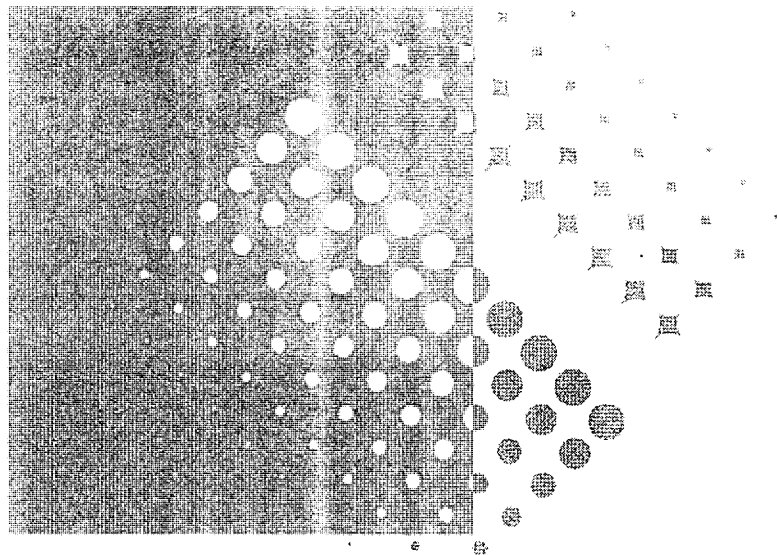

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships



INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR
LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

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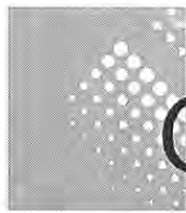
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Contents

Overview	v
Measuring Student Learning	vii
1. Why Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships?	1
The Need for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships	1
Schools Not Meeting Student Needs	9
Importance of Relationships	11
Value of Relevance	18
Further Reading	26
2. Defining Rigor and Relevance	29
Introducing the Rigor/Relevance Framework	29
Teaching and Learning in the Rigor/Relevance Framework	39
3. Defining Relationships in Learning	51
Dimensions of Relationships	51
Relationship Framework	52
How the Relationship Framework Helps Teachers	55
Further Reading	61
4. Building Student Relationships	63
How to Build Relationships	63
Supportive Behaviors	71
Supportive Initiatives	75
Supportive Structures	109
Further Reading	128
5. Building Staff Relationships	131
How to Build Relationships	131
Collaborative Behaviors	131
Collaborative Initiatives	134
Collaborative Structures	147
Further Reading	153
6. A Model for Leadership and Change	157
Why, What, and How of Change	157
Empowering Individuals in the Change Process	164
Tools for Change	164
Summary	171
Further Reading	171

7.	Leadership Activities	173
	Introduction	173
	List of Activities	174
	Envision	177
	Discover	193
	Create	243
	Build	258
	Develop	295
	Support	349
8.	School Success Stories	389
	Introduction	389
	Matthys Elementary School	389
	A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School	394
	Awtrey Middle School	398
	Will Rogers Middle School	403
	Brockton High School	408
	Kenwood Academy High School	414
	A.J. Moore Academy	420
	Granger High School	424
	Kennesaw Mountain High School	428
	Excelsior Education Center	432
9.	Personal Portfolio	437
	Purpose of the Portfolio	437
	Benchmark Tasks	438
	Implementation Actions	444
	Evidence	446
	Reflection	446



Overview

While it is necessary to set minimum measures, they are certainly not sufficient.

For the past two decades, the public discussion on education has focused on the desire to have every student acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in adult life. Equal opportunity is a fundamental principle of our nation, and it is easy to form a consensus around education policies and funding that ensures every student equal opportunity to learn. During this era, both federal and state policies related to standards and accountability have focused on minimum proficiency in the attempt to ensure quality education. The policies have contributed to many schools raising achievement levels. However, there is increasing concern that this “minimum mentality” may actually be harmful to ensuring that all students enjoy a balanced and effective education.

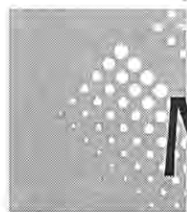
The recent work of the International Center for Leadership in Education, in partnerships with state education agencies and national education leaders, is re-examining how we define student learning criteria in an attempt to provide direction to schools that is more comprehensive and goes beyond the minimum. While it is necessary to set minimum measures, they are certainly not sufficient. Excellence in any endeavor comes not from striving for minimum performance but from reaching for lofty goals. **Rigor, relevance, and relationships** are passionate and lofty goals that inspire us beyond the minimum.

The International Center for Leadership in Education has developed learning criteria that encompass four areas in which schools can judge their effectiveness using quantitative indicators. These four areas are core learning, stretch learning, student engagement, and personal skill development. Schools have focused intensely on core learning, with state testing and accountability measures focusing on minimum standards. In some cases, this dedication of resources to ensuring that all students meet core learning standards has been at the expense of creating school environments where students are challenged to stretch their learning or to

develop personal skills. Many school leaders have come to recognize that a commitment to rigor, relevance, and relationships is a more positive approach. It provides balance and encourages students to demonstrate achievement in areas of stretch learning and personal skill development. Enthusiasm is growing for rigor, relevance, and relationships because it fosters student engagement in learning beyond the core requirements.

School leaders have devoted significant attention to making sure all students acquire core skills. Now it is time for schools to provide the rich learning opportunities that stretch students with greater depth or breadth of learning. Moreover, it is not simply knowledge and skills that define a comprehensive education, but also such personal skills as respect, leadership, initiative, responsibility, and service to others. Focusing schools on rigor, relevance, and relationships provides a more balanced educational program that leads to better-educated students and ensures a bright future for these individuals as well as our communities and nation.

It is not simply knowledge and skills that define a comprehensive education, but also such personal skills as respect, leadership, initiative, responsibility, and service to others.



Measuring Student Learning

Questions about Student Learning

- How do you describe an “educated student” in your school?
- How do you really measure whether school improvements are working?
- How do you focus your school community on the needs of students?
- Are state tests the only thing that matter?
- Do current measures of student learning fail to identify some of your best students?
- How to you identify school success?

Many schools are working diligently to improve rigor, relevance, and relationships, and this is a worthy goal. Frustration can occur, however, if schools embrace this goal without a systematic approach to measure current student learning, set goals, monitor progress, and recognize success. Some school improvement initiatives are carefully constructed, viewed appropriately through the lens of a school’s mission, driven by data, and accountable to multiple stakeholders. Other initiatives, however, are not so meticulously conceived. Rather than allowing data to drive goal setting and decision-making, some schools are still guided by good intentions, hunches, and impressions. Often, these schools inadvertently lose sight of learners’ needs as they struggle to ensure compliance with state regulations. The quest for rigor, relevance, and relationships that are supportive of student learning must be conducted in the context of a comprehensive data system for measuring student learning.

The Learning Criteria to Support Rigor, Relevance and Relationships is one tool that supports school improvement processes through a data collection and analysis process. The International Center developed the Learning Criteria in 2005 to identify “proven” schools and to help “promising” schools move to proven status.

The Learning Criteria to Support Rigor, Relevance and Relationships is arranged in four data categories that school leaders can use to determine the success of their school in preparing students for current assessments and future roles and responsibilities.

1. **Core Academic Learning** – Achievement in the core subjects of English language arts, math, and science and others identified by the school.
2. **Stretch Learning** – Demonstration of rigorous and relevant learning beyond minimum requirements (participation and achievement in higher level courses, specialized courses, etc.).

3. Student Engagement – The extent to which students (a) are motivated and committed to learning, (b) have a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and (c) have relationships with adults, peers, and parents that support learning.

4. Personal Skill Development – (a) Measures of personal, social, service, and leadership skills and (b) demonstrations of positive behaviors and attitudes.

In the hands of a thoughtful and broad-based school leadership team, the Learning Criteria helps a school clarify its mission, prioritize problems and interventions, and critically review school performance. Further, these analyses provide critical rationales for establishing goals and developing action plans. Most importantly, the data generated by the Learning Criteria reflects the needs of learners in ways that traditional, less complex measures overlook. The Learning Criteria is designed to provide a robust, comprehensive, and detailed portrait of school performance that clearly maps out a route for school improvement efforts.

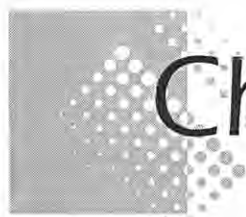
The Learning Criteria delivers data that can fuel accountability reports to the community-at-large. This clear and comprehensive information underlines the notion that school improvement is a multifaceted enterprise. The Learning Criteria also challenges schools to leverage data as a means of monitoring continuous, long-term growth and improvement efforts.

Increased expectations and testing demands have placed a heavy burden on schools. The Learning Criteria accounts for both expectations and demands and simultaneously breaks new ground in the territory of school improvement: The Learning Criteria redefines school success in terms that are unique to each school, meet standardized test measures of school success, and reveal the school environment in all of its complexity and depth.

Learning Criteria data empowers schools and school communities to craft meaningful, cogent, and comprehensive school improvement plans, to set powerful school change agendas, and to envision critical interventions that fortify the efforts of learners, teachers, and school administrators to achieve academic excellence.

A packet of materials
on the Learning
Criteria to Support
Rigor, Relevance and
Relationships is on
the CD in this kit.

Consider
connecting the
initiatives developed
from resources in
this kit to overall
measures of
student learning
based on the
comprehensive data
used in the
Learning Criteria.



Chapter 1

Why Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships?

The Need for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

Increasingly, we are recognizing that relationships are critically important to learning.

If there is not a high level of positive relationships, students will not respond to higher expectations.

Since its inception in 1991, the International Center for Leadership in Education's core belief has been that what students need to succeed in the 21st century is an education that is both academically rigorous and "real-world" relevant. This objective of rigor and relevance is not just for some students; it is for all students. The current context of school reform, as driven by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, places the International Center for Leadership in Education ahead of its time in gauging the essential goal of public education. As schools and teachers struggle to cope with new accountability requirements, one thing is clear — simply working harder, or doing what we have always done, will not yield higher student achievement. Different results require different solutions.

While we often hear the call for rigor and relevance, frequently leaders are adding a third "R" and calling for schools that aspire to "rigor, relevance, and relationships." This is more than a nice alliteration or an updating of the original 3Rs — reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Increasingly, we are recognizing that relationships are critically important to learning.

Relationships do not become a new standard but a way to improved learning and a means to the end of high achievement. The recent work of the International Center has examined some of the most successful high schools in the country — schools that have the challenges of poverty, mobility, and diversity, but still have high rates of student success. In these schools, it is clear that relationships among students and staff are deliberately nurtured and a key reason for their success. Students feel that the staff genuinely cares about them and encourages them to achieve at high levels. Experience in working with these schools indicates that when schools raise student expectations, they also need to focus on the quality of relationships and support for students. If there is not a high level of positive relationships, students will not respond to higher expectations. This resource kit focuses on the need to have rigor, relevance, and relationships — and strategies to achieve them.

Tony Wagner, the codirector of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, has an interesting perspective on rigor, relevance, and relationships. He responds to a question on defining rigor, relevance, and relationships by initiating a process to have local administrators define them through collaborative thinking. In doing so, they began to see weaknesses in the common assumption of defining rigor.

"Rigor in the classroom, we began to see, was invariably tied to the larger questions of what society will demand of students when they graduate, what it means to be an educated adult, and how the skills needed for work, citizenship, and continuous learning have changed fundamentally in the last quarter-century."

Seven questions emerged from this work, as reported by Wagner in *Education Week* in 2006. The following questions are asked of students to reveal a measure of the rigor, relevance, and relationships:

1. What is the purpose of this lesson?
2. Why is this important to learn?
3. In what ways am I challenged to think in this lesson?
4. How will I apply, assess, or communicate what I have learned?
5. How will I know how good my work is, and how I can improve it?
6. Do I feel respected by other students in this class?
7. Do I feel respected by the teacher in this class?

Following are the reasons why rigor, relevance, and relationships are essential in the classroom.

A Changing World

Recent advances in science and technology are mind-boggling. Three areas of technological change that have far-reaching implications are information technology, biotechnology, and nanotechnology, which allows construction

A high school diploma must be seen as a starting point to learning, not the ending point.

of miniature devices from molecules for use in medicine and other fields. While technological innovations bring many benefits, there is little argument that they add to the complexity of our world and increase the skill level every person needs to function effectively in our society.

It is impossible to forecast exactly where the future will take us, but it is obvious that as technology continues to evolve, it will alter the workplace and our homes, personal lives, and education systems.

High school graduation must be viewed not as the end of learning, but as the jumping-off point for a lifetime of experiences that will involve both acquiring new knowledge and applying existing knowledge to new situations. It is lifelong learning skills that will help students to make informed and intelligent decisions regarding the direction and limitations of technological developments, the use of technology to alter their own lives, and other major financial, professional, and personal questions that they will undoubtedly face. These skills cannot be taught as discrete topics. Rather, students learn them through high-quality, challenging lessons based on real-world problems and unbounded by separate school subjects.

Need to Motivate All Students to High Achievement

Two-thirds of high school students indicate that they would work harder if schools offered more demanding and interesting courses.

One of the barriers to higher achievement most often cited by teachers is that students lack motivation to learn what is being taught. The problem might be better defined as lack of student involvement or engagement in the learning experiences being offered. A telling piece of research was published in the *Condition of Education 2002*. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported on student perceptions of meaningful schoolwork, interest of courses, and whether school learning will be important in later life for 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000 (see the following bar graph). To understand the shrinking percentages, we must recognize the changes that have occurred in schools over that time. Since *A Nation at Risk* appeared in 1983, there has been a continual introduction of new requirements as

part of an ongoing effort to raise standards. It appears that the result at the high school level has been to make learning less interesting, less meaningful, and less connected to students' perception of the future.

In the spring of 2005, the National Governors Association surveyed teenagers as part of a policy initiative on high schools. More than 10,000 completed the Rate Your Future surveys nationwide. In this large sample, more than one-third said high school has been "easy." Two in three students agreed with the statement: "I would work harder if high school offered more demanding and interesting courses." More than 70% think taking courses related to the kinds of jobs they want is the best way to make their senior year more meaningful.

By interviewing students in your school, you can confirm the connection between relevance and student engagement. Students consistently indicate that they do not work as hard as they are capable of if they fail to see the relevance of what they are learning.

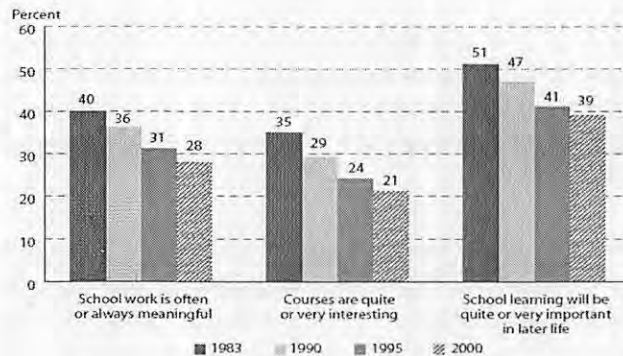
Students consistently indicate that they do not work as hard as they are capable of if they fail to see the relevance of what they are learning.

