What is the Developmental Approach?

	Developmental Approach	Behavioural/Learning Approach
Philosophy (theoretical premise)	Based on theories by Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, Rousseau, and Neufeld "children's instincts are hard-wired, genetically based, neurologically endowed, but can optimize through development". Over time, maturation will occur naturally, at each its own pace; however, it requires the support of the 'right' conditions to unfold. The adult's job is to become a facilitator to Nature's plan.	Based on theories by Skinner, Pavlov, Watson, and Bandura "behavior can be explained in terms of conditioning, without appeal to thoughts or feelings, and that some mental conditions are best treated by altering behavior patterns. Human behaviour is learned and therefore can be unlearned. Children are born with a blank slate, and it is the adult's job to mold them and make them 'fit' for society".
Objective	Supporting the child by proving the 'right' conditions (warmth, safety, belonging, structure, predictability, etc.) to help them grow, and honouring the rhythm at which they unfold their human potential.	Shaping or modifying the child's problem behaviour, through conditioning and reinforcement, or by the consistency of the lesson, in order to effect change.
Focus	Focusing on the child's response to the conditions provided and adapting accordingly. Aiming ultimately towards the child's internal satiation, intrinsic motivation, personal growth, and a sense of agency.	Focusing on the child's compliance through teaching the expected behaviours, or by providing external incentives to reinforce desired behaviour.
Elements to consider	1. child's profile, maturity level, and background 2. contribution of the adults involved 3. impact of the physical/social environment, and context.	Child's behavioural profile and skill set.
Common practices	Embodying a strong yet caring adult posture, cultivating relationship, establishing a safe and structured environment, and setting up opportunities for expression and experimentation.	Direct teaching or reinforcement strategies (rewards and consequences), behaviour tracking system, behaviour management tools (chart, token system, contract).
Methods	Adult modeling, emotional release and co-regulation, emotional expressive activities (stories, role-playing, art, music, play).	Practicing expected behaviours, social skills groups, SEL lesson plans.
Context and timing	Working around the incidents, focusing on prevention, applying the principle of child availability (stress response), readiness, and maturity.	Intervening in the incident, applying principle of immediacy.
Planning and analysis	Addressing the issues at the root, focusing on qualitative data (observable patterns, risk and protective factors, case studies to provide insight).	Addressing the child's behaviour, focusing on quantitative data (tracking sheets, S.M.A.R.T. goals).
Signs of to success	Child trusting and receptive towards the adults.	Child acquiring the right skills and applying them properly.
When it's not working	Backing off from the situation until better understanding of the root of the behaviour. Aiming not to do harm.	Working harder and more consistently, upping the ante if needed.
What the adult needs to be successful	1. desire to better understand the 'why' before the 'how' (what's behind the behaviour) 2. further insight to evoke the right intuition (what we see will inform us on what to do) 3. ability to adapt when things aren't working.	More skills and know-how to intervene when faced with challenging behaviour ('what to do when').

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Comparison of Intervention Practices in a School Implementing a Nurturing Support Center

	Practices to Prioritize (aligned with the philosophy of the NSC)	Practices to Avoid or Transform (punitive approaches or overly behaviour-focused)
1 Welcoming and building relationships	• Welcome the student with a calm, caring, and predictable presence • Observe signs of discomfort (reading the student's cues) • Offer co-regulation immediately (body, posture, tone)	• Welcome the student using a purely cognitive approach (a speech, a fact sheet, an authorization) • Focus on the behaviour or interrogate/confront upon arrival • Rely on rewards for appropriate behaviour
2 Understanding behaviour	• Understand behaviour as a manifestation of underlying needs • Consider the function of behaviour (safety, connection, belonging, etc.) • Adjust the environment rather than trying to change the student	• Interpret behaviour as a willful choice or something to correct • Focus solely on observable behaviour • Rely exclusively on consequences to prevent recurrence
3 Responding to needs	• Prioritize basic and contextual needs (security, rest, food, movement) • Offer concrete, tailored options (space, time, adult presence) • Create favourable conditions for success and a sense of belonging	• Respond to needs only after the student has been "calmed down" • Label behaviour as inappropriate • Minimize the student's underlying needs
4 Managing emotions	• Actively co-regulate with the student (presence, tone, rhythm, proximity) • Validate and acknowledge the emotions experienced • Teach and model adaptive emotion regulation strategies • Recognize the helpful function of emotions (e.g., a protective signal) • Adjust expectations based on the student's state of regulation	• Expect the student to regulate on their own, without support • Focus only on verbal control or self-calming techniques during dysregulation • Interpret emotional expressions as manipulation, a way to gain control, or inappropriate behaviour • Look for immediate compliance rather than exploring what the student needs
5 Calming and regulation	• See calming as part of the intervention process • Intervene on the causes (e.g., fatigue, sensory overload, relationship) • Respect the student's individual regulation pace	• Expect calmness as a precondition for intervention • Use only quick "techniques" to make the student calm down • Rush the student back to class as soon as they appear calm
6 Adult-student relationship	• Maintain a stable, predictable, and unconditional relationship • Adapt one's posture and communication style (tone) • Build a sense of belonging within a supportive school community	• Base the relationship on threats (consequences, ultimatums) • Use the relationship as a control tool • Give up or neglect an attentive, caring adult posture
7 Discipline and supervision	• Use discipline as an educational tool • Maintain the connection during interventions • Provide clear, coherent, and restorative interventions	• Use discipline as the primary form of response • Isolate the student without support • Focus solely on compliance
8 Teaching skills	• Teach in a concrete, meaningful, and relevant way • Model and practice new skills in real-life contexts • Adjust the teaching approach based on the student's pace, interests, and motivation • Consider that the acquisition of a new skill is a gradual process that requires time and repetition	• Assume that teaching a skill will automatically lead to its use • Apply the same general approach to all contexts • Teach a skill once, without providing ongoing support • Expect immediate mastery, even when the student is in a dysregulated state • Ignore the importance of repetition and systematic practice in a safe, stable environment
9 Break times	• Use break time as a safety and regulation tool • Allow for team consultation time • Maintain relational and supportive follow-up	• Use break time as punishment or exclusion • Leave the student alone, without support • Seek immediate compliance