain social skills. The consultant also can provide help with educating the parent community about DDMS practices, and even sometimes about approaches to children's behavior in the home that are effective and child-centered.

## **Implementation Phases of *Developmental Designs***

*Developmental Designs for Middle School* is an approach that when fully implemented creates a caring, challenging climate in which students can do their best work. For most teachers, it takes from three to five years to learn the skills, practice them enough to feel confident, and experience the full results, but with careful implementation you will see some results immediately. Like any comprehensive approach to professional growth, *Developmental Designs* calls for some paradigm shifts, is built on repeated practice, and thrives in a school climate of reflection and collaboration. Good relationships among adults are cultivated through meeting structures and shared language, as well as through authentic, ongoing assessment of teacher practices.

### **Phase 1: FORMING and PRACTICING**

TRAINING—Overview for all teachers and administrators; DDMS1 for most teachers and principal; four to eight days of on-site coaching

#### **Focus Areas of Implementation**

Classroom community-building:

- Orientation to begin the school year
- Daily schedule that allows for CPR/Advisory
- Teacher-led CPR 2 to 3 times per week
- Student-led CPR when students are ready
- Occasional games and trust-building activities in class periods
- Students often learning together with different partners
- Opportunities for acknowledgement
- Circle teaching format
- Thoughtful closure to the school year
- Discussion of non-competitive recognition replacing competitive rewards

Proactive needs-based classroom management implementation:

- Hopes and Dreams (goal-setting)
- Hopes and Dreams check-in during the year
- Social Contract
- Social Contract check-in during the year
- Reminding language
- Many routines are modeled and practiced
- Teacher questioning to help students construct their own understanding
- Look/Sound/Feel charts
- "Quiet" signal
- Reflection after things go well
- Role play sometimes used to practice social skills
- Acknowledgements

#### Reactive Pathways to Self-control:

- Small mistakes are noticed
- Non-punitive redirection, both verbal and nonverbal, is used
- Buddy room/fix-it plan procedure is begun
- Short social conferences in many classrooms when students return from buddy room
- Longer social conferences for repeated misbehaviors are sometimes used
- Remodeling behavior in many classrooms
- Redirecting language in many classrooms
- Fix-it plan is implemented in behavior room
- P-W-R loop is used to process a variety of learning situations in many classrooms

#### Adult community issues and application:

- Creation of staff guidelines
- Staff guidelines implemented and reflected upon
- Adult acknowledgements
- Staff Hopes and Dreams created
- Staff Hopes and Dreams implemented, displayed and reflected upon
- Some staff meetings led with CPR components
- “Quiet” signal
- Parents’ Hopes and Dreams sought
- Parent meetings and/or mailings on DD are initiated
- Parents experience a CPR at a parent-information night
- Core group of DD teachers is established

#### Professional reform:

- Team meeting format is used regularly
- DD reflection and discussion as a team and/or staff
- All-school routines are discussed by committee
- Number of other reforms and initiatives is limited
- DD library is created
- Staff year-long focus on proactive strategies

### **Phase 1I: INTEGRATING and SUSTAINING**

TRAINING—DDMS1 and DDMS2 for all teachers; core group attends coaching workshop if possible; four to eight days on-site coaching; Leadership Institute for administrators and some teachers.

#### **Focus Areas of Implementation**

##### Proactive needs-based behavior management/community-building:

- Hopes and Dreams and social contract are posted and used in all classrooms
- Constitutional convention used to create all-school social contract
- Orientation process every year
- All routines are modeled and practiced—nothing is assumed
- Hopes and Dreams/social contract check-in repeatedly during the year
- Reminding language used consistently
- Remodeling and practicing used after breaks

- Teacher questioning used to help students construct understanding
- Look/Sound/Feel charts used
- “Quiet” signal used consistently
- Reflection used when things go well and when they don’t
- Role play frequently used to develop and practice social skills
- Acknowledgements used regularly and universally, teacher-to-student and student-to-student
- Non-competitive recognition has replaced competitive rewards
- Regular all-school meetings
- CPR/Advisory most days
- Student-led CPR in second half of the year
- Games/trust-building activities used frequently throughout the day
- Students consistently mix with different partners
- Thoughtful year-closing process