**Why Rigor
and
Relevance?**

- A Changing World
- Need to Motivate All Students to High Achievement
- Emphasize Essential Skills/Knowledge
- Shift Focus from Teaching to Learning
- Reduce Overloaded Curriculum
- Unified Perspective and Focus
- Preparation for State Tests

By looking at teaching and learning from the perspective of relevance as well as rigor and by emphasizing hands-on learning, we can engage students in meaningful and challenging work. Rigorous and relevant instruction motivates students to learn.

INTEREST IN SCHOOL: Percentage of 12th-graders who expressed various opinions about their school experience: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000



Emphasize Essential Skills/Knowledge

Teachers need to provide a relevant contextual base for the knowledge and skills they teach to their students.

Too often teachers answer a student who asks “Why do I need to learn this?” with the glib response, “Because I had to learn this stuff, and now it’s your turn” or with the equally weak response, “You will understand later in life why this is important.” There are skills that are important for all students to learn in school. However, many topics taught out of tradition or teacher interest are of lesser importance. Students need to understand what is truly important for them to learn. Teachers need to provide a relevant contextual base for the knowledge and skills they teach to their students. Education is meaningless when it is reduced to an unending list of content topics for which the student quickly learns the facts, takes the test, and then forgets it all. Focusing on a narrower list of priority skills and knowledge makes the importance of learning these things clear.

Rigorous and relevant instruction presents projects and problems that are related to the context. When students experience a problem in context, they are more likely to make connections and thus see the value in what they are learning. The rigor follows.

Shift Focus from Teaching to Learning

In a discussion of low or inadequate student achievement, some teachers lay the blame completely on the students. Teachers who feel this way believe that they are doing a good job. They feel that if the lesson is clear in their minds, organized well, and presented completely, then they have done their job.

This narrow perspective fails to recognize that learning, like communication, is not a one-way street. There is no communication if one person presents a message and no one listens or understands. Communication is most effective when another person listens, understands, and then applies what was heard.

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Teaching involves demonstrating skills and presenting knowledge, but learning does not occur until the students engage and understand. One of the most powerful ways to change what happens in the classroom is for teachers to think about planning instruction from the perspective of student learning.

An easy way to enable teachers to embrace this perspective is to design student work in the form of problems and projects that link standards and benchmarks from multiple disciplines. By taking this approach, teachers are more likely to shift their focus and think in terms of student learning rather than focusing on teaching.

Reduce Overloaded Curriculum

Several large-scale studies have confirmed what many educators already know — the curriculum in the majority of U.S. schools is overcrowded. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the International Center for Leadership in Education are among the organizations that have published reports on the subject.

In the most comprehensive effort to quantify the extent of the problem, researchers at Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) compiled a comprehensive list of standards and benchmarks found in the major national standards documents. Across all subjects and grades, they identified 200 unique standards, with 3,093 related benchmarks. They then obtained estimates from teachers on how long it would take to teach each benchmark adequately. The researchers calculated that it would take 15,465 hours to cover all of the standards and benchmarks. Yet, the most generous estimate of the instructional time students have during their academic careers is 9,042 hours.

Based on these findings, it would appear that although the standards and assessments being put into place across the country are intended to bring structure and clarity to school curricula, they often do just the opposite. In an effort to be comprehensive, far too many topics are labeled “essential,” blurring the distinction between high-priority and low-priority topics. Districts, schools, and teachers must make this distinction themselves and attempt to filter the topics that are truly essential from those that are simply nice to know.

“What do students need to know to succeed in life?”

“What do students need to know to succeed on the test?”

To focus in on what is essential for students, the International Center for Leadership in Education encourages districts to develop and analyze data to answer two questions: “What do students need to know to succeed in life?” and “What do students need to know to succeed on the test?” If a topic fulfills either of these needs, it can rightfully be labeled a high priority. If it meets neither, schools and districts need to reexamine whether it is worth the investment of scarce instructional time.

Once priorities are set, using project-based instruction creates learning experiences that can include several standards. This enables schools to use time more efficiently to develop students’ competence in standards. By using well-designed projects, a teacher can include multiple standards within a single lesson. This also allows for more in-depth instruction and reduces the superficial efforts of “covering” topics with little student retention.

Unified Perspective and Focus

One weakness in many schools is that teaching, testing, school improvement, and resources emphasize different skills and knowledge. A school may have highly qualified teachers, good assessments, abundant technology and library resources, and extensive professional development, but the sum of all of these parts may not lead to high levels of student achievement. Schools need to do more than create the components of effective schools; they must have all of these parts working in alignment and emphasizing similar perspectives. Applying the concepts and levels of rigor and relevance is useful in bringing curriculum, instruction, and assessments into alignment.

Moreover, any organization is more successful when all of its activities focus on a goal and all functions are aligned with achieving that goal. Research has shown that the most effective schools have a laserlike focus on curriculum. This unity is easiest to accomplish in elementary schools, since most teachers are common branch teachers. In middle school and high school, however, teachers lack a common teaching situation, and they are deeply immersed in their own subjects. It is difficult for mathematics, science, and English language arts teachers to share a narrowly focused, common objective. One efficient way that a school can embrace a common focus that cuts across subject areas is with rigor and relevance that applies to all subjects.

Research has shown that the most effective schools have a laserlike focus on curriculum.

Preparation for State Tests

The expansion of high-stakes testing programs over the last decade has led many teachers to “teach to the test.” Some have criticized this focus as detrimental to “real” learning. However, teaching to the test is not bad—as long as it is a good test. States are working to make the tests more criterion-referenced, better aligned with state standards, more valid, and without bias. These tests are also becoming more difficult, and efforts are underway to create questions that demand complex thinking.

Schools Not Meeting Student Needs

There is a common misconception that state tests include only low-level recall multiple-choice questions. The International Center for Leadership in Education's review of these tests has revealed that many do include complex questions, high rigor, and application of knowledge. In the future, teachers will need to teach to higher levels of rigor and relevance in order to prepare students for state tests.

The challenges of a changing economy and society have been known to us for more than a decade. How well have schools responded?

Virtually every state raised its graduation requirements and beefed up its testing program in response to the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*. "Back to basics" was a frequent rallying cry. But these efforts concentrated on the same academic, theoretical, abstract teaching areas that had caused the education crisis in the first place. What is taught in schools and the way instruction is organized and delivered often do little to prepare students to assume their adult responsibilities.

The organization of U.S. schools and the U.S. culture itself have become the biggest obstacles to school reform and higher standards. Offering discrete courses taught in isolation, with little connection to other subjects or other learning, may be compatible with teacher training and certification, but it bears no resemblance to the integrated way we use knowledge in life.

Furthermore, as a society we have come to view getting students ready for college as the primary goal of schooling. Yet, every year the level of skills needed for employment climbs, while requirements for college entry stay the same — or even diminish — in years when demographics produce a dip in the number of high school graduates and many colleges struggle to fill seats.

One result of a school system that focuses almost exclusively on preparing students for the next grade or level of education is a preoccupation with

sorting students. The culture of U.S. schools is to sort and compare students to identify the “brightest.” Schools have paid so much attention to comparing students to the average that few have noticed that standards are too low. Ranking at or near the top of the class does students little good if they do not have the skills to compete in modern society.

Today, all students need high levels of skills and knowledge to succeed in adult life. Schools must develop a culture of excellence that challenges every student to achieve rigorous and relevant standards.

Teaching through application is a very effective way to engage more students in pursuit of higher standards and to ensure that graduates can use what they have learned. When students see the relevance of what they are learning, they are more motivated to learn. Research has also shown that people retain more of what they have learned by doing, instead of reading or listening. It is not just higher standards that are needed, but the right standards. More emphasis needs to be placed on looking at the specific skills and knowledge that students must acquire.

Every core subject has applications to the real world, yet too often these subjects are reduced to textbook-driven memorization of facts. Science, for example, is about understanding the natural world. It seems logical that experiences in a science curriculum should give students the direct opportunity to use science skills to make observations in and about the real world. Yet, memorizing tables and taxonomies and moving through the chapters in a textbook are the more typical activities found in a science classroom.

Mathematics is a subject in which students develop the skills to recognize patterns, communicate relationships between quantities, and analyze data. Without real-world uses of these skills, they are solely intellectual pursuits. It is a little like learning the rules and skills of driving a car without ever actually sitting behind the wheel and going for a drive.

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English language arts is about learning forms of communication and understanding a culture through works of literature. Again, the real test of communication skills is the ability to use them effectively in actual situations. However, rarely are speaking and listening or technical reading and writing emphasized in the English classroom.

Moreover, too often, little connection is made between a piece of literature and the daily lives of students. Literature can be extremely valuable in helping students form a broad understanding of the human experience when relationships are made between a book and the real world.

Importance of Relationships

It is the relationships among the people that make the schools effective.

Schools are about people. They are not simply buildings, curriculum, textbooks, or assessments. Students, teachers, parents, support staff, and administrators work together to create a place of learning called school. In reference to people, we often talk about the importance of finding or developing talented school leaders and teachers that are “high quality.” However, having the best people is not sufficient. The International Center’s examination of successful model schools shows clearly that it is the relationships among the people that make the schools effective.

Education leaders are discussing relationships in schools more frequently. In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Michael Fullan offers insight into the importance of relationships and explains that leaders must connect with people and lead them toward change. Tom VanderArk, Executive Director of Education Initiatives for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, promotes schools aspiring to develop “rigor, relevance, and relationships,” as the foundation supports large urban school districts in creating smaller learning communities.

Ronald F. Ferguson, creator and director of the Tripod Project, is a lecturer and senior research associate at Harvard. The Tripod Project examines curriculum, pedagogy, and relationships, as well as their impact on student achievement. Ferguson states, “The special importance of encouragement

highlights the likely importance of strong teacher-student relationships in affecting achievement, especially for African-American and Hispanic students.” Relationships may hold the key for reducing the achievement gap in this country.

School improvement is driven by various experts in government, business, and education who try to ensure that all students achieve high levels of learning. These improvement efforts focus on standards, curriculum, student assessments, accountability measures, classroom management practices, use of technology, instructional strategies, decision-making processes, and school leadership. These improvement efforts are necessary, but they may not be sufficient to create really great schools, particularly great schools that sustain achievement over the years.

The examination of high-performing high schools by the International Center provides rich examples of schools that are great not only because of their practices in improvement efforts, but also because of the quality of relationships in the school. Having positive relationships in schools will not, by itself, create high levels of student achievement. However, these relationships are critically important.

Rigor and relevance are linked with relationships. Rigor requires students to make a substantial personal investment in their own learning. Students involved in rigorous learning are deeply engaged in thought, critical analysis, debate, research, synthesis, problem solving, and reflection.

In his book *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink provides provocative and insightful analysis on the skills necessary for a rapidly changing world. Pink describes how we are shifting into a new age of commerce, learning, and living. Developed nations are moving from an industrial economy dominated by left-brain logical thinking to a right-brain intuitive world, which is dominated by a different way of knowing, being, and doing. Pink sees three forces driving the Western world in this direction: abundance, Asia, and automation.

Relationships may hold the key for reducing the achievement gap in this country.

Chapter 8 – School Success Stories describes best practices of rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Developed nations are moving from an industrial economy dominated by left-brain logical thinking to a right-brain intuitive world, which is dominated by a different way of knowing, being, and doing.

So what do we do now that routine jobs are automated or outsourced? Pink argues that we will need to decrease logical, systematic ways of being and develop more of a “conceptual” side.

Pink describes six critical competencies or senses required for the conceptual age. They are design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning. Each of these critical competencies has a human connection that dictates how to develop positive relationships.

Design does not occur in isolation—the best designs come from insightful observation of unique human needs.

Story is a form of communication that enhances the personal context of language.

Symphony focuses on harmonizing isolated work, just as an orchestra conductor leads individual musicians into a more effective performance. This requires building good relationships.

Empathy is about awareness. It allows us to see the other side of arguments, understand values different from our own, and work with others toward a common goal. It is empathy for others that defines meaningful work.

Play is the passionate experimentation that leads to learning. This activity involves others.

Meaning occurs when we connect any of our work to the needs of others. It is the quality of relationships that helps us recognize meaningful work.

One organization that has done extensive surveying of students related to the topic of aspirations is the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations in Portland, Maine. The Quaglia Institute has developed a list of eight conditions that are necessary for student achievement. These characteristics help to

A Whole New Mind clarifies directions to take for future teaching and learning and provides a rationale for building relationships.

define the way schools establish a sound foundation for students to excel. The following are the eight conditions.

Qualia Institute for
Student Aspirations
www.qisa.org

Belonging - The condition of belonging means that a student is a valued member of a community, while still maintaining his or her uniqueness. It is a relationship between two or more persons characterized by a sense of connection and support. A sense of belonging is a necessary condition for a student's sense of well-being, social engagement, and competence. The condition of belonging increases intrinsic motivation, for it fosters self-confidence and investment in the community. Teachers have the opportunity to establish a culture of belonging in the classroom, one that promotes students' sense of well-being, connection, and self-belief.

Heroes - Heroes are people with whom a student can connect, who have a positive influence on them, and who listen to and value their ideas. Heroes build trust in others and belief in oneself.

Sense of Accomplishment - The condition of sense of accomplishment recognizes effort, perseverance, and citizenship as signs of a student's success. Sense of accomplishment is viewed in terms of personal growth and effort, not just through measurable outcomes and countable successes.

Fun and Excitement - The condition of fun and excitement is characterized by students being inspired. They are actively engaged and emotionally involved in their school work. Students who exhibit fun and excitement are usually self-confident, curious, and prepared. They are willing to meet the challenges of the day.

Curiosity and Creativity - The condition of curiosity and creativity is characterized by inquisitiveness, eagerness, a strong desire to learn new or interesting things, and a desire to satisfy the mind with new discoveries. Curiosity triggers students to ask "why," while creativity gives them the initiative to ask "why not."

Spirit of Adventure - The spirit of adventure is characterized by a student's ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at school and home. Students experience the spirit of adventure when they tackle something new without the fear of failure or pressure of success.

Leadership and Responsibility - The condition of leadership and responsibility means students are able to express their ideas and are willing to accept consequences for their actions. It cultivates accountability for the classroom environment and school community.

Confidence to Take Action - Confidence to take action is the extent to which students believe in themselves. It encourages them to dream about their future while being motivated to set goals in the present. This condition is what we strive for; all other conditions must be established and supported for students to attain this level of aspiration. Confidence to take action is characterized by a positive and healthy outlook on life and by looking inward rather than outward for approval.

