Dear Families,

We want to let you know about an approach to teaching that we are implementing this year at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  It is called *Developmental Designs*. It has been used successfully by teachers to create learning environments where our students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The *Developmental Designs* approach is based on the importance of social-emotional learning to academic and personal success.  It was created by classroom teachers to meet the unique combination of social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of our students.  *Developmental Designs* offers strategies designed to keep our students safe, connected, responsible, and engaged in learning. 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* approach is founded upon these researched principles of effective practices 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. Goals are best achieved through the mastery of incrementally challenging tasks.
5. There is a set of personal/social skills that students need to learn and practice to be successful socially and academically:

COOPERATION ▪ COMMUNICATION ▪ ASSERTION ▪ RESPONSIBILITY ▪ ENGAGEMENT ▪ EMPATHY ▪ SELF-CONTROL

1. Knowing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs of the students we teach is as important as knowing the content we teach.

7.   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?** When students know and feel that they belong to a community that cares about them, they are safe enough to take risks in learning, to show who they are and what they know, to ask questions, to admit harm, and to repair damages. When teachers show they care, students have a much better chance at success.

In a *Developmental Designs* School, we are all committed to helping our students know and reach their full potential.

Sincerely, Your *Student’s DD School*