#### Engaged Learning (For DDMS2-trained teachers)

- Lessons use POWER learning approach: Planning-Options-Work-Exhibit-Review
- Engaged Learning Strategies are implemented
- Social interaction is frequently the context for learning
- Individual evidence of learning is required in all group work
- Exploratory Modeling introduces learning materials
- Circle teaching format is used in class periods
- Reflection on work, goals, and process at the end of semester and year
- Students ask frequent, thoughtful questions of the teacher, text, and each other
- Active, exploratory learning in a social context used much more than lecture and workbooks
- Academic recognition is non-competitive
- Written and verbal language is descriptive and specific
- Learning successes are celebrated by all

#### Adult Community Issues and Application

- Creation of and periodic reflection on staff Hopes and Dreams and guidelines (social contract)
- Regular staff meetings include agendas, reflection time, CPR, and acknowledgements
- “Quiet” signal is used consistently
- Parents’ Hopes and Dreams are solicited every year
- Hopes and Dreams conference with parent(s), student, and teacher
- Follow-up conferences to assess and adjust goals
- Staff strategies are in place to help struggling peers
- Core group coaches teachers in their classrooms and in peer-to-peer meetings
- Specialists and non-teaching staff are involved in CPR as much as possible
- Structures are in place to support open and honest communication and to resolve conflict

## FEES

**Full-day exploratory visit** (Overview for staff, observations, meetings): \$1,500

**One-day Overview:** \$1,500 per facilitator

\$7 per participant for workshop booklet

Travel costs for facilitator

**DDMS Weeklong On-site Workshops:** \$645 per participant

Travel costs for facilitator

Host site provides food (served on site)

**DDMS Weeklong Institutes:** \$695 per participant

Graduate credit is available for weeklong workshops: 2 credits, \$360; 3 credits, \$570

**Leadership Conference:** \$750 per participant

Registration minimum: 2 participants, including the principal; we recommend no more than 5 from one school.

**Consulting**, per day, plus travel expenses: \$1,500

*Fees are subject to change without notice.*

# MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROJECT AGREEMENT

## On-site Training and Support

Educators may choose to participate in the work of *Developmental Designs for Middle School* as individuals or teams attending DDMS Institutes, or a school may choose to work with the model on site. On-site DDMS workshops and consulting must occur in the context of the Middle School Partnership Project as described here.

### ***Developmental Designs for Middle School Partnership Project Agreement***

The Middle School Partnership Project is open to middle schools committed to pursuing a comprehensive, school-wide approach to training and implementation of *Developmental Designs for Middle School*. In order to become a part of the Middle School Partnerships project, a school's adult community agrees to:

1. Engage with Origins in assessment and planning, during which a school-wide training and implementation plan can be designed to meet the needs of the school
2. Provide evidence of agreement among the administration and at least 85% of staff that they are willing to honestly explore and implement DDMS strategies and approaches to classroom management, school-wide discipline, and academic instruction
3. Be willing to work together on strengthening the climate of the adult community within the school, as well as the school's relationship with adult communities outside the school (parents, community agencies, businesses)
4. Participate in professional development in the DDMS1 and 2 workshops for all members of the adult community in the school over a period of years (usually two to five). Training for the two required courses occurs during summer or on-site by arrangement
5. Have administrators attend DDMS1 and 2 workshops, as well as the annual Leadership Institute
6. Have an average of five to fifteen days (depending on size of school and/or need) of on-site consulting each year provided by an Origins consultant who works consistently with the school. A core group of high-implementing teachers capable of assisting other teachers in their implementation of *Developmental Designs* components is central to continued successful professional development for all. Some members of the core group will attend the Coaching Workshop to prepare to be on-site coaches and DDMS initiative leaders
7. Understand that involvement in the Middle School Partnership Project is a multi-year commitment to use the *Developmental Designs* approach as a school-wide initiative, and they will reasonably limit the number of other initiatives during this period to ensure successful professional growth and desired school-wide results