Belonging is an important first condition. The degree to which a school builds a sense of belonging is a springboard to developing the additional conditions and a foundation for learning.

Belonging is an important first condition. The degree to which a school builds a sense of belonging is a springboard to developing the additional conditions and a foundation for learning. The Quaglia Institute has developed a student survey to measure the level of these conditions. This survey can be a useful tool to objectively measure the level of these conditions. Research by the Quaglia Institute has identified a correlation between these conditions and student achievement.

The *My Voice Student Aspiration Survey* has asked thousands of students questions related to relationships. In the area of respect, only 34.4% agreed that students respect their teachers, while 47.8% agreed that teachers respect students. When asked if students respect each other, only 33.4% agreed. It is statistics like these that Dr. Russell Quaglia identifies as "a crisis of respect in our schools."

On the current issue of male versus female achievement, only one out of every two boys agreed that “I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me.” Only 48% of boys agreed with the statement: “If I have a problem, I have a teacher with whom I can talk.” This sense of disconnect from their teachers has an impact on how willing boys are to listen to what teachers are trying to teach them and in turn what they are able to learn. On the topic of bullying, almost half (45.8%) of students surveyed strongly agreed that this is a problem.

MetLife annually conducts a survey of teachers. Conducted by Harris Interactive® since 1984, this year’s survey examines the experiences of teachers, principals, and secondary school students upon entering a new school. Their report, “American Teacher: Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships,” has several questions and national data on relationships. One of the questions on the 2005 survey asked students if they observed new students being teased or bullied. Eighteen percent of the national sample replied often or very often. Another 33% answered sometimes. This indicates that over half of the schools have environments that are not welcoming to new students.

Over half of the schools have environments that are not welcoming to new students.

The High School Survey of Student Engagement is a survey that offers teachers and administrators actionable information on school characteristics that shape the student experience. HSSSE polled 200,000 students from high schools in 29 states in 2004 and 2005. Since it is a national survey, it provides baseline data to compare student’s perceptions in your school with others nationwide. Some of the results are:

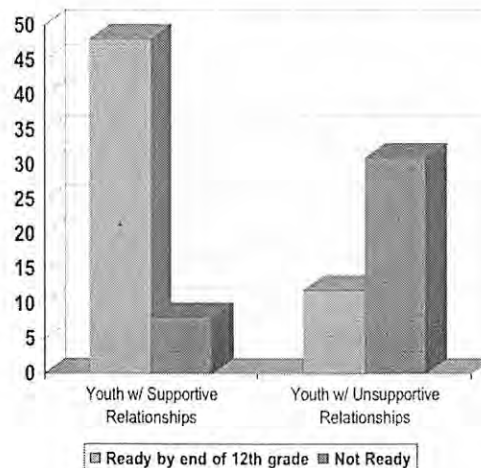
- More than half (52%) had not discussed ideas with a teacher outside of class during the year.
- Three-fifths (60%) had not communicated with a teacher by e-mail.
- However, 70% agreed they had many opportunities to ask questions about their work.
- Less than half (48%) had frequently discussed grades or assignments with a teacher.

- Half never or only sometimes received feedback from teachers on assignments.

Impact of Relationships on Student Learning

For more on the Tripod Project, see the beginning of Chapter 4.

An education project that has had relationships as one of its core principles is the Tripod Project. This is a three-year project directed by Dr. Ronald Ferguson of Harvard. The project examined the impact of curriculum, pedagogy, and relationships on student achievement. Research has been conducted in approximately 20 schools. The project report shows the results of student surveys used at the elementary and high school levels to assess the levels of student support and teacher expectations.



In *Finding Out What Matters for Youth*, Gambone and others examined whether higher levels of student support contributes to higher levels of student engagement and higher levels of student achievement. These results indicate teacher support is important to student engagement in school. Students who perceive teachers to be creating caring, well-structured learning environments in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely

to report engagement in school. In turn, high levels of engagement are associated with higher attendance and test scores — variables that strongly predict whether youth will ultimately pursue postsecondary education and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Relevancy Leads to High Achievement

Research in many aspects of physiology as well as education reinforces the importance of using application instruction as a means of raising student achievement.

Modern technology enables biologists, medical researchers, and cognitive scientists to research and better understand how the human brain functions and how people learn. This fascinating exploration of brain neurons and synapses gives physiological documentation to many of the practices of good teaching.

The brain is stimulated through the senses. When teachers create learning experiences that embody new sights, sounds, and manipulations, more learning will occur. The brain records these many stimulations, but they are only retained as a result of rehearsal, practice, or connection to other knowledge and experience.

Children utilize language and develop patterns of learning very young. Research confirms that the brains of children ages 4 to 10 are much more active than when they are older. The foundations of learning are therefore established at an early age for students. If high-quality learning does not occur then, later learning will be stunted.

The old adage of learning best by experience is really true. Recent research confirms that more learning occurs when students are immersed in a rich, stimulating environment. Learning that involves a physical component, such as writing or design and construction, results in greater brain activity than simply listening or viewing. To be effective, education must create these

Value of Relevance

“Children learn best if they are immersed in complex experiences and are given the opportunity to actively process what they have learned.”

*-Renate Nummela
Caine*

More learning occurs when students are immersed in a rich, stimulating environment.

types of stimulating learning experiences.

When a student cannot recall a new piece of information, it is because that information never made it into long-term memory. Research confirms that there is a process for converting short-term memory to long-term memory.

Research also shows that greater learning takes place when students are challenged and engaged in their learning. Too often, according to Caine and Caine, the rote teaching of facts leads to students actually becoming intellectually disengaged from the learning process, and the brain stops learning. This finding does not mean students should not be required to memorize information, but that it needs to be done in a manner that keeps students interested, which is often through real-world, integrated tasks.

Application results in better learning. The compilation of research in communication and learning by William Glasser reinforces what we all know innately — that we retain information better when we actually use it.

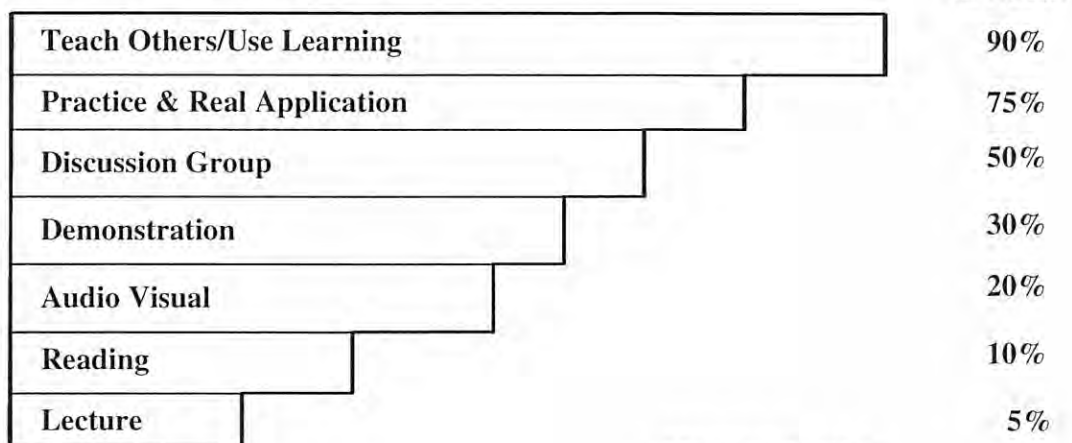
Application of learning is not only a worthy learning objective, but also an effective route to greater retention of knowledge and higher levels of learning.

Students retain 75 percent or more of what they experience through application. Gathering new information only through lecture results in a retention rate of 5 percent. Reading can increase that rate to 10 percent. Adding audiovisual material results in a 20 percent retention rate. These are the instructional practices applied in most U.S. classrooms. Application of learning is not only a worthy learning objective, but also an effective route to greater retention of knowledge and higher levels of learning.

Students in U.S. classrooms have limited exposure to application. In this country, the term “applied” is often used in conjunction with lower-level, less-demanding courses. Parents and educators in search of high-level courses avoid anything that is described as application. Likewise, teachers do not attempt to include application in instruction.

Other nations equate application with high-level learning and frequently incorporate real-world problems into instruction. Stevenson and Stigler have pointed out the significant international differences in this area. Analysis of

Learning Activity Retention



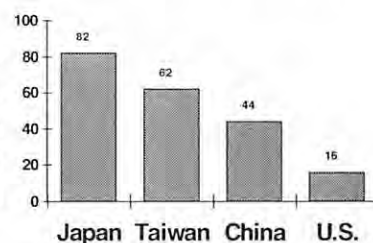
William Glasser, *The Quality School*

classroom instruction revealed that only 16 percent of instruction in a sample of U.S. classrooms could be characterized as application. In contrast, instruction in Taiwan and Japan was 62 percent and 82 percent application, respectively.

Contrary to perceptions in the United States, application instruction does not mean a lack of rigor. In the most comprehensive study to date on a comparison of achievement of students across nations, TIMSS tested 500,000 students in 1995 and 1996. The study also compared textbooks and instructional practices. The curriculum analysis component is published in *A Splintered Vision*.

The TIMSS analysis of textbooks looked at the breadth of topics and rigor of assignments among several nations. U.S. textbooks focused overwhelmingly on the most basic performance expectations. On average, 80 percent of the units in science textbooks for 9-year-old students focused

Real World Applications



on “understanding simple information.” No other nation had as much emphasis on that. U.S. textbooks for 13-year-olds were somewhat more rigorous, but other nations clearly require more challenging work. The analysis of teacher lessons plans showed the same low level of expectation in the United States.

The TIMSS definition of challenging work was not based solely on criteria involving high levels of cognitive activity. Challenging work was also judged by the degree to which students were expected actually to use their knowledge.

In *Characterizing Pedagogical Flow*, the authors made this observation about U.S. classrooms:

Challenging work was also judged by the degree to which students were expected actually to use their knowledge.

Subject matter content in general appeared to be represented in more theoretical, abstract and procedural form rather than represented in practical situations or related to students' experiences.

Research on the tens of thousands of students who drop out of school annually in this country shows that their main reason for leaving is not that they lack the intellectual skills to do the work. It is that they see no connection between what goes on in school and their future. If we are to reach all students to help them develop the level of skills and knowledge which will provide them greater future opportunities, we must make those connections between education and the real world.

Student interest translates into higher levels of achievement.

Stevenson and Stigler have pointed out that one of the obvious differences among international systems is that U.S. education does not have a tradition of valuing learning through application. Close examination shows significantly higher levels of application in European and Asian classrooms. It is therefore no surprise that U.S. students do not fare well on international tests that emphasize application. U.S. eighth-graders ranked 28th in Math and 17th in science on the 1996 TIMSS.

Carefully planned instruction that is aligned with academic standards and taught in a context that interests students leads to greater relevance of instruction. When instruction is more relevant, it not only increases student interest, but also helps to deepen student learning through application. When students experience relevant applications, they are better able to retain skills and knowledge and demonstrate proficiency at a later time.

The national curriculum effort in interdisciplinary instruction is High Schools That Work (HSTW), sponsored by the Southern Regional Education Board. This program encourages the adoption of practices that include incorporating academic skills in career and technical instruction, active student learning, and teacher collaboration. Research found evidence to support the hypothesis that meeting the curricular goals is related to meeting the achievement goals. A higher percentage of students in a school meet the achievement goals when more students complete integrated instruction. HSTW detailed research which continues to show that teachers who use best practices in relating concepts to the real world contribute to higher student achievement.

Perhaps the most compelling research driving the need for application is that the majority of students learn best when instruction emphasizes application, as Conrath reported in *Our Other Youth*. To assist students in achieving high standards, teachers must create learning environments that present students with challenging problems. This work must be aligned with their learning styles, so that they can demonstrate their knowledge and use their skills.

Adding to the education research on the efficacy of more application in learning are the findings from community forums and focus groups of parents and business and community leaders. All of these groups expect high school graduates to use the knowledge they acquire in school when

Meeting the
curricular goals is
related to meeting
the achievement
goals.

they venture out into the world.

Research shows that students learn more when they realize that what they are learning has a practical application to the world of work. Some research findings on how people learn and how to structure successful programs and schools are described briefly as follows.

Knowledge Is Best Acquired When Taught in Context

Brain research reinforces what many teachers observe — students retain knowledge best when it is connected to other experiences. One of the key recommendations of the Committee on the Science of Learning states:

Knowledge that is taught in a variety of contexts is more likely to support flexible transfer than knowledge that is taught in a single context. Information can become “context-bound” when taught with context-specific examples. When material is taught in multiple contexts, people are more likely to extract the relevant features of the concepts and develop a more flexible representation of knowledge that can be used more generally.

The findings are published in the International Center resource kit, *America's Most Successful High Schools: Case Studies and Resources on Best Practices*.

“The great waste in the school comes from the child’s inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside of school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while on the other hand, the child is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school.”
-John Dewey, 1899

In 2004, the International Center for Leadership in Education, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, examined 30 high-performing high schools throughout the country. Among the characteristics that defined these successful schools were extensive instruction in context and high degrees of relevancy. These schools were committed to having students acquire knowledge through contextual learning in many forms.

In the United States, with its exclusive focus on preparation for college, the word “applied” has become synonymous with “lower level.” But the truth is that all students need to be taught theoretical and content knowledge as well as how to apply those theories and that content. Overwhelming evidence has established that the knowledge acquired in the typical U.S. school curriculum fails to equip students for the increasing rigors of the workplace.

Children become better problem-solvers in direct relation to the opportunities they have to solve problems and to reflect on what worked and what did not. Real-world problems do not come neatly packaged in predictable, easy-to-solve formats. We need to provide students with experience in grappling with problems that mirror the world beyond school.

Increased Achievement Results from Focusing on Students' Interests and Aptitudes

Although the theory of multiple intelligences was developed as a psychological theory, it has sparked a great deal of interest among educators because of its implications for teaching and learning. The application of multiple intelligences theory to education is a grassroots movement among teachers. One use involves modifying traditional subject curricula; the theory of multiple intelligences offers teachers a number of different approaches to a topic, several modes of representing key concepts, and a variety of ways in which students can demonstrate their understandings.

The National Research Council reports that when instruction is based on students' interests and aptitudes and is appropriate to their learning styles, students are more motivated to learn. In the 1990s, as the call for teaching students how to use their knowledge began to capture the attention of more academic educators and administrators, the National Research Council found that academic performance improved for many students when they were taught in magnet schools and theme academies. Other successful models are schools-within-a-school and alternative schools. On a smaller scale, authentic assessments and problem-based learning gained acceptance. As achievement in magnet schools and theme academies continues to rise, the research base grows richer to validate the premise. This finding can be a powerful tool to promote interdisciplinary instruction for rigor and relevance.

