

PREFACE

Vicki L. Schmitt

Editor-in-Chief

Our third issue of *Middle Grades Research Journal* Volume 6 is a special issue focused on a middle school classroom management approach titled Developmental Designs. Our own managing editor, David L. Hough, of Missouri State University has been studying the Development Designs approach for more than 3 years. Working with a nonprofit educational foundation called Origins staff in Minneapolis, MN, Dr. Hough has fashioned a mixed-methods evaluation design to examine a number of different research questions. The four manuscripts that comprise this special issue reflect different methods used to collect data to answer questions guiding the program evaluation and research inquiry. Each was submitted in fully blinded format to three different *MGRJ* reviewers who assessed research significance, strength of methods, statistical rigor, findings, and overall level of scholarship. Each manuscript received high ratings with decisions to accept and publish with or without minor revisions. Revisions were completed between November 2010 and March 2011. Final editing was completed in June 2011.

Our first manuscript titled “Characteristics of Effective Professional Development: An Examination of the Developmental Designs Character Education Classroom Management Approach in Middle Grades Schools,” presents the multifaceted program evaluation and formal research designs used as part of the comprehensive longitudinal study examined in detail in this special issue. The evaluation and study utilize data across 25 states that include more than 2,300 teachers in 241 schools to focus on the professional development aspect of the program. Specifically, Dr. Hough examines levels and degrees of professional development that appear to be necessary in order to achieve high levels of classroom and school-wide implementation by teachers and other school personnel. Studying Developmental Designs 1 and Developmental Designs 2 (DD1 and DD2) throughout 2008-2009, Dr. Hough found that “teachers implement a number of classroom management strategies at high levels only after having participated in sustained professional development provided by content experts over an extended period of time. In addition, classroom-based ‘coaching’ was

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Middle Grades Research Journal, Volume 6(3), 2011, pp. ix–xi
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ISSN 1937-0814
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found to provide a value-added component that enhanced program implementation as well as teaching and learning outcomes.” Most middle grades schools, including but not limited to high-poverty middle schools “were found to meet or exceed AYP [adequate yearly progress] criteria at significantly higher rates when 75% + of their teachers implemented DD1 and DD2 for 2 or more years.”

This study not only provides an examination of the Developmental Designs classroom management program but it also explores the program as a type of character education effort that holds promise as a school reform model. The study’s contribution to those areas is noteworthy, as is its contribution to our understanding of what it takes to translate professional development into actual classroom practices that impact an entire school community.

Next is a study by Dr. Terrance Kwame-Ross, Linda Crawford, and Erin Klug, all members of Origins staff who manage and oversee the Developmental Designs program from their offices in Minneapolis, MN. This team used data collected unobtrusively from archival records to conduct a descriptive study of the Developmental Designs program nationwide. After describing theoretical perspectives and the conceptual framework upon which Developmental Designs and its 10+ practices are based, a detailed description of their professional development approach is presented. From 2005 to 2010, a total of 428 schools with developmental-design trained teachers were identified across 29 states. The underlying research question guiding this inquiry explores the relationship between schools with four or more DD1- or DD2-trained teachers, those with one to three DD1- or DD2-trained teachers, and their schools’ AYP.

Assisting Dr. Hough with our third study, “An Ex Post Facto Examination of Relationships Among the Developmental Designs Professional Development Model/Classroom Management Approach, School Leadership, Climate, Student Achievement, Attendance, and Behavior in High-Poverty, Middle Grades

Schools,” we used data from the full program evaluation of DD1 and DD2. These data, when aggregated, indicate that “teachers implement a number of classroom management strategies at higher levels after participating in sustained professional development for two or more years as provided by content experts, that is, facilitators and coaches, whenever the school’s leadership is perceived as supportive.” High levels of program implementation in middle grades schools were associated with higher school climate and better student outcomes with school leadership being a covariate. Attendance, behavior, and academic achievement as measured by state assessments and other AYP criteria among high-poverty middle grades schools were found to be associated with high levels of DD1 and DD2 implementation and supportive school leadership. These findings are consistent with others presented as individual program evaluation components in previous reports.

“An Evaluation of the Developmental Designs Approach and Professional Development Model on Classroom Management in 22 Middle Schools in a Large, Midwestern School District” is the concluding study presented in this special theme issue. This large school district adopted the Developmental Designs classroom management approach and professional development model for all of its 22 middle schools. Of interest in this study is the impact of the professional development model on teachers’ levels of competence, confidence, and implementation. This evidence-based research design utilizes quasi-experimental methods and includes 360 school personnel. Survey questionnaires were administered electronically to generate data pertaining to the quality of professional development, teacher confidence implementing the various strategies, and extent of program implementation in classrooms and other school settings. Data indicate that teachers are highly satisfied with the developmental-design approach and its various strategies as well as the professional development model used. As found in previous research examining the

developmental-design approach, second year training and implementation resulted in significantly higher teacher confidence and classroom implementation levels. “This finding is important to the professional development knowledge base in that it documents the need for a minimum of 2 years of training and classroom use to achieve significant improvement in teachers’ confidence in and implementation of new strategies for classroom management.”

The four studies presented in this special issue of *Middle Grades Research Journal* exemplify rigorous program evaluation techniques and serve as examples of how program evaluation and formalized research can not

only coexist but also augment one another. Findings related to effective professional development, promising classroom management grounded in character education, and student/school outcomes are important and significant. Rarely do researchers and program evaluators have the opportunity to invest in rigorous, large-scale, longitudinal examination of educational interventions such as the Developmental Designs for middle schools approach. The staff at Origins are to be commended for their cooperation with regard to allowing access to and examination of data to test theories and address questions of importance to the middle grades research community.