



DEVELOPMENTAL RESPONSIVENESS. High-performing schools with middle grades are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.

- 1. The staff creates a personalized environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.**
 - Adults and students are grouped into smaller communities (e.g., teams, houses, academies) for enhanced teaching and learning.
 - These small learning communities are characterized by stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships.
 - Every student has a mentor, advisor, advocate, or other adult he/she trusts and stays in relationship with throughout the middle school experience.

- 2. The school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.**
 - Teachers are trained to recognize and handle student problems.
 - Students with difficulties, and their families, can get help.
 - The school houses a wide range of support (e.g., nurses, counselors, resource teachers) to help students and families.
 - School staff members offer parent education activities involving families.

- 3. All teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment.**
 - Teachers enhance standards-based learning by using a wide variety of instructional strategies.
 - Teachers incorporate well-developed procedures and routines for effective classroom management.
 - Teachers facilitate learning by deliberately teaching study and organizational skills.
 - Teachers integrate creative activities in the lessons (e.g., current technologies, visual and performing arts, etc.).

- 4. The curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents.**
 - Students talk about daily issues in their own lives, their community and their world.
 - Students take action, make informed choices, work collaboratively, and learn to resolve conflicts.

- 5. Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems.**
 - Teachers collaborate to create integrated activities that cross content boundaries.
 - Students can work on the same project in several different classes.

- 6. Students are provided multiple opportunities to explore a rich variety of topics and interests in order to develop their identity, learn about their strengths, discover and demonstrate their own competence, and plan for their future.**
 - Teachers and counselors push students to challenge themselves and set high academic and career goals for their future.
 - Students are provided with multiple opportunities to explore topics of interest to them.
 - Students demonstrate competency in a variety of subjects as well as areas of interest.

- 7. Students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities.**
 - All students have a real say, or have legitimate representation, in what happens at school.
 - School staff members have an “open-door” policy to encourage student involvement and connection.
 - Students take an active role in school-family conferences.

- 8. The school staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well being of the children.**
 - Parents are more than just volunteers or fund-raisers; they are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the school.
 - Parents are informed, included, and involved as partners and decision-makers in their children’s education.

- 9. Staff members provide all students with opportunities to develop citizenship skills, to use the community as a classroom, and to engage the community in providing resources and support.**
 - Students take on projects to improve their school, community, state, nation, and world.
 - Members of the community engage in meaningful learning opportunities with the school.

10. The school provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment.

- Student co-curricular activities cover a wide range of interests—team sports, clubs, exploratory opportunities, service opportunities, and a rich program in the visual and performing arts.
- Co-curricular programs are infused with activities that help students develop relevant life skills.