

Developmental Overview

The mission of New Design High School (NDHS) is to provide a life preparatory curriculum that uses the idea, concept and process of design to assist in meeting the holistic needs of adolescents. This includes addressing the academic, intellectual, social, emotional and creative requirements of students. To meet the holistic needs of students, NDHS has created a framework that both guides and structures the development of curriculums, programs, culture and systems at the school. The NDHS Developmental Overview is based on an adaptive view of understanding childhood and adolescence, building upon the theories of many schools of educational thought. These schools of educational thought include:

- Holistic educators (including John Dewey, Rudolph Steiner, Maria Montessori, Friedrich Froebel, Johann Pestalozzi, Krishnamurti, Jean Rousseau, Ron Miller and Rachel Kessler)
- Progressive educators (including John Dewey and Francis Parker)
- Critical theorists (Paulo Freire, Michael Apple, Maxine Greene, Paolo Freire)
- Developmental and cognitive psychologists (Abraham Maslow, Carlo Rogers, Erich Fromm)
- Constructivist educators (Lev Vygotsky, Howard Garder)
- Radical educators (Herbert Kohl, AS Neil)
- Systems theorists (Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber)
- Current brain based researchers (Mel Levine)
- Anthropological and cultural researchers.

Based upon the aforementioned educational research and theories, the following core beliefs have emerged:

- Children grow in life stages or developmental cycles.
- Each stage or cycle has its own needs and purposes, and thus, education should be tailored to the needs, yearnings and requirements of each particular cycle.
- Human beings are complex and are comprised of a mix of interrelated systems of abilities, potential and creative energies.
- The more the needs of each stage or cycles are met, the stronger the foundation for adult health, intelligence and creativity.
- There are four stages in the lives of children and adolescents.
 - a) Stage 1: Learning through the Body – Birth to around 8 years
 - b) Stage 2: Learning through and for the Emotional Life – 8 to around 13 years
 - c) Stage 3: Learning for Idea and Ideal Development – 14 to around 16 years
 - d) Stage 4: Learning for the Development of Reason – 17 to around 21 years
- Evolution, growth and development are not linear processes and are often chaotic and different for each student.
- Environmental, cultural and family issues play an extremely important role in the development of each student.
- Students move through the stages holistically, prompted by shifts in their brain development, hormones, thinking and emotional sophistication. The movement from one stage to the next can be seen primarily in students' perceptions of their selves and their environment.
- The needs associated with various stages can be revisited at later dates to improve holistic growth.

Developmental Stages

Stage 1: Learning through the Body – Birth to around 8 years

In this first stage, learning primarily takes place through an exploration of the immediate environment through the vehicle of the body and the medium of sensations. In this stage, children develop a sense of rightful place and rightful boundaries. Healthy development, at this stage, allows children to grow into adults that develop the ability to recognize, define and set boundaries. It also gives children the foundation from which confidence and strength is nurtured as they move into adulthood, enabling them to achieve what they set their hearts and minds to. Very important, to this stage, is that children have a sense of belonging, that they discover their own strength, learn flexibility and understand boundaries. The environment for children, in this stage, needs to convey a safe and secure physical environment for their explorations. Other needs include a loving touch, a sense of warmth, and attention. In these years, language and motor skills develop as children learn to adapt their body to their social and physical environment. During this age, children orient themselves to their own

well being and nourishment. When the needs of children are not met in this stage they tend to lack an understanding of their own boundaries and the boundaries of others. Failure to meet the needs of children, in this stage, can also result in the child having tremendous self-doubt and deficiency in internal fortitude which prevents them from achieving what they need or want.

Stage 2: Learning through and for the Emotional Life – 8 to around 13 years

In this stage, learning takes place primarily through feelings. Children learn and become aware of the relationships in their own life, family, community and world. In these years, children develop the ability to both trust and cooperate. To flourish, children need an environment that includes caring and feeling mentors, and they need to perceive a sense of honesty in their relationships, a sense of being treated with fairness, a sense of adventure, as well as being placed in situations in which they are forced to both be and witness flexibility and compromise. At this stage, children are particularly attuned to emotional states and seek out experiences that generate feelings and promote awareness. These experiences set the foundation for the adult emotional life. A healthy development in this stage creates a deep and trusting sense of oneself, family, community and world. This is the foundation for future social, emotional, and intellectual growth. It is in this stage that the roots of adult empathy, caring, compassion and understanding are planted. It is also the stage in which adult conscience and inspiration are rooted.