I wish to enter into the Middle School Partnership Project

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Authorized Signature

Date

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Origins

Date

## SUPPORTING ARTICLES and EXCERPTS

### **Research Basis for the *Developmental Designs for Middle School Approach* Origins**

Prepared by Origins

Literature review of the research and theoretical frameworks supporting the *Developmental Designs for Middle School* approach available on [www.OriginsOnline.org](http://www.OriginsOnline.org) (see Articles and Research, sort for Research)

### **Building Community with Adolescents**

Concerns about building classroom and school communities have traditionally been greater in elementary school than in secondary schools. The middle-school movement in the United States is changing this for students in grades 6-8. The middle-school movement has made clear that teaching and learning for adolescents has to be built on the realities of human development.

Success or failure for a teenager is dependent upon many factors, not the least of which is home life. Nevertheless, school can provide the kind of safe, caring atmosphere that allows students to take risks. Without that safety, students' performance is at best less than optimal, and at worst a failure.

Research indicates, especially for elementary-age and middle-school students, that strengthening the social context for learning creates more inclusive classrooms in which all learners have a much increased chance to learn.

Addressing the need to create a safe, respectful social culture in middle school is fundamental to producing excellent results in academic performance. When individuals have higher emotional self-awareness, when they know how to manage their feelings and harness them to be productive, when they can read the emotions of others and handle relationships effectively, they spend less time and energy feeling bad about themselves, each other, and school, and more time and energy on learning.

Emotional-literacy programs have been shown again and again to improve students' academic achievement scores and school performance.

*In a time when too many children lack the capacity to handle their upsets, to listen or focus, to rein in impulse, to feel responsible for their work, or to care about learning, anything that will buttress these skills will help in their education. In this sense, emotional literacy enhances schools' ability to teach.*  
—Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*

A structure for achieving a caring, respectful social climate in which students are academically successful must address several issues:

- Students need opportunities every day to interact with each other socially with the guidance and support of adults. Strong advisory programs with carefully structured meeting formats can ensure that every student feels known and included, experiences herself or himself as a significant person, and begins the day with a sense of possibility for fun and pleasure in learning. Such a start can make all the difference in preventing conflict and discouragement in adolescents. Although they spend plenty of time talking with each other in unstructured formats, the safe structure within a good advisory makes communication more effective and meaningful, and prevents the hurts and conflicts often associated with adolescent communication. It gives them instruction and practice in effective communication.

Especially at a time of transition to a new school, a safe environment for social exchange, peer recognition, and practice in communication can promote their self-esteem, which often plummets at times of major transition.

- Service activities that use youthful energy and idealism to make a relevant and meaningful contribution to the school or to the larger community give meaning to lives that often lack meaning, and can provide channels for growth and development socially and intellectually.
- Discipline that stresses the proactive and is based in the belief that young people want to be good and want to succeed with peers and with adults can change the school climate from one that spends a lot of energy reacting to antisocial behavior into one in which students participate in a network of support for themselves and each other. A structure to fulfill the behavior-management philosophies of social psychologists such as Glasser, Dreikurs, Nelsen, etc., will generate the level of responsible independence necessary for students to make good choices consistently.
- Developmentally, young adolescents are in flux emotionally. It is a time of questioning, and of the breakup of some childhood certainties. They challenge their teachers, their parents, and each other. They are easily embarrassed, and the girls, especially, are prone to forming cliques. Everything seems awkward; feelings and relationships are seldom clear and simple. In the midst of all this uncertainty, these young people enter a new school. They are on the way to independence, but that independence needs to be shored up during their three years in middle school by structures that balance freedom with responsibility.

Academic programs with flexible scheduling, project-based and other forms of active learning, an inquiry approach that stresses open-ended questioning, and the opportunity each day to plan, choose, and reflect upon aspects of work are all good for learners at this stage. Within the safety of a carefully designed social curriculum, students can handle challenges successfully. If they are not given the opportunity to stretch into greater autonomy, they will use their energy to resist and resent, and can become trouble-makers instead of problem-solvers. With a balance of freedom and responsibility and high expectations for behavior and achievement, middle schoolers can thrive. The *Developmental Designs* approach offers the structures that make this balance practical and achievable.