As student achievement in magnet schools and theme academies continues to rise, the research base grows richer to validate the premise. This finding can be a powerful tool to promote interdisciplinary instruction and small learning communities.

Learning should be an active process; instead, many students spend the school day watching their teachers work.

Metacognition Essential for Continued Learning

In simple terms, metacognition occurs when a learner takes a new piece of information, examines its validity in relation to what else he or she knows about the subject, and then considers how it expands his or her understanding of the topic. Prior knowledge is important in determining performance. This includes knowledge about one's own strengths and weaknesses and the demands of the task at hand.

Metacognition also includes self-regulation—the ability to orchestrate one's learning. Skills such as planning, monitoring success, and correcting errors when appropriate are all necessary for effective intentional learning. Often, metacognition takes place in classrooms when students consider information and talk about its application out loud. By talking about it, they are forced to think more deeply about the issue.

Interdisciplinary instruction and real-world problems encourage metacognition more than traditional subjects taught in isolation. Traditionally, the teacher disseminates knowledge, and the students listen and perhaps take notes. Learning should be an active process; instead, many students spend the school day watching their teachers work. To make learning active requires teachers to change how they teach.

High Expectations Correlate with Achievement

This research finding does not relate only to rigor, relevance, and relationships, but it is mentioned because of the strong research findings.

Any effort to introduce interdisciplinary activities must simultaneously include high expectations for all students. Research shows that students will try to rise to the level of expectation established for them. For interdisciplinary education, this means having high expectations for students' performance in all of the concepts involved from each discipline.

Using interdisciplinary instruction creates learning experiences that can include several standards. This enables schools to use student time more efficiently to develop competence in standards. It also allows for more in-depth instruction and reduces the superficial efforts of “covering” all topics with little student retention.

Interdisciplinary instruction is not an experiment in alternative learning. It is a viable, deliberate strategy to better prepare students for success in an increasingly complex world. Interdisciplinary instruction can also be part of the solution to achieving higher performance on state tests for many students. Interdisciplinary instruction is also consistent with research on learning. It remains only for teachers to look beyond the “way they were taught” and do the right thing for students by giving them rigorous and relevant learning experiences.

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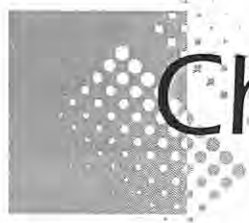
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Chapter 2

Defining Rigor and Relevance

Introducing the Rigor/Relevance Framework

The Knowledge Taxonomy is based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: (1) knowledge/awareness, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a tool developed by staff of the International Center for Leadership in Education to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is based on two dimensions of higher standards and student achievement.

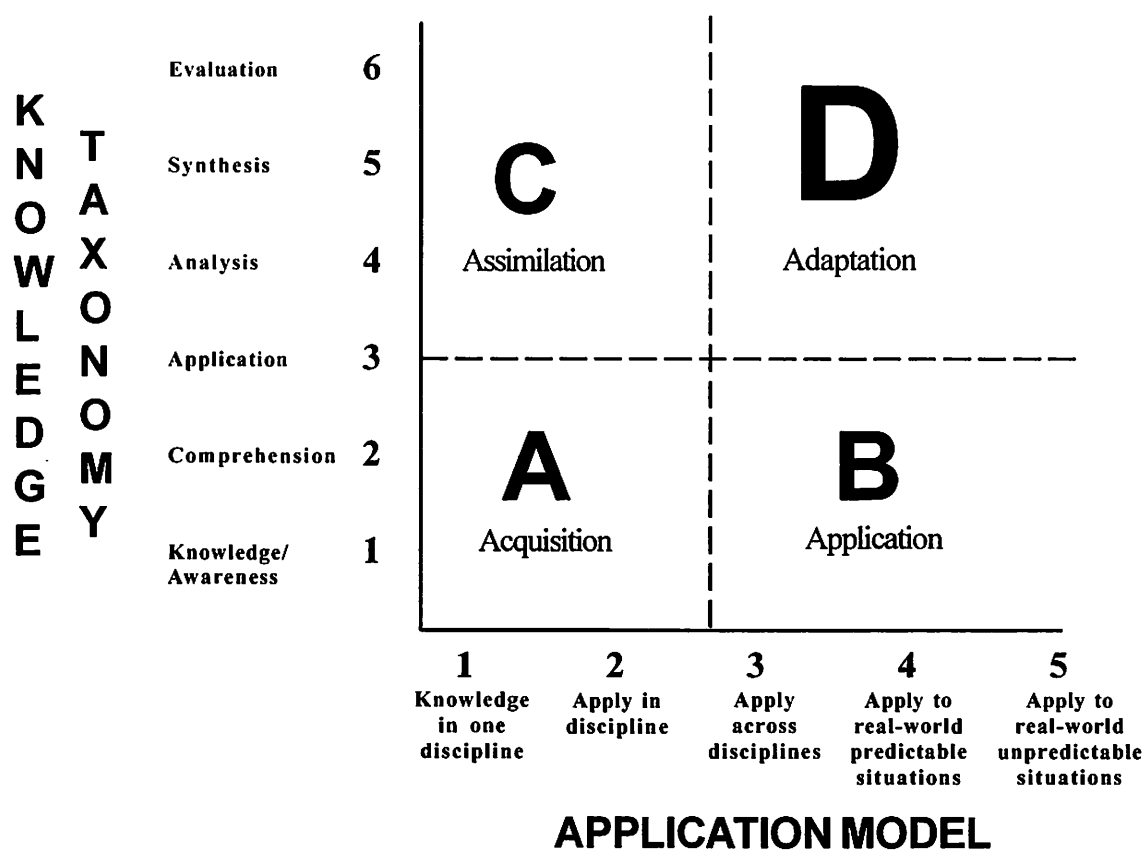
First, there is a continuum of knowledge that describes the increasingly complex ways in which we think. The Knowledge Taxonomy is based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: (1) knowledge/awareness, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.

The low end of this continuum involves acquiring knowledge and being able to recall or locate that knowledge in a simple manner. Just as a computer completes a word search in a word processing program, a competent person at this level can scan through thousands of bits of information in the brain to locate that desired knowledge.

The high end of the Knowledge Taxonomy labels more complex ways in which individuals use knowledge. At this level, knowledge is fully integrated into one's mind, and individuals can do much more than locate information. They can take several pieces of knowledge and combine them in both logical and creative ways. Assimilation of knowledge is a good way to describe this high level of the thinking continuum. Assimilation is often referred to as a higher-order thinking skill; at this level, the student can solve multistep problems and create unique work and solutions.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework has four quadrants. Quadrant A represents simple recall and basic understanding of knowledge for its own sake. Quadrant C represents knowledge for its own sake, as well as more complex thinking. Examples of Quadrant A knowledge are knowing that the Earth is round and that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*.

Rigor/Relevance Framework®



Quadrant C embraces higher levels of knowledge, such as understanding how the U.S. political system works and analyzing the benefits and challenges of cultural diversity in this nation versus other nations.

Quadrants B and D represent action or high degrees of application. For example, Quadrant B includes knowing how to use mathematics skills to make purchases and count change. Quadrant D knowledge explores the ability to access information in wide area network systems and the ability to gather knowledge from a variety of sources to solve a complex problem in the workplace.

Each of these four quadrants can also be labeled with a term that characterizes the learning or student performance.

Quadrant A—Acquisition

Students gather and store bits of knowledge and information. Students are primarily expected to remember or understand this acquired knowledge.

Quadrant B—Application

Students use acquired knowledge to solve problems, design solutions, and complete work. The highest level of application is to apply appropriate knowledge to new and unpredictable situations.

Quadrant C—Assimilation

Students extend and refine their acquired knowledge to be able to use that knowledge automatically and routinely to analyze and solve problems, as well as create unique solutions.

Quadrant D — Adaptation

Students have the competence to think in complex ways and also apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired. Even when confronted with

perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skills to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.

A Fresh Approach

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a fresh approach to looking at curriculum standards and assessment. It is based on traditional elements of education, yet encourages movement to application of knowledge instead of maintaining an exclusive focus on acquisition of knowledge.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is easy to understand. With its simple, straightforward structure, it can serve as a bridge between school and the community. It offers a common language with which to express the notion of a more rigorous and relevant curriculum and encompasses much of what parents, business leaders, and community members want students to learn.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is versatile; it can be used in the development of instruction and assessment. Likewise, teachers can use it to measure their progress in adding rigor and relevance to instruction. It can also help select appropriate instructional strategies to meet learner needs and higher achievement goals.

Defining Rigor

Rigor refers to academic rigor — learning in which students demonstrate a thorough, in-depth mastery of challenging tasks to develop cognitive skills through reflective thought, analysis, problem-solving, evaluation, or creativity. Rigorous learning can occur at any school grade and in any subject. The Knowledge Taxonomy describes levels of rigor.

Here is an example involving technical reading and writing.

Quadrant A

Recall definitions of various technical terms.

Quadrant B

Follow written directions to install new software on a computer.

Quadrant C

Compare and contrast several technical documents to evaluate purpose, audience, and clarity.

Quadrant D

Write procedures for installing and troubleshooting new software.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework offers a common language with which to express the notion of a more rigorous and relevant curriculum and encompasses much of what parents, business leaders, and community members want students to learn.

Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List

1

Knowledge

arrange	match
check	name
choose	point to
find	recall
group	recite
identify	repeat
label	say
list	select
locate	write

2

Comprehension

advance	interpret
calculate	outline
change	project
contemplate	propose
convert	reword
define	submit
explain	transform
extrapolate	translate
infer	vary

3

Application

adopt	manipulate
capitalize on	mobilize
consume	operate
devote	put to use
employ	relate
exercise	solve
handle	start
maintain	take up
make use of	utilize

4

Analysis

assay	include
audit	inspect
break down	look at
canvass	scrutinize
check out	sift
deduce	study
dissect	survey
divide	test for
examine	uncover

5

Synthesis

blend	develop
build	evolve
cause	form
combine	generate
compile	make up
compose	originate
conceive	produce
construct	reorder
create	structure

6

Evaluation

accept	grade
appraise	judge
arbitrate	prioritize
assess	rank
award	rate
classify	reject
criticize	rule on
decide	settle
determine	weigh

A versatile way to identify the level of rigor of curriculum objectives, instructional activities, or assessments is through the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List. The Verb List can be used either to create a desired level of expected student performance or to evaluate the level of existing curriculum, instruction, or assessment. An example of student performance at various levels follows.

BASIC NUTRITION	
Level	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge/ Awareness	Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Comprehension	Explain nutritional value of individual foods
Level 3 – Application	Make use of nutrition guidelines in planning meals
Level 4 – Analysis	Examine success in achieving nutrition goals
Level 5 – Synthesis	Develop personal nutrition goals
Level 6 – Evaluation	Appraise results of personal eating habits over time

Notice each statement starts with a verb that comes from the appropriate section of the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List. The expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition can vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher only wants students to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at level 1 or 2 is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a more significant impact on nutritional habits, then some of the objectives need to be similar to levels 4 through 6.

Note that each of the levels requires students to think differently. Levels 4 through 6 require more complex thinking than levels 1 through 3.

Do not confuse rigor with difficulty or rigidity. Obscure or tedious questions may be difficult but are not rigorous in cognition. Nor does being inflexible in student expectations lead to higher level thinking and rigor.

When creating lesson plans and student objectives, selecting the proper word from the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List can help to describe the appropriate performance. Simply start with a verb from the desired level and finish the statement with a description of that skill or knowledge area. The Verb List can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Looking for verbs and identifying their level will give a good indication of the level of student performance in that instruction.

Defining Relevance

Relevant learning is interdisciplinary and contextual.

Relevance refers to learning in which students apply core knowledge, concepts, or skills to solve real-world problems. Relevant learning is interdisciplinary and contextual. Student work can range from routine to complex at any school grade and in any subject. Relevant learning is created, for example, through authentic problems or tasks, simulation, service learning, connecting concepts to current issues, and teaching others. The Application Model describes the levels of relevance.

Identifying the level of relevance of curriculum objectives and instructional activities is a little more difficult than determining the Knowledge Taxonomy level because there is no verb list. However, just as the Knowledge Taxonomy categorizes increasing levels of thinking, the Application Model describes increasingly complex applications of knowledge. Any student performance can be expressed as one of five levels of the Application Model.

The Basic Nutrition example that follows describes student performance at various levels, similar to the example in the Defining Rigor. However, each level requires students to apply knowledge differently.

The expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition will vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher wants students only to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at

BASIC NUTRITION	
Level	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge in One Discipline	Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Application in One Discipline	Rank foods by nutritional value
Level 3 – Interdisciplinary Application	Make cost comparisons of different foods considering nutritional value
Level 4 – Real-world Predictable Situations	Develop a nutritional plan for a person with a health problem affected by food intake
Level 5 – Real-world Unpredictable Situations	Devise a sound nutritional plan for a group of 3-year-olds who are picky eaters

level 1 is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a significant impact on nutritional habits, then some of the objectives need to be at levels 4 and 5.

