



To meet the unique combination of social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of young adolescents, the *Developmental Designs* (DD) approach for the middle grades offers an array of strategies designed to keep young people safe, connected, responsible, and engaged in learning. *Developmental Designs* 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.

Guiding Principles

The *Developmental Designs for Middle School* approach is founded upon six researched principles of good practice that form the core of successful teaching and learning.

- Social learning is as important to success as academic learning.
- We learn best by constructing our own understanding through exploration, discovery, application, and reflection
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interactions within a supportive community.
- 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 ■ Self-control
- Knowing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs of the students we teach is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Trust among adults is a fundamental necessity for academic and social success in a learning community.

Research Basis

Origins has begun a three-phase research and evaluation of *Developmental Designs*. Findings from the descriptive study and more about the philosophical basis of *Developmental Designs* are available at: www.OriginsOnline.org/dd_index.php.

Classroom Practices

Community-building Advisory

The Circle of Power and Respect (CPR) and Activity Plus (A+) are meeting structures for building community, social skills, and readiness for learning.

Goals and Declarations

Students declare a personal stake in school to anchor their learning in a meaningful commitment to growth.

Social Contract

Based on their personal goals, students design and sign an agreement that binds the community to common rules. Its principles are modeled and practiced every day.

Modeling and Practicing

Social competencies are learned by seeing and doing. Nothing is assumed—all routines are practiced.

Reflective Loop

Ongoing, varied reflective planning and assessments ensure continuous, conscious growth.

Empowering Teacher Language

Gesture, voice, and words combine to create a rigorous, respectful climate for building responsible independence.

Pathways to Self-control

When the Social Contract is broken, teachers have an array of strategies, such as various kinds of redirection, fix-its, loss of privilege, Take a Break, and Buddy Room. Social skills grow without loss of dignity.

Collaborative Problem-solving

Students and teachers use social conferencing, problem-solving meetings, conflict resolution, and other problem-solving structures to find positive solutions to chronic problems.

Power Learning & other Engaged Learning Strategies

Social interaction, experiential learning, choice, exhibition, reflection, and other practices help connect young adolescent needs and the school curriculum, so that students are deeply engaged in learning.

Power of Play

Play is designed to build community, enliven students, and restore their focus—more time truly on task.

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

What does a middle-level school look, feel, and sound like when adolescent needs are met appropriately? A school implementing *Developmental Designs* makes creating respectful, caring relationships a high priority. Every day begins with an advisory in which students circle up to greet each other respectfully, share what's happening in their lives, and engage in activities that teach important skills in a lively way. The DDMS advisory structures (Circle of Power and Respect—CPR, and Activity Plus—A+) build a safe, inclusive school community while teaching social and academic skills. They establish a clear path into the learning day.

Class routines and transitions between classes are taught and practiced. Everything is modeled and rehearsed. The goal is the development of self-control and responsible independence. Also carefully introduced and consistently upheld are consequences for all rule-breakers, no matter who or 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.

Caring communities are paramount. Teachers use language that fosters reflection and intrinsic motivation among students. Each class period 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. Students ask and answer open-ended questions and help design and make choices in assignments. There is a balance in each class between teacher-directed lessons and independent and group work.



Professional Development

Workshops

- **90-minute or Half-day Overview**—gives school a glimpse of the philosophy and practices of approach, providing enough information to begin conversation of whether or not DD is a good fit for the school.
- **One-day Overview**—participants learn basic principles upon which DD approach is built, along with socio-emotional learning practices through which they are implemented.
- **Week-long Workshops**—DD1, 2, & 3, Building Academic Communities Through the Arts (BACTA) week-longs present an approach to building community, classroom management, and instruction designed to strengthen teaching practice with sound, integrated social and academic curriculum.

Follow-up Classroom & School-wide Consultation

- **Classroom Coaching** provides intensive, specific training to improve classroom implementation; provides consistency among classrooms; develops staff's peer-support structure
- **Consulting for Sustainability** creates support structures to sustain reforms, including school-wide community-building, discipline plans, and conferencing with parents
- **Leadership Training and Consulting** for school-wide leaders (administrators and teachers)

Publications

- **Books from Origins for middle level educators**
 - *The Advisory Book*, a comprehensive guidebook for implementing successful middle school advisory programs
 - Upcoming book focused on proactive discipline
 - Upcoming book addressing cultural conversations in the classroom
- **Free Origins middle school newsletter**—articles written by teachers for teachers
- **Origins website**—hundreds of teaching ideas, activities, and articles to support implementation
- **E-notices**—free, brief electronic messages sent three times a year with timely reminders and supporting resources for implementing *Developmental Designs*

ABOUT ✨ ORIGINS

Origins, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering learning in community, is the national center for the *Developmental Designs* approach. It provides workshops, on-site consulting, and publications to teachers and school communities.

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