### **RESEARCH: Excerpts from *Student Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Perceived Pedagogical Caring***

by Kathryn R. Wentzel, University of Maryland College Park, 1996

Why are some children eager to engage in classroom activities whereas others devalue and disengage from the learning process? Of interest for the present research is that recent studies have linked interpersonal relationships between teachers and students to motivational outcomes.

[In this research] two specific questions concerning teacher caring and student motivation were addressed:

a) To what extent do adolescents' perceptions of caring teachers predict efforts to achieve positive social and academic outcomes at school?

b) How do middle school students characterize a caring, supportive teacher?

Results suggest that perceptions of caring teachers are related to students' academic efforts and to their pursuit of pro-social and social-responsibility goals. These relations were robust when students' previous motivations and performance, and current control beliefs and distress were taken into account. When asked to describe teachers who care, students generated responses that correspond closely to dimensions

of effective parenting. Teachers who care were described as demonstrating democratic interaction styles, [differentiated responses, and nurturance].

...The results of the present study provide strong evidence in support of the notion that students are more likely to engage in classroom activities if they feel supported and valued.

### **Some Thoughts on Social-Emotional Learning in Middle Schools**

From *This We Believe*

National Middle School Association

In a healthy school environment, human relationships are paramount, and all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Students and adults recognize and accept one another's difference; curiosity, creativity, and diversity are celebrated. Issues of gender and equity are addressed with sensitivity and fairness. This climate encourages positive risk-taking, initiative, and the building of substantive relationships.

### **From *Young Adolescent Development and School Practice: Promoting Harmony***

John Van Hoose and David Strahn

In successful advisory programs, students learn as much about themselves as they do about each other...middle-grade students NEED time together. Some students find that school is the only time they can see their friends. All students look forward to whatever time they have to "catch up" or "hang out." Some schools seem to try to fight this need. More successful schools find ways to integrate social and academic learning.

### **From *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14***

Chip Wood

It has been documented, across cultures, that cognitive development is greatly enhanced through social interaction. Cognitive effort is not an isolated or individual activity, despite our emphasis on individual achievement in school. Cognitive growth is enhanced in those environments that foster and respect social interaction-where learners are accepted and enjoyed by others....School is the structured social setting where the external society makes its demands in the adolescent. How the [middle] school is structured and places its demands on students is of critical importance in the development of healthy young adults.

### **From *Social and Emotional Learning in Middle School***

Howard E. Taylor and Susan Larsen

#### **Why is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Necessary?**

Without social and emotional competence, students lack the skills to manage life tasks such as working cooperatively, solving everyday problems, and controlling impulsive behavior (Elias et al. 1997). Additionally, without being able to identify and manage their emotions effectively, students are vulnerable to "emotional hijackings," that is, being unable to think clearly because they are emotionally overwhelmed (Goleman 1995).

By applying SEL activities, teachers tap students' inter- and intrapersonal intelligences. Teachers provide students opportunities for problem solving, developing stress management skills, exercising civic responsibilities, and practicing conflict resolution and negotiation strategies. Additionally, teachers help break down affective barriers (e.g., frustration, low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression) that can

distract students, interrupt the thinking brain (Goleman 1995), and impede academic achievement (Maag and Forness 1991; Mendaglio 1992).

### **Why Focus on Social and Emotional Learning in the Middle Grades?**

To help early adolescents meet their developmental needs, middle school teachers must provide instructional opportunities for students to work in groups, develop same- and opposite-sex relations, appreciate diversity, and examine the pressure to conform (Manning 1993). Early adolescents need active engagement in problem solving, debating, role taking, and addressing moral dilemmas. They want and need to embrace the provocative issues of their time, understand the many position in a topic, and participate in real solutions. All of these developmental tasks are addressed through a social and emotional curriculum.