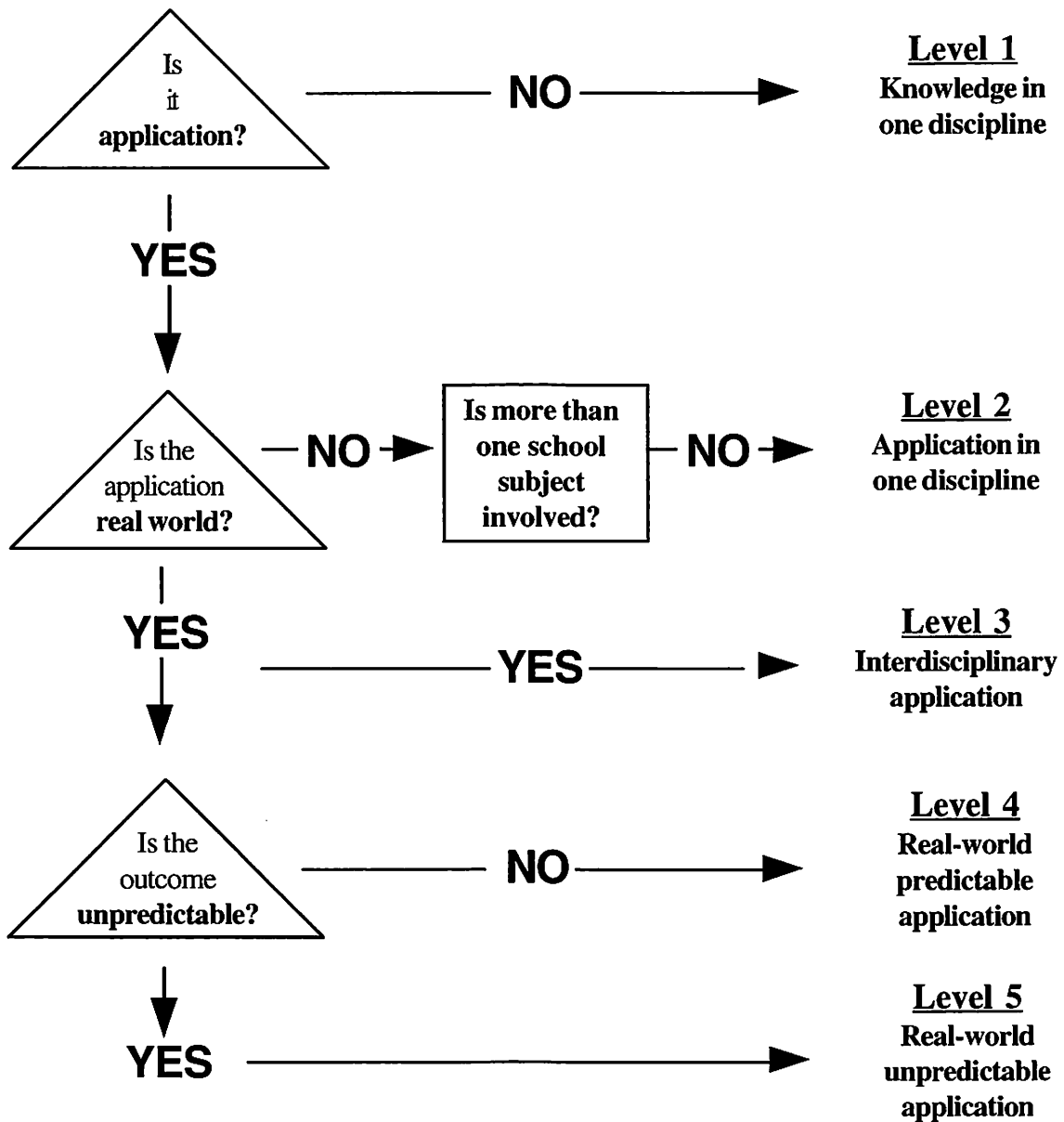
The Application Model Decision Tree shown on the following pages can assist in setting the desired level of expected student performance in application. Start by writing draft statements of student objectives and then use the Decision Tree to reflect on and revise these statements. The first page of the Decision Tree focuses on the three key characteristics that distinguish levels of the Application Model: application, real world, and unpredictability. The second page of the Decision Tree offers additional criteria to determine whether an objective meets the test of application, real-world, and unpredictability.

The Application Model Decision Tree can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Answer the

Do not confuse student excitement and activity with relevance. To be relevant, the work must be meaningful and similar to the work adults do outside school.

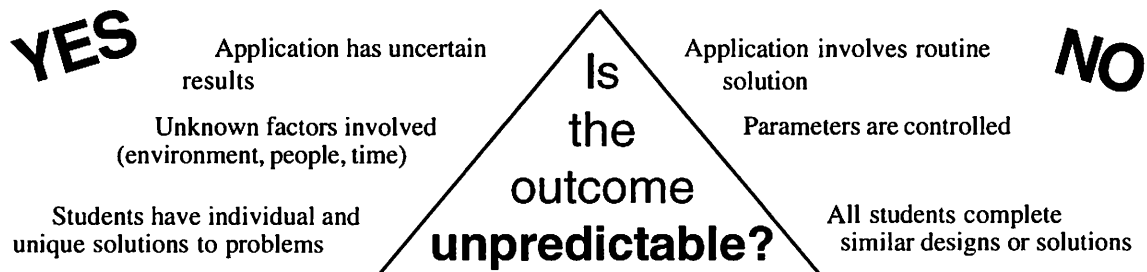
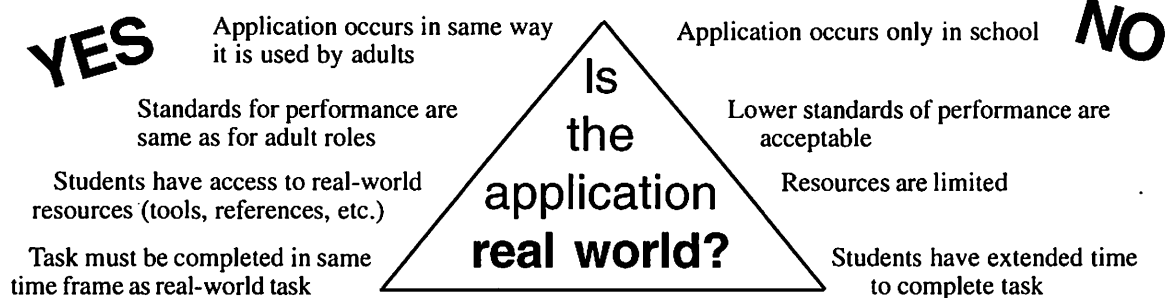
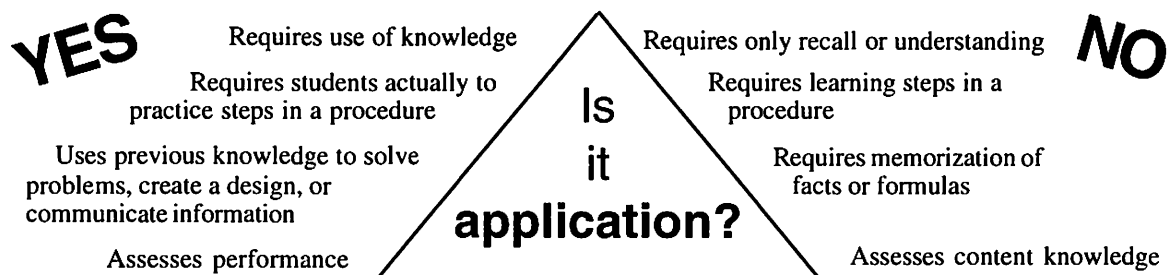
Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Select a task, application, or activity and then answer the following questions. See the next page for clarification of the questions.



Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Use the following statements to clarify where a task, application, or assessment belongs on the Application Model.



questions to identify the level of student performance for the instruction or assessment.

Why Is This Useful?

One of the principles of effective learning is congruence among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Make sure that levels of rigor and relevance are consistent throughout a lesson. For example, if a teacher has lofty curriculum objectives in Quadrant D — high rigor/high relevance but develops instruction and assessments in Quadrant A — low rigor/low relevance, students would be unlikely to achieve those high expectations. Similarly, if a teacher creates high-rigor instructional activities but uses a low-rigor assessment, the test would not be an accurate indication of what students had learned.

Use the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List and the Application Model Decision Tree to draft, examine, and modify curriculum objectives, instructional activities, or assessments to get them to the desired level. The Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List lists verbs that can be used to expand into objectives or test questions. The Application Model Decision Tree helps categorize draft objectives or test questions.

Teaching and Learning in the Rigor/Relevance Framework

Teacher/Student Roles

One way to think about the Rigor/Relevance Framework in day-to-day instruction is in terms of the roles that teachers and students take. These roles are represented in the following figure.

When instruction and expected student learning is in Quadrant A, the focus is on “teacher work.” Teachers expend energy to create and assess learning

activities — providing information, creating worksheets, and grading student work. The student is often a passive learner.

When the student expectation moves to Quadrant B, the emphasis is on the student doing real-world work. This student work is often more complicated than Quadrant A work and requires more time. Learning in Quadrant B is best described as “student work” because students are doing extensive real-world tasks.

When the learning is placed in Quadrant C, it is best described as “student think.” In this quadrant, students are expected to think in complex ways — to analyze, compare, create, and evaluate.

The term that best describes Quadrant D activities is “student think and work.” Learning in Quadrant D is more demanding and requires the student to think and work. Roles shift from the teacher-centered instruction in Quadrant A to student-centered instruction in Quadrants B, C, and D. Teachers still work in Quadrants B, C, and D, but their role is more as a coach or facilitator.

Rigor/Relevance Framework
Teacher/Student Roles

R I G O R	<i>High</i>	C Student Think	D Student Think and Work
	<i>Low</i>	A Teacher Work	B Student Work
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
		RELEVANCE	

Another way to distinguish learning among the four quadrants is by looking at whether the students “got it right” in terms of how the work will be evaluated. When instruction is in Quadrant A, there is clearly a right answer. When the level of learning moves up into Quadrant C, often there is more than one “right” answer, and the teacher is looking for original work that reflects logical and rational thinking on the student’s part. Quadrant C is about rational answers. When the learning is real-world in Quadrant B, instruction often involves having students follow a procedure to do some work, and the right answer requires doing the procedure correctly. In Quadrant D, where the student is working on complex real-world problems, results depend upon whether the student asked all the right questions in order to consider everything that should have been included in attacking the problem.

Rigor/Relevance Framework *Did Students Get It Right?*

R I G O R	High	C Rational Answer	D Right Questions
	Low	A Right Answer	B Right Procedure
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Student Learning in the Rigor/Relevance Framework

Following are some examples of student learning in each quadrant at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Elementary Level Examples

		English	
R I G O R	High	Brainstorm as many words as possible to describe an object. C	Create new words to describe phenomena or objects. D
	Low	Memorize spelling words. A	Write a story about the school using specific words. B
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Mathematics			
R I G O R	High	Find values in number sentences when represented by unknowns. C	Develop formula for estimating a large quantity without counting (e.g., beans in a jar). D
	Low	Memorize multiplication tables. A	Collect outside temperatures for several days and graph the results. B
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

		Science	
R I G O R	High	C Make diagrams of animal life cycles.	D Design a zoo.
	Low	A Make daily observations of an animal kept in class.	B Create a field book about organisms in a local river.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Elementary Level Examples

		Social Studies	
R I G O R	High	Contrast citizens' responsibilities under different forms of government.	Devise strategies for surviving a disaster (e.g., blizzard, tornado).
	Low	Memorize names, locations, and capital cities of the 50 states.	Describe geographic and climatic characteristics of the local community.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

		Art	
R I G O R	High	Contrast painting styles.	Express emotions and feelings with color and images.
	Low	Explain the color wheel.	Create holiday crafts/ornaments.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Middle Level Examples

English			
R I G O R	High	A Analyze commercials for fact and opinion.	B Write directions for assembling a product or carrying out a procedure.
	Low	A Locate information in a technical manual.	B Assemble a product following written directions.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Mathematics			
R I G O R	High	A Express probabilities as fractions, percents, or decimals.	B Devise a scale to test consumer products and graph data.
	Low	A Plot the coordinates for quadrilaterals on a grid.	B Make a scale drawing of the classroom.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Science			
R I G O R	High	A Identify chemicals dissolved in an unknown solution.	B Collect data and make recommendations to address an environmental problem.
	Low	A Construct models of molecules.	B Collect data on dissolved oxygen, hardness, alkalinity, and temperature in a stream.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Middle Level Examples

		Social Studies	
R I G O R	High	C Analyze primary and secondary documents.	D Compare examples of stereotyping in historic and current events.
	Low	A View a historical video and answer factual questions.	B Plan and participate in a community service activity.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

		Art	
R I G O R	High	C Research a famous artist.	D Create a sculpture using everyday objects.
	Low	A Define art terms.	B Create a visual piece using tessellation.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

High School Examples

English			
R I G O R	High	Compare and contrast literary styles of different authors.	Write and perform a radio play.
	Low	Read an important work of literature and identify the theme.	Relate a historical novel to current events.
		Low	High
RELEVANCE			

Mathematics			
R I G O R	High	Select best measures of central tendency to support a point of view. C	Develop a sampling plan for a public opinion poll. D
	Low	Predict the probability of events using ratios. A	Measure small metal objects using calipers and micrometers. B
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

		Science	
R I G O R	High	Research the discovery of a new element. C	Solve organic chemistry case study problems in petroleum distillation. D
	Low	Memorize elements of the Periodic Table. A	Participate in an online collaboration to collect scientific data on a global problem. B
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

High School Examples

		Social Studies	
R I G O R	High	Participate in a Socratic seminar on a policy issue, such as privacy.	Analyze a community problem, suggest a solution, and prepare a plan to solve it.
	Low	Study geography of a world region through demographic and economic data.	Locate and interpret current and historical economic data for economic forecasting.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

		Second Language	
R I G O R	High	Read and analyze literary work in a second language.	Teach language to younger students.
	Low	Speak common vocabulary.	Role-play conversations.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

		Art	
R I G O R	High	Compare styles of impressionists of the 19 th century.	Design and construct sets for a dramatic production.
	Low	Conduct a virtual museum field trip.	Create a collage illustrating positive and negative space.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

High School Examples

Music			
R I G O R	High	C Compare and contrast different musical styles.	D Compose a song.
	Low	A Memorize notes.	B Perform a musical piece from memory.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Health Education			
R I G O R	High	C Identify advertisements that target youth.	D Create an advertisement to combat unhealthy youth advertising.
	Low	A Describe the effects of drugs on the human body.	B Demonstrate strategies to reduce spread of germs.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

Physical Education			
R I G O R	High	C Compare benefits of different forms of cardiovascular exercise.	D Design an exercise program for senior citizens.
	Low	A Acquire fundamentals of basketball.	B Play a baseball game.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

High School Examples

Family and Consumer Science

R I G O R	High	C Analyze child safety hazards.	D Develop a brochure for parents on child safety.
	Low	A List parental responsibilities.	B Demonstrate child care tasks with simulated infant.
		Low	High

RELEVANCE

Business - Information Technology

R I G O R	High	C Compare features of Web development software.	D Create a Web site for a local business.
	Low	A Demonstrate Web development software functions.	B Design a Web page.
		Low	High

RELEVANCE

Construction

R I G O R	High	C Compare heat loss ratings and cost of building materials.	D Design and construct a storage shed.
	Low	A List safety procedures.	B Use power tools correctly.
		Low	High

RELEVANCE



Chapter 3

Defining Relationships in Learning

Dimensions of Relationships

Students invest more of themselves, work harder, and learn better when the topic is interesting and connected to something that they already know.

Strong relationships are critical to completing rigorous work successfully. Students are more likely to make a personal commitment to engage in rigorous learning when they know teachers, parents, and other students actually care about how well they do. They are willing to continue making the investment when they are encouraged, supported, and assisted — much in the same way that a personal trainer might work with an athlete who lacks the will or confidence to continue.

The International Center for Leadership in Education has focused for years on relevance as equally critical as rigor. Relevance can help create conditions and motivation necessary for students to make the personal investment required for rigorous work or optimal learning. Students invest more of themselves, work harder, and learn better when the topic is interesting and connected to something that they already know. Relationships complement rigor and relevance. For students to engage fully in challenging learning, they require increased levels of support from the people around them.

In addition to relationships around the student as learner, relationships among staff are important also. In model schools, it is clearly evident that staff members support each other and learn from one another. In these schools, teachers enjoy their work and perform as a team, sharing the burden of effective teaching. Again, it is the quality of relationships that is apparent in these effective schools.