Stage 3: Learning for Idea and Ideal Development – 14 to around 16 years

In this stage, learning takes place through the development of ideas and ideals in a variety of social environments. Adolescents have an unceasing need to explore the development of their own identity and, also, to gain a better understanding of what it means to be an individual. It is the stage in which adolescents begin to develop the ability for autonomy and self-governance. During these years, adolescents begin to experiment and “try on” their adult identity. As a result of this intense individual growth and exploration, there is a tremendous amount of insecurity. This insecurity results in massive behavior swings in adolescents between freedom and responsibility, assertion and insecurity, and individuality and peer conformity. The key in this stage is providing structured opportunities for inquiry and exploration of ideals. Adolescents need to have the opportunity to construct knowledge, ideas and their own ideals. During these years, adolescents are becoming aware of their personal responsibility and must be provided with challenges in which they can succeed so they can see themselves as being personally responsible. It is a very social stage and adolescents must be able to act out their ideals in a peer context. It is a time when the adults must respect the identities being tried on by adolescents and, actually, provide them with opportunities to explore those different identities. The environment that is needed to nurture the developing capacities in this stage includes a sensitive respect from peers and adults, the opportunity for adolescents to express ideals, positive peer contact and a respect of the personal space of adolescents. Healthy development at this stage gives adolescents the necessary foundation to develop the power and freedom to move forward in an ever increasingly complicated and uncertain world.

Stage 4: Learning for the Development of Reason – 17 to around 21 years

In this stage, learning takes place through the development of reason. Learning takes place through the ability to step into others’ perspectives to allow for a deepening of perspective. During these years, young adults need to develop an interconnected perspective, one that takes into consideration emotional, social, cultural and intellectual issues. Intentionality, the act of having aspirations and working to achieve them, is also very important at this stage. In stage 3 adolescents need to develop their ideas and ideals. They need to act upon these ideas and ideals, developing and bringing something tangible into the world. Dialogue and inquiry are the key tools in this stage. Dialogue allows young adults to both receive and transmit information. Inquiry allows them to use their developing reason to make sense of the world in which they live. The environment for healthy development, in this stage, is one that provides structured opportunities, guidance and support so that they can pursue their exploration of the world. Their explorations should result in an acting out of their ideals that, in turn, will have a visible impact upon the world in which they live. Healthy development in this stage allows young adults to be able to make sense of the interconnectedness of the world.

New Design Yearly Themes *From Dependence to Independence*

Year 1 – Identity

Essential Questions:

- Who am I?
- How is my identity constructed?
- What are my belief systems and values? How do they influence who I am?

Enduring Understandings: My identity is my sense of self and is constructed through a variety of influences. My identity is based upon my belief system and my values which ultimately affect my behaviors and actions. My identity is unique and what I say, feel and think is crucial to understanding who I am and what I value.

The first year at New Design is an exploration of the concept of identity. Students are encouraged and guided to develop an individual belief system in the hopes that they will develop as individual thinkers. Identity is viewed as the discovery and recognition of the self as seen through the development of informed ideas, thoughts and beliefs. It is the year in which students develop the thoughts, beliefs and interests that will make up their unique and individual belief system as adults. The year is designed to assist students in the process of awakening to the self and the awareness of the self that develops in the process. It is the year in which students are guided to explore and develop their idealism, opinions, imaginations, influences, intentions, and interests. In this year, students will become personally aware of their own selves and will be encouraged to think about who they are. They will start to understand that they have both an exterior personality and an interior world that is developing in concert. Students will be given the support so that they learn to trust themselves and their ideas. They will need to be guided and supported in their efforts to develop their own thinking. The evidence of healthy growth in Year 1 is students' ability to develop, form and express informed views that are unique.

Stage 3 (14 to 16 years) is the major influence for Year 1. Stages 1 and 2 also play significant roles with the exploration of feelings and the understanding of boundaries as important influences. As students explore their own identity, they also return to the exploration of the environment and their boundaries. A sense of rightful place is extremely important in Year 1. It is considered the foundation year in terms of skill development at NDHS.

Year 2 – Community**Essential Questions:**

- What is a community and why do we need to exist in a community?
- How do we create a community for ourselves?
- What are my communities and how do they influence me?
- How does my community influence by my identity?