There are four dimensions of relationships important in schools.

- ✓ **Learning Relationships** - These are the relationships with students essential for support in the learning process, formed from a combination of relationships with parents, peers, and teachers.
- ✓ **Staff Relationships** - These are the relationships among teachers, administrators and support staff that influence teaching, support

functions, staff retention and development, and school decisions and problem-solving.

- ✓ **Professional Relationships** - These are the relationships each educator creates and maintains to learn and develop in the profession. It includes individual mentors and groups from whom an educator learns and those that provide a supportive environment in the profession. This group often extends beyond a school or district where an educator is employed.
- ✓ **Community Relationships** - These are the relationships of the school as an organization with parents and business and community leaders.

Good leaders inspire others and, in the process, develop positive relationships among staff. Likewise, good teachers break down student isolation and facilitate learning that provides a strong supportive environment for students. Positive relationships occur in many schools. The question is whether, in the process of school improvement, we can elevate relationships from a characteristic we observe to a dimension of schools we measure, set goals around, plan for, and systematically improve.

Perhaps what is needed to bring relationships into a viable aspect of school improvement is the development of a Relationship Framework. Such a taxonomy will enable quantifying relationships. Over 50 years ago, Benjamin Bloom and others developed the Knowledge Taxonomy that has become universally accepted as a way to designate levels of cognitive thinking. Teachers set and improve levels of student thinking in their classrooms using this knowledge framework. Bill Daggett and the International Center for Leadership in Education created the Application Model to describe a taxonomy of learning along higher degrees of application. In the same way the Knowledge Taxonomy and the Application Model have helped define knowledge and application, a clear taxonomy for relationships can drive improvement in connections related to learning.

Clearly relationships are important. How do we define and improve them?

Good leaders inspire others and, in the process, develop positive relationships among staff.

Relationship Framework

The Relationship Framework describes seven levels of relationships.

Level 0 is Isolation. This is the lack of any positive relationships. The individual feels alone and isolated from social relationships that would enhance learning.

Level 1 is Known. A person must know someone before a relationship is formed. When teachers seek to develop positive relationships with students, the first step is getting to know them—their families, likes, dislikes, aspirations, and learning styles.

Level 2 is Receptive. Often a learning relationship is described in terms of providing the assistance and support that a student needs. However, a preliminary step is showing that you are interested and genuinely care about developing a relationship. This comes from frequent contact in multiple settings and taking an active interest.

Level 3 is Reactive. In this case, one person receives guidance or support from another. This relationship yields emotional support or cognitive information.

Level 4 is Proactive. At this level, the partners have made a proactive commitment to do more than assist when needed and take an active interest in supporting the other person.

Level 5 is Sustained. Positive support is balanced from all family members, peers, and teachers. It is a relationship that will endure over a long period of time. This is the level of relationship that effective parents have with their children.

Level 6 is Mutually Beneficial. This level occurs rarely in education, for at this point, both parties contribute support to one another for an extended period of time.

Relationship Framework

0. Isolation
1. Known
2. Receptive
3. Reactive
4. Proactive
5. Sustained
6. Mutually Beneficial

When the Relationship Framework is applied to learning, it refers to the support that is provided to students from teachers, parents, peers, and the community. The following chart describes the degrees of student support at each level of the framework.

Relationship Framework	
Learning Relationships Support for Students	
0. Isolated	Students feel significant isolation from teachers, peers, or even parents. Students lack any emotional, social connection to peers and teachers.
1. Known	Students are known by others, frequently called by name. Teachers know students and their families, interests, aspirations, and challenges. Students are known by peers that they interact with in school.
2. Receptive	Students have contact with peers, parents, and teachers in multiple settings. Teachers exhibit positive behaviors of “being there” that show genuine interest and concern.
3. Reactive	Teachers, parents, and peers provide help to students when requested, but support may be sporadic and inconsistent among support groups.
4. Proactive	Others take an active interest in a student’s success. Teachers take initiative to show interest and provide support. Students and others express verbal commitment for ongoing support and validate this commitment with their actions.
5. Sustained	There is extensive, ongoing, pervasive, and balanced support from teachers, parents, and peers that is consistent and sustained over time.
6. Mutually Beneficial	Positive relationships are everywhere and commonplace among the way that students, teachers, and parents interact and support the student as learner.

How the Relationship Framework Helps Teachers

When relationships are categorized as a simple dichotomy of good or bad, teachers are not likely to reflect on practice or make self-directed changes.

Sample surveys using the Relationship Framework can be found in Chapter 7, Discover #10 - Relationship Surveys.

Once teachers make relationships important, they can begin to reflect on current practices and discuss how to improve relationships. Relationships are not simply good or bad; they exist on a continuum. Furthermore, relationships can change over time.

The Relationship Framework is useful because it first helps teachers understand that there are degrees of relationships. When they think about their relationships with students, teachers can use the framework to apply a qualitative measure to the relationships they make. This qualitative measure helps teachers reflect on their current levels and allows them to decide if they wish to make changes to improve relationships. When relationships are categorized as a simple dichotomy of good or bad, teachers are not likely to reflect on practice or make self-directed changes. If relationships are “good,” there is no need for change. If relationships are “poor,” it is easier to become defensive, blame the other party, or simply accept things for the way they are. When a leveled framework is used for describing relationships, it has a different effect on teachers. Even if relationships are poor, there are at least some positive aspects on which to build. This makes teachers less defensive.

At the other end of the scale, relationships categorized as generally “good” are usually never as good as they could be. There is the potential for growth and further improvement. This motivates even the best teachers to continue to work on improving relationships and strive to reach higher levels. In this scenario, all teachers need to work on improving relationships regardless of the current level of success.

The various levels in the Relationship Framework help to identify the changes that need to be made to improve relationships. If a teacher observes that a student is isolated, the first step is to engage in interventions to get the student “known.” The teachers can get to know the student and facilitate activities among peers to expand what they know about one another. Just because students “hang out” together does not mean that they really know

much about each other. Sometimes a student in a group can be just as isolated as a student who sits alone in a school cafeteria.

If a teacher observes that current student relationships are at the “known” level, relationship interventions can focus on frequency of contact and exhibiting behaviors of receptivity. The next level moves to behaviors that provide support to students.

The various levels of the Relationship Framework provide guidance to teachers on how gradually to move to higher levels of learning relationships. Relationships are not a dichotomy of good or bad. There are degrees of relationships, and teachers can work on behaviors that will improve learning relationships.

Classroom Management versus Learning Relationships

The teacher’s responsibility in teaching and learning in the classroom is often divided into instruction and classroom management. Instruction refers to the content and pedagogy of what is learned. Classroom management refers to the processes and techniques that teachers use to set the climate for learning. “Classroom management” creates the impression that the classroom is an industrial process rather than a collaboration among people. Classroom management suggests that the teacher applies certain management techniques without any emotion to make sure that the classroom runs smoothly and efficiently. The term originates in the industrial model of education, the same model that gives us a rigid bell schedule, differentiation of labor, and large school houses.

School leaders are now questioning many of these industrial model characteristics. Perhaps one of the changes schools should make is to abandon the term “classroom management” and replace it with “relationship building.” Teachers need to create a climate for learning in the classroom. However, this is not a process to be managed. The classroom is made up of

a group of students who desire and deserve high quality personal relationships with adults and peers. It is the quality of these relationships that drives their behavior and leads to learning. The following table describes some differences in looking at the climate of instruction as relationship building rather than as classroom management.

	Classroom Management	Relationship Building
Classroom Rules	Mandated	Negotiated
Power	Without question	Power with respect
Observation of Effectiveness	Students sitting passive and quiet	Students actively engaged
Risk-Taking	Discouraged	Encouraged
Control Mechanism	Negative punishments	Positive reinforcement
Primary Teacher Role	Absolute attention	Source of encouragement

Staff Relationships

When the Relationship Framework is applied to staff, it refers to the level of respect, communication, and collaboration that exists among all staff in a school. The following chart provides additional descriptions of staff relationships at each level of the framework.

Relationship Framework	
Staff Relationships	
Collaborative Learning Communities	
0. Isolated	Staff members perform their work but feel significant isolation from other staff or lack frequent feedback from school leaders and others.
1. Known	Staff members know each other personally, including their interests, aspirations, and challenges.
2. Receptive	Teachers, support staff, and leaders have frequent contact and respect each other's contributions to the school environment. All exhibit behaviors of interest in others.
3. Reactive	There are many examples of teachers or support staff working together, and staff members consistently and eagerly help when requested.
4. Proactive	Strong levels of collaboration exist, and there is obvious ongoing commitment in team teaching, mentoring new teachers, and professional development.
5. Sustained	There is demonstrated ongoing collaboration from all staff over a significant period of time. New staff members are incorporated into the school culture of collaboration.
6. Mutually Beneficial	Staff members work as a total community committed to each other and to school goals.

Professional Relationships

The Relationship Framework is applied to educators beyond their work with colleagues employed at the same school or district. Professional educators learn their craft working with mentors and other educators at universities, other school districts, and in professional organizations. Educators often rely on national, state, or regional professional organizations for ideas and encouragement in their specific profession. The dozens of professional organizations for educators are testimony to the importance

of professional relationships in education. Often educators rely on formal mentors for guidance throughout their career. Professional relationships refer to the ongoing collaboration that exists among all educators outside of the school or district where they work. The following chart provides additional descriptions of professional relationships at each level of the framework.

Relationship Framework	
Professional Relationships	
0. Isolated	Educators work with little interaction with others in the profession.
1. Known	Educators know many educators within their profession. They attend regional or state professional meetings.
2. Receptive	Educators make frequent contact via telephone or e-mail with like professionals beyond formal meetings. They exhibit a willingness to actively participate, share ideas, and answer questions.
3. Reactive	Educators offer and seek help from others in the profession. Also, they may present a program, write an article, or simply meet one-on-one with another educator.
4. Proactive	Educators have formal agreements with another educator to serve as a mentor providing ongoing advice and feedback.
5. Sustained	There is ongoing collaborative and active involvement in professional organizations.
6. Mutually Beneficial	An educator is recognized as making significant contributions to a profession. Professional relationships are essential rewards in personal satisfaction in the educator's work.

Community Relationships

When the Relationship Framework is applied to the community, it describes the level of respect, support, involvement, and communication that exists among various community groups and the school as a whole. The following chart describes examples of community relationships at each level of the framework.

Relationship Framework	
Community Relationships	
0. Isolated	A school may be strong or weak but functions independently from the community at large.
1. Known	School staff knows families, community organizations, and community leaders. Staff members are knowledgeable about major local businesses.
2. Receptive	Staff and administration exhibit openness to parents and community. Parents feel welcome in the school.
3. Reactive	Parent requests for information are responded to promptly. School activities include community service. There are many active parents involved in a variety of school activities and instruction.
4. Proactive	Active partnerships exist with community and business organizations. There are community groups that formally support various school functions.
5. Sustained	There exists a long-term tradition of parent involvement and community partnerships. The school attributes a large share of its success to community partnerships.
6. Mutually Beneficial	Relationships at this level are mature and committed. They benefit both the school and community.

Further Reading

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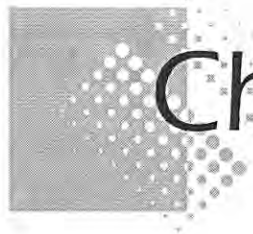
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Chapter 4

Building Student Relationships

How to Build Relationships

Building relationships is determined by the way teachers create interaction with students. It is the complex combination of what we say and do. The words and deeds accumulate to create either a respectful and positive relationship that elevates the level of learning or a negative relationship that stands as an obstacle to learning. Relationships are carefully constructed one conversation or action at a time. It takes many interactions to create a positive relationship, but only one careless comment or action to destroy it. The development of a teacher-student relationship can be compared to a large falling domino display. After tedious and careful construction, the builder steps back to see the beautiful result. However, one misplaced domino can destroy the display before it is completed, and the builder will have to start all over again. Such is the case with building relationships. One negative comment or conversation can ruin a relationship between a teacher and a student, forcing them to rebuild what they created together. In building relationships, teachers must be patient, since relationships take time to build. They also must be cautious in what they say and do.

Actions That Value Others

The recent book by Sandra Harris, *BRAVO! Building Relationships with Actions that Value Others*, offers practical suggestions and moving stories about building relationships. There is also a teacher and administrator version, which is one of the suggested further readings. A description of actions that help to build relationships include:

Actions That Uphold High Standards

- ✓ Search Your Soul
- ✓ Accept Responsibility
- ✓ Create a Culture of Achievement

Actions That Are Empowering

- ✓ Build Leadership Capacity
- ✓ Encourage Authentic Learning
- ✓ Demonstrate Democratic Principles

Actions That Demonstrate Respect for All

- ✓ Be Fair
- ✓ Be Caring

Actions That Support All Students

- ✓ Communicate Effectively
- ✓ Encourage

Actions That Challenge the Imagination

- ✓ Be Open to Change
- ✓ Solve Problems Creatively

Actions That Demonstrate Culturally Responsive Teaching

- ✓ Confront Your Own Personal Biases
- ✓ Confront Biases in the Classroom
- ✓ Acknowledge and Affirm Cultural Diversity
- ✓ Be Careful About Crossing Bridges

Actions That Are Courageous

- ✓ Advocate for Others
- ✓ Abound in Hope

One education initiative that has relationships as a primary focus is the Tripod Project. The purpose of the Tripod Project is to increase communication and build knowledge among teachers about ways of achieving success in the classroom. It focuses on three legs of the instructional tripod — content, pedagogy, and relationships — with the aim of helping all students, especially African-Americans and Hispanics, to achieve at higher levels.

The project encourages teachers to attend more carefully to how each leg of the tripod interacts with five key tasks of social and intellectual engagement in their own classrooms. These five key tasks are:

The Tripod Project, directed by Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, has conducted research and staff development in several urban schools across the country.

Task One. Trust and Interest vs. Mistrust and Disinterest

Introductory class sessions provide a good start to the semester by fostering positive feelings about the class.

Task Two. Balanced vs. Imbalanced Teacher Control and Student Autonomy

Teacher and students seek and find an appropriate balance of teacher control and student autonomy.

Task Three. Ambitiousness vs. Ambivalence

Each student collaborates with the teacher to commit to ambitious learning goals and to overcome ambivalence by either party.

Task Four. Industriousness vs. Disengagement or Discouragement

Teacher and students work industriously to achieve goals for learning and to recover from any disengagement or discouragement due to setbacks.

Task Five. Consolidation vs. Irresolution and Disconnection

Teacher helps students to consolidate what they have learned and to connect goals to future classes and life experiences, where what they have learned will be applicable.

Communication That Signals Caring

Timely Talking

The first component of effective communication is the decision to even talk at all. Sometimes the decision to engage in a conversation has more impact on building positive relationships than the actual conversation. For a school leader, one of the important concepts to instill in teachers is making good decisions about when to engage in conversation. For example, seeing a negative behavior is best corrected with an immediate direct response. If a teacher fails to speak and acknowledge this inappropriate behavior, then students will quickly assume it is acceptable. A teacher must act quickly when a student obviously exhibits frustration, shows lack of interest, or feels isolated. By asking a question, giving a compliment, or even making a personal greeting, a conversation can start that continues to build positive

relationships with students. Teachers need feedback both from school leaders and peers about the timely decisions of talking and engaging in conversations. Too much talk can create negative feelings in students. All teachers should be constantly aware of the timeliness of their conversation to take advantage of opportunities to build positive relationships, to show interest, and to assist students in engaging learning situations.

Tactful Honesty

The second component of effective communication is honesty. Students observe much more than we frequently give them credit for. A poor communication practice occurs any time teachers provide inaccurate information, try to cover up negative events, or only share part of the “story” with students. Often this is done to try and protect them. Students will most often get the full story at a later time. This lack of full honesty acts as a roadblock to the building of high-quality learning relationships. Students often indicate that they value teachers and administrators who are open and honest with them—sharing good news and bad.

Being honest is often a significant burden, and full disclosure can be brutal to students and create many strong emotions. So while it is important to be fully honest in talking with students, it is also important for teachers to use some measure of tact in sharing information with students. One way to improve tactfulness in conversations is for teachers to be very precise in their observations. For example, when a teacher observes a student frequently late to class, the teacher really has no idea of the reason or motivation for tardiness. If the teacher makes a comment that the student is lazy or unorganized, that assumption may be wrong and may lead to additional confrontation. It is far more tactful to say to the student, “You’ve been late four times this week. That negatively affects the rest of the students in this class.” This latter comment is still accurate, but less judgmental. As an instructional leader working to improve student relationships, it is very important to provide feedback to teachers on how to improve conversations with tactful honesty.

While it is important to be fully honest in talking with students, it is also important to use tact.

Active Listening

The third component of communication for building relationships is active listening. Active listening is intentionally focusing on the person with whom you are having a conversation, whether it is in a group or one-on-one, in order to understand what he or she is saying. When encouraging teachers to use good communication skills to build relationships, it is essential for teachers to practice focusing on students one-on-one and engaging in the conversation. Looking directly at the other person, turning toward the subject, and removing other distractions help to make the teacher more aware of the student's nonverbal cues and show a greater interest in the conversation as well as the individual.

Active listening may also require suppressing emotional involvement with the conversation. It is hard to truly listen if the teacher is yelling in a loud voice at students. Active listening requires not only hearing, but also observing. Verbal clues and other observations help to decode a student's message. Give each student time to complete his or her message. Express appreciation for sharing information and encourage them to engage in future conversations. It may be helpful to restate key points to affirm your understanding. Asking additional questions as part of the conversation helps to build this understanding. Avoid making snap judgments. Reflect on what has been said and respond appropriately. These are all good suggestions to be a good active listener.

Consistent Body Language

Body language is the unspoken communication that occurs in nearly every encounter with another human being. We all have many innate and learned physical characteristics that reveal a great deal about our unspoken thoughts and emotions. Having the ability to read and understand a student's body language can make a significant difference in good communication between

teachers and students. Teachers should learn to read student body language and recognize the important characteristics that indicate students' feelings. In addition, teachers should reflect on their own mannerisms, posture, and gestures that might convey hidden meanings to students. Following are several tips to keep in mind in knowing how to use one's body effectively in conversations.

- Eye contact is one of the most important aspects. While there are cultural exceptions, good conversation in general requires making eye contact. Eye contact is essential to convey interest in a conversation.
- Posture also conveys a great deal about emotions. Walking around with slumping shoulders or head down conveys a lack of confidence or interest and a generally weak attitude. Students are not likely to approach teachers that exhibit such negative posture.
- Head position is also an important indication of confidence. When we are confident, we keep our heads level both horizontally and vertically. When a teacher wants to be more authoritative, it is important to keep the head straight and level. Conversely, to be friendly and receptive, tilt the head just a little to one side or the other.
- Hand gestures and arm movements also give clues. In general, the more outgoing a person is, the more they tend to use their arms with big movements in conversations. The quieter the person, the less they will move their arms away from the body. Try to strike a balance of arm movements that conveys friendliness and enthusiasm.
- Distance from others is crucial to give off the right signals. Stand too close, and the person will be labeled as "pushy" or "too in the face." Standing too far away and keeping a distance will indicate a lack of interest.

In the years to come,
your students may forget
what you taught them.
But they will always
remember how you made
them feel.

Best Practices to Improve Learning Relationships

Relationships in school can always be improved. Schools engage in specific practices to improve the quality of those relationships that influence student learning and the operation of a school. In regard to student learning relationships, school practices fall into three categories:

1. **Supportive Behaviors** – ways teachers act and interact with students to support positive learning and good relationships.
2. **Supportive Initiatives** – school initiatives that contribute to positive learning and good relationships.
3. **Supportive Structures** – major organizational changes that contribute to learning and good relationships.

Following are examples of adult and peer **behaviors** that influence learning relationships in a positive manner.

- ✓ Showing respect
- ✓ “Being there” for students and frequent contact
- ✓ Active listening
- ✓ One-on-one communication
- ✓ Encouraging students to express opinions
- ✓ Avoiding “put-downs”
- ✓ Writing encouraging notes
- ✓ Students praising peers
- ✓ Displaying students’ work
- ✓ Identifying unique talents and strengths
- ✓ Exhibiting enthusiasm
- ✓ Using positive humor
- ✓ Serving as a role model
- ✓ Celebrating accomplishments

Following are specific supportive **initiatives** that influence learning relationships in a positive way.

- ✓ Social activities to start the year
- ✓ Team building
- ✓ Mentoring
- ✓ Rewards, recognition, incentives
- ✓ Student advocacy
- ✓ Advisory programs
- ✓ Peer mediation
- ✓ Students as teachers
- ✓ Character education
- ✓ Parent partnerships
- ✓ Business-community partnerships
- ✓ Service learning/community service
- ✓ Extracurricular and co-curricular activities
- ✓ Sports programs

Schools also can implement major changes to their **structures** that can make it easier to develop positive learning relationships.

- ✓ Small learning communities
- ✓ Alternative scheduling
- ✓ Team teaching
- ✓ Teaching continuity
- ✓ School-based enterprises
- ✓ Professional learning communities

“A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove,—but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”
-Forest Witcraft

Supportive Behaviors

The tone of voice that a teacher uses in recognizing or responding to students makes a difference in the students' interpretations of the teacher's respect for them.

Showing Respect

Showing students respect can be as simple as calling students by their names. When an adult shows interest in what a student has to say and allows all ideas to be expressed, respect is present. The tone of voice that a teacher uses in recognizing or responding to students makes a difference in the students' interpretations of the teacher's respect for them. A learning environment characterized by order, focused on learning, and absent of disruptions signals respect to the students. Behavior and activities that encourage diversity and demonstrate the acceptance of different cultures also illustrate respect. Rules about acceptable behavior between students also provide evidence of respect for students, such as an intolerance of bullying.

"Being There" for Students and Frequent Contact

Educators project an interest in their students by their participation in and presence at school functions. When students notice that teachers are there, they recognize the sense of value that the teachers place on the students and their activities. Some examples of school events and activities that teachers can observe or participate in to demonstrate their interest include advising extracurricular and cocurricular activities, coaching sports, chaperoning school events, and attending music programs, theatrical productions, and art shows. Teachers may serve as judges at school competitions.

The presence of teachers in their classrooms before and after school sends a message to students. Students know that the teacher "is there" for them. Giving students exact times when a teacher might be available for extra assistance tells students that the teacher is willing to give extra academic help and is available to do so. Some teachers give students their e-mail addresses and telephone numbers so that students may contact them if necessary. Participation in after-school, Saturday, and summer academic

assistance programs is another example of being present for students. In some districts, teachers visit students in their homes, or the district might sponsor a door-to-door community outreach to let parents, students, and community members know that the school values working with youth in the community.

A simple yet highly effective example of “being there” and having contact with students occurs at the beginning of the school day and during the change of classes. A teacher in a hallway greeting students is a strong contact with students and sends an indirect, subtle message of caring.

Active Listening, One-on-One Communication, Encouraging Students to Express Opinions

Adults can show they are interested through active listening and by using words of encouragement, regardless of the situation. Raising questions on what is being shared and agreeing or disagreeing with thoughts let the students know that the adult is paying attention and desires to continue the dialogue.

One-on-one communication can be very powerful in assisting students to express their ideas. Often, students are afraid to speak their mind because of how others might perceive their ideas. Teenagers do not want to be unaccepted or unpopular.

Avoiding “Put-downs,” Writing Encouraging Notes, Students Praising Peers

Students are not unlike adults in their need for recognition and encouragement. They want to be praised, they want their accomplishments to be noticed, and they want to be validated and recognized for their achievements. “Put-downs” should not be tolerated. Sarcasm at the expense

of another becomes a form of cruel humor that brings down a student's self-esteem. Learning is supported by words of encouragement. Showing students how their work has improved and specific examples of growth encourage students to continue to improve.

In one school, teachers write each student a note every month. The note is personal to the student and outlines accomplishments, as well as areas that the student needs to continue to work on in order to improve. The tone and words of the note are encouraging, giving the student a sense of "Hey, I've done this much, and now I can do more."

Peer review is an effective means to have students praise one another, to develop an understanding of what constitutes quality work, and to interpret exemplars and rubrics. Praise from fellow students is as valuable as praise from adults to encourage continued learning and improved performance.

Identifying Unique Talents and Strengths

One student may create well-organized and attention-getting PowerPoint presentations, another may be able to solve complex mathematical equations, and yet another may compose beautiful song lyrics. Recognizing individual talents and academic strengths are not enough. Teachers must also find ways for students to demonstrate, practice, and "shine with" their unique capabilities. These strategies will further strengthen the students' personal sense of potential and nurture continued growth in the recognized area of accomplishment.

Displaying Students' Work

Hanging up students' work for others to see validates their effort and performance. This display also sends an indirect message to others within the school. The work shown on bulletin boards or in display cases serves as

an example for others and states that academic performance is valued. In some schools, when one enters the front door, sports trophies have been replaced with student work. Academics are the first order of business in the school. While it is true that athletics and sports are important to the school and to the lives of the students, trophies for performance in these areas are found near the gym.

Exhibiting Enthusiasm, Using Positive Humor, Serving as a Role Model

Students pick up on everything that the adults in the school community say or do or do not say or do. Enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm; positive humor brings laughter and creates an “okay” environment. Whether adults realize it or not, they set the tone and atmosphere of a school; their enthusiasm, humor, ideas, attitude, and behavior are what create the culture of the school. Adults within the school community are the role models for the development of future adults and lifelong learners. There is a famous cliché that rings true: “Imitation is the greatest form of flattery.” Students do “imitate” the roles of the adults they interact with on a daily basis within the school community. The adult role models set the norms.

Celebrating Accomplishments

All school communities enjoy celebrations. Celebrations are important in building close relationships among students and staff members. These occasions can be especially meaningful to developing a sense of community. Celebrations such as graduation ceremonies are held for the school at large. Students in a small learning community also participate in special events, such as the opening night for an arts academy performance.

Celebrations in schools take a variety of forms. Some honor outstanding students. There are also assemblies to give public recognition to high-

performing students, award ceremonies, or special dinners. Business and community members and advisory councils may hold celebrations to honor various students and programs.

Supportive Initiatives

Social Activities to Start the Year

At the beginning of the school year, a variety of activities are held by schools to welcome new and returning students, as well as their parents. Some of the activities include orientation sessions led by student leaders. These events help familiarize students with the school facilities, policies, and procedures. Typically, the student handbook is reviewed. Similarly, there might be a dinner meeting for families, where staff members review policies and opportunities for students. Other introductory activities may include picnics, pep rallies, welcoming assemblies, skits, and dances. To introduce students to extracurricular and cocurricular activities, a “club rush” allows representatives to explain the purpose and activities of each organization.

“When teachers make the most of each moment, no matter how small, to build relationships with actions that value others, we transform shadow into light, potential into life and honor the greatness of our students—one student at a time, one family at a time and one community at a time.”

-Sandra Harris

Team Building

In academic teaming, teachers are organized across departments into groups called teams. Each team shares the same students and is responsible for the curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and sometimes even the scheduling of their students. The team has common planning time and usually teaches in the same physical location within the school. Teaming adds to the personalization of the learning community. Together the team focuses on each student’s progress. With teaming, it is easier to focus on the “whole” student.

Team building activities can also be used to strengthen adult and student relationships. There are numerous professional development activities that center on team building. A risk walk is a typical activity that requires an individual to be totally dependent on another. In this activity, one walks

blindly with only the guidance of another person. To strengthen the interdependence of the group, students may engage in ropes programs.

Mentoring

Mentoring consists of one-to-one relationships between a young person and an interested, caring adult who can provide assistance academically, personally, socially, or professionally. Some mentoring relationships develop naturally, for example, the connections that form between students and older friends or relatives. Others are planned. In these situations, a student is matched with a mentor through a structured program that has a specific purpose.

Mentoring programs typically have an educational, career, or personal development focus. Academic mentoring assists students in raising their academic achievement, improving attendance, or preventing dropouts. The mentor tutors the student and helps with homework and other assignments. This type of mentor also spends time with their students, encouraging them and taking an interest in their lives. The goal is to improve the students' attitudes toward school and help them identify and reach personal goals, as well as raise grades.

Career mentors help students understand a particular career and develop related skills and competencies. The student is paired with an adult who works in the field of interest to the student. The mentor offers information, support, and opportunities for the student to better understand what is involved in the career and discern if it is a good match to the student's interests and talents.

Personal development mentoring provides support and guidance for students in areas of personal need. These programs may focus on building self-esteem, drug and alcohol abuse, dealing with the death of a parent, gang involvement, and so forth. Programs can be designed for any group of

students with specific needs, such as gifted students, minority students, low-performing students, and English language learners.

Researchers note a number of benefits of mentoring programs for students, mentors, and schools. Benefits for students include:

- improved academic performance
- career awareness
- positive attitudes about school
- reduced likelihood of dropping out
- improved relationships and communication with parents and teachers
- heightened self-esteem and self-confidence
- higher academic aspirations and goals

Benefits for mentors include:

- opportunity to contribute to the community
- contact with and better understanding of young people
- development of new skills

Benefits for schools include:

- higher academic achievement
- increased community support
- lower dropout rates
- higher engagement levels of students
- partnerships with business and community representatives

To implement an effective mentoring program, attention needs to be given to developing goals, addressing liability issues, determining staffing/volunteers to coordinate and facilitate the program, identifying logistics, and securing funding. Once the program's goals have been determined, a plan for recruitment of mentors and their orientation, training, and pairing

with mentees needs to be designed. Ongoing management and supervision of the program will ensure its sustainability and success.