Enduring Understandings: The purpose of community is to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to others. A community is sustained through the development of honesty, trust and a willingness to both give and receive. Belonging to a community is essential to developing our sense of self and the strength we need to meet our needs and achieve our goals.

The second year at NDHS focuses on the idea of community and community development. Community is defined as a group of people who are connected on some level and, thus, have a relationship to one another. It is the year that students transition to, and from, being able to develop informed individual opinions to being aware of the opinions of others around them as a source of their own developing thinking. It is also the year that students explore, and more importantly, experience the idea of community, communities and relationships. A focus of learning, in this year, is on the development of social intelligence and awareness as a source of influence on the development of ideas and ideals. During this year, students should also gain an understanding of the world in which they live in order to understand the cultural beliefs that form the backbone of their thoughts and beliefs. The evidence of healthy growth in this year is students' ability to participate, develop and learn from the community to which they belong. Healthy growth is also evidenced in students' ability to develop healthy relationships in the communities in which they participate.

In Year 2 students begin to understand the process of learning. Stage 2 and 3 are the major influences in the development of the community year. As students explore the idea of community, they also return to the exploration of their interior lives and the feeling life. A sense of belonging is extremely important in Year 2.

Year 3 – Perspectives

Essential Questions:

- What are the variety of ways in which people view and experience the world in which we live?
- How does perspective shape the way we view the world?
- How can I “read”, interpret, and deconstruct my world so that I can gain a deeper understanding of myself and of my communities?
- How can I understand the multiple perspectives that reside in me, as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of my thoughts, values and beliefs?

Enduring Understandings:

Multiple perspectives must be critically and creatively examined in order to have a more holistic understanding of ourselves and our world. I can only understand myself if I understand others. In order to view the world in a critical manner we need to construct our sense of self and community. To do so, we must first deconstruct our view of the world.

In the third year, students will explore the idea of perspective. The idea underlying perspectives is the ability of students’ to critically examine their relationships to one another, to their community and with their own selves. The year will focus students’ upon developing the capacity to view the world through multiple perspectives, for example, looking at a situation from a variety of angles, in the hopes they will gain a deeper insight into themselves and the world around them. Using inquiry, students will strive to gain different and new perspectives, which in turn, will further develop their own opinions and ideas. The ability to see things in a variety of ways, and through a variety of lenses, will assist students in the development of their interpretive and critical abilities. The idea of deconstruction and reconstruction are very important to this year. It is the idea that the individual pieces make up the whole of something. The idea of a collage comes to mind as a metaphor for Year 3. It is the year in which students must be given an opportunity to deconstruct texts so they can reconstruct them. Autobiographical text is very important in Year 3 as students begin to view the complexity of the human self.

In Year 3 the major influence is Stage 3 and 4. As students explore the idea of perspectives, they also return to the exploration of their interior lives and their emotional condition. Through the exploration of multiple perspectives students develop their own ideas and ideals.

Year 4 – Future

Essential Questions:

- Who will I be in the future?
- What will be the state of the world in the future?
- How can I affect the future?

Enduring Understandings:

Studying the future helps guides one’s choices in the present, as well as informs one’s perspective about where one wants to be in the future. To discover the possibilities and opportunities that the future has to offer allows one to better understand the present so that one can be intentional about one’s life, moving forward.

The future is the guiding theme of the fourth year at NDHS. The theme of future focuses on students discovering their inner preferences, ideas, and ideals, which will guide their adult lives. Curriculum explores the future as a lens to better understand the present, while also studying the present to better understand the future. The focus for the year is real life curriculum in which students engage in more independent and self-directed responsibilities directed at impacting and changing the world. Students should be creating, designing, building and experimenting based upon their ideas. In this year students are given opportunities to ask deeper questions about life, themselves and the world. They must be given outlets, not only to express their ideals and develop their ideas, but also, an opportunity to act upon their ideas and ideals. In the fourth year, the teacher shifts more into the role of coach and mentor, while students assume a role of initiator, apprentice and entrepreneur.



In Year 4 the major influence is Stage 4. Intentionality is the key to Stage 4. Through dialogue and inquiry, students need to be given structured opportunities to act upon their ideas and ideals, developing and bringing something tangible into the world. Healthy development at this stage can be evidenced by students' ability to develop an interconnected perspective that reflects multiple contexts of the world and the ability to create and act upon their ideas and ideals from those understandings.