Rewards, Recognition, Incentives

Student achievement, engagement, participation, and positive behavior are improved through rewards, recognition, and incentives. The recognition of academic success and positive behavior motivates students to continue to strive toward higher degrees of engagement and academic achievement. Typical incentives used to motivate students to learn and demonstrate new academic content include grading systems, verbal praise and attention, and various tokens and prizes such as stars, coupons, stickers, movie theater passes, discounts at local retail stores, raffle tickets for drawings of special prizes, and so forth. There is no question that these activities are effective means for improving academic performance and behavior. Most students respond favorably to the “prize” for their efforts and accomplishments.

In order for these incentives to be effective, rewards must be known, and the criteria for receiving them must be clearly understood. Explicit procedures for incentives ensure that they are awarded fairly and objectively. Specific standards form the rationale for the reward. Individual student success in meeting the criteria determines whether or not a reward is given. Rewards should not be based on one student’s performance as compared to another’s. The rewards are selected because of their appeal to students. It is important that the rewards correlate to specific student successes. For example, students may receive a special award each month for perfect attendance.

Rewards are based on the attainment of a specific standard of performance. They should not be given for merely completing a task. The rationale for rewards, incentives, and recognition needs to be established and described to students. Students need to understand exactly what they must do to obtain the reward. Students who do not receive an award do not fail; their performance simply did not meet the standard tied to the incentive. This

What most people need to learn in life is how to love people and use things instead of using people and loving things.

distinction is significant for students, particularly in elementary and middle school, to understand. The system for rewards and incentives should not in any way breed unmotivated, discouraged students.

Recognition or praise is also an effective strategy to support student learning. Educators need to develop rationales for the kinds of recognition they will give students. As with rewards and incentives, students need to know when recognition can be expected; it must relate to performance at a particular degree of proficiency for a specific task.

In *Classroom Instruction that Works*, Marzano and others refer to the use of the pause, prompt, and praise technique to recognize students who are having difficulty completing a task. When the student looks to the teacher for help with a challenging task, the teacher pauses to give the student more time to identify, correct, solve, or express the academic difficulty. Following the pause, the teacher provides a prompt or suggestion for the student to correct an error or to solve the academic difficulty. Finally, after the student has corrected the error and improved performance, the teacher provides praise for the specific demonstrated achievement. Student recognition must be prompt and provided on an individual student basis. Receiving accolades weeks after the successful performance is somewhat meaningless to the student. The completed task has long been forgotten by the student. Likewise, general recognition to the entire class for successful student performance does not provide individual students with feedback about their particular attainment of knowledge or demonstrated abilities.

At Kennesaw Mountain High School in Kennesaw, Georgia, the school works very hard to create high expectations, and it expects students to work hard to meet these goals. The school has a faculty member who serves as student leadership coordinator. This person is also responsible for Vision Quest, an awards program for academic success. To motivate students with some additional external symbols of excellence and continuous improvement, the school has created numerous awards, including medallions, medals, certificates, and a wide variety of school-related clothing that can only be earned by achieving specific goals. Students proudly exhibit their accomplishments by wearing shirts and medals that say such things

as “Scholar Athlete,” “Academic Excellence,” and “Academic Success.” Kennesaw Mountain has created the same degree of excitement and recognition for academics that many schools have only for athletics.

Student Advocacy

Advocacy involves teachers or volunteer community members and students in a relationship that provides students with a caring, attentive adult. The teacher/community member becomes the advocate for the student. The teacher/community member as advocate supports and assists the student in developing self-understanding, planning and goal setting, and reviewing academic progress and achievement. The students may gain a better understanding of themselves and their ability to connect to their academic studies through various activities with their advocate, such as dialogue; interpretation of various questionnaires; and recognition of learning styles, academic strengths and weaknesses, and career interests. The advocate helps the student set academic and career goals and helps determine short-term goals and expectations to meet long-term plans. The advocate meets periodically with the student to develop and maintain a relationship of trust and support. During meetings, considerable time is given to evaluating and reviewing individual student progress and challenges.

As an advocate, the teacher/community member provides not only support, but also services. The advocate intervenes on a student’s behalf, monitors participation in programs, and may even negotiate for additional services for the student. This adult lends proactive support for the whole student so that they can be successful. The advocate never gives up on the student—an essential measure of a student advocacy program’s success.

Research indicates that advocates can have some positive influence on student outcomes. Typically, a student advocacy program will help students develop more positive attitudes about school and improve student attendance and academic performance. Continuing contacts result in a more successful

“When you have high expectations, you have to have high support.”
- *Eugene White*

The common characteristic of successful advisor/advisee programs is the commitment of the adults to establish a personal, caring relationship with assigned students.

advocacy relationship and more students' success in meeting defined goals. Student advocacy programs sometimes fall under the description of mentoring, tutoring, and homeroom advisory programs.

Advisory Programs

Various forms of advisement programs have been in place in middle and high schools for many years. Some variations, although called advisory periods, are really homerooms. Homerooms exist for the purpose of taking attendance and making announcements only. Advisories have the objectives for staff to get to know students, identify academic needs, and provide advice. Advisories feature a professional development initiative whereby teachers receive significant training in how to be an adult advisor. Some advisory periods meet on a daily basis, others once per week, and still others less often. Frequently, students stay with the same advisor for all four years of high school.

The common characteristic of successful advisor/advisee programs is the commitment of the adults to establish a personal, caring relationship with assigned students. There is also a curriculum or agenda to be followed.

Power of Advisories

The publication, *The Power of Advisories*, offers five key dimensions of an effective advisory program.

Key Dimension #1: Purpose. A clearly defined purpose supported by the community.

Which of the following purposes makes the most sense for your school?

- To advise students about academic decisions and monitor academic achievement

- To provide developmental guidance (both formal and informal)
- To foster communication between the home and the school and among members of the school community
- To encourage supportive peer relationships and practice conflict resolution
- To promote an awareness of diversity and tolerance
- To undertake community service both within and outside the school
- To facilitate community governance and conversations
- To prepare students for life transitions including career development and postsecondary opportunities
- To promote character development and explore moral dilemmas
- To explore the process of group development and have fun

This discussion is adapted, with permission, from *Changing Systems to Personalize Learning: The Power of Advisories* (Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk, 2003). For more information, visit www.lab.brown.edu.

Key Dimension #2: Organization. Organized to fulfill the purpose and to ensure personalization.

The Education Alliance at Brown University offers the following guiding questions as you discuss how your advisory should be organized.

People and Size

- How many advisees will each adviser have?
- Which adults in the school building will serve as advisers? What characteristics should they possess?
- If some teachers do not serve as advisers, what supportive roles can they take on? Will any advisories be cofacilitated, i.e., first-year teacher with veteran teacher?
- By what criteria will students be sorted into advisories (e.g., age, grade level, gender, race/ethnicity)?
- By what criteria will individual advisees be assigned to individual advisers (e.g., advise only students you teach, common interests, previous relationship, self-selection, at random)?
- Will advisers and advisees be paired for one year or multiple years?

- What will be the specific roles and responsibilities of advisers and advisees?
- How will parents be involved in the advisory program?
- How will community members outside the school be involved in the advisory program?

Time and Space

- How often will advisories meet (e.g., once daily, twice daily, twice weekly)?
- How long will advisory meetings be (e.g., brief check-ins, longer activity periods)?
- Will there be time for individual meetings as well as group meetings?
- How will this time fit into the master schedule?
- Where will advisories meet?
- How will advisories be able to personalize their space?
- Will each advisory have its own space?

Professional Development and Support

- How do we create regularly scheduled time for advisers to meet (e.g., time for training, curriculum development, sharing successes, having kid talk)?
- In what types of configurations can advisers meet for training and support (e.g., clusters, teams, full faculty, pairs)?
- How will we identify the types of training and support that advisers need (e.g., group process and development, how to communicate with parents, listening skills, knowing when to refer advisees to others, academic advising)?
- How will initial and ongoing training be conducted, and by whom?
- What resources do advisers need (e.g., a program coordinator, curriculum, parent volunteers, counselors, petty cash)?
- What additional support will be given to advisers who are new to advising?
- What additional support will be given to advisers who are struggling?
- How will advisers be observed and assessed?

- How will advisory responsibilities be dealt with in the master contract?
- What type of budget will be required for the program?

Student Ownership

- What role will students take in creating/overseeing the advisory program?
- How can advisories serve as a vehicle for empowering students (e.g., through school governance, through student-led groups, by taking on a community responsibility)?
- How can students in upper-grade advisories mentor students in lower-grade advisories?

Key Dimension #3: Advisory Program Content. Content based on the purposes to be achieved, on the nature of the school, and on individual advisers. Content may:

- Be organized around essential questions, themes, or skills
- Be consistent across advisories or vary based on an adviser's knowledge of his or her advisees
- Follow a common curriculum, be chosen from an advisory handbook, or be activities organized by advisers to personalize their own advisory experience.

Key Dimension #4: Assessment. Assessment should be done at several levels:

- Individual students/advisees
- Individual advisers
- Advisory groups as a whole
- Overall advisory program
- School and program leadership

Assessments should determine whether the purposes of the program are being met and whether participants are meeting expectations.

Key Dimension #5: Leadership. Strong leadership by an individual or team charged with designing, implementing, overseeing, supporting, and assessing the program.

Essential leadership duties include creating buy-in among community members and ensuring that advisers have adequate training, resources, and support. Questions to be answered include:

- Who will take primary leadership of your advisory program?
- What specific barriers do you foresee in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of your program? How do you plan to avoid and/or overcome these barriers?
- What processes can be put in place to build support for your advisory program among all school community members, including consideration of the master contract? How will you ensure that consensus is achieved around the state purposes?

Example of an Advisory Program

At Brockport High School in Brockport, New York, the advisement period is central to the school's schedule. This period is scheduled every other day. It permits students to seek extra help from teachers or participate in club activities during the school day. Each teacher is assigned 15 students to advance the goal of personalizing the school. There are no scheduled classes during the advisement period, so that all teachers are available to provide extra help to students. For the first 15 minutes, students stay with their assigned advisor. They can then "travel" to other teachers with whom they have made an appointment. If a student does not require academic assistance, the time can be used for club or activity meetings. If a student is in need of academic assistance, no travel is permitted to extracurricular events. The advisement period contributes to an incredible sense of school spirit, ownership, and participation at Brockport.

Peer Mediation

Peer mediation is a process that enables trained student mediators to reconcile disputes between other students or small groups of students. Those engaged in a dispute enter the mediation process voluntarily. Students that

act as mediators are trained in conflict resolution skills; they must be totally objective and act in an impartial, nonjudgmental manner. Student mediators also must recognize when a situation under dispute is beyond their power or area of expertise to resolve. These situations are then referred to another more knowledgeable peer mediator or an adult in the school community. In all instances, all parties involved in the mediation agree to keep confidential the matter under dispute. Mediators, however, need to recognize when some areas of the dispute are serious enough to warrant the involvement of a member of the school staff.

Peer mediation allows students an opportunity to engage in dialogue and seek joint solutions to disputes. Through mediation, students learn to manage conflict and develop speaking, listening, critical thinking, and negotiating skills. Teamwork is encouraged, and problem-solving is the strategy used to resolve the dispute. The assistance that students bring to other students through this process nurtures a sense of belonging, concern, and care within the school community.

Examples of the types of problems that may be resolved through peer mediation include rumors and gossip, cheating and stealing, relationship difficulties, racial confrontations, and vandalism. Serious problems such as drug use, sexual abuse, and weapon possession require referrals to appropriate professional staff members within the school. The goal of mediation sessions is to reach an acceptable solution to all parties involved in the dispute.

Prior to mediation sessions, all parties become familiar with the ground rules and commit to follow them. Students in the dispute meet with mediators to ensure that they are objective and have no conflict of interest. The mediators explain exceptions to the confidentiality rules and explain the mediator's role. During the session, the disgruntled parties each tell their version of the event /story to the mediator. The mediator summarizes the facts of both sides, and facilitates a discussion of the issues. Then suggestions for resolution are sought and acknowledged, and solutions are discussed—

"The special importance of encouragement highlights the likely importance of strong teacher-student relationships in affecting achievement, especially for African-American and Hispanic students."
-Ronald Ferguson

particularly those on which both parties can agree. Then each party involved in the dispute selects the best possible solution. The mediator then obtains verbal and written agreement among all parties. A monitoring process is developed to ensure that the solution is carried out.

Students as Teachers

Learning is best remembered when one has the opportunity to teach another. With tutoring, students can succeed at their own level and pace without being publicly compared to proficient learners. The extra attention and support given while a student is being tutored may fill a gap left by the lack of support from adults outside the school. Research has demonstrated that when students are provided with appropriate training, they can successfully tutor other students.

The tutor offers a positive role model for learning and brings enthusiasm to exploring new topics. The goal is to help raise the academic achievement of the student being tutored. A variety of programs exists in schools that enable students to serve as teachers or tutors for other students. These teaching opportunities may occur informally in a classroom setting with a student who needs academic assistance or has been absent.

In cooperative learning activities, the group “sinks or swims together” as group members work interdependently. Many teaching moments occur this way among students. In these positive interdependence activities, students feel that they need one another in order to succeed. Each member of the group is essential in helping to complete the task. When students perceive that their achievement is correlated with that of other students, a sense of positive interdependence develops. Students recognize that each member functions as a part of a team and that the success of the whole group depends on the contributions of each member. This relationship fosters peer tutoring, support, and encouragement.

Some cooperative learning strategies are designed to have students teach other students. In Lineup, team members divide and learn new information. Then they teach each other their particular part/topic. In Jigsaw, academic material is broken down into sections. Each student is responsible for a part of the information and must learn it and teach it to his teammates. Cooperative learning strategies create a learning environment in which students are willing to help one another, give and receive feedback, respect others' ideas, and validate their own ideas.

One-on-one instruction has been recognized as superior to group instruction. Student tutoring programs have many benefits, both to the students doing the tutoring and to those receiving the assistance. Peer tutoring occurs when the tutor and the person tutored are the same age. Cross-age tutoring involves an older student assisting a younger one. Student tutors may assist with class projects, provide direct instruction, lend support in lab work, help with homework, assist with in-class assignments, discuss ideas with students, and so forth.

The perceived roles of the tutor include advisor, facilitator, mentor, motivator, friend, peer, team member, communicator, mentor, and role model. The tutors benefit by improving communication and interpersonal skills, reinforcing knowledge of the subject being tutored, enhancing reflection, increasing self-confidence, and gaining insight into the teaching profession. The students being tutored are given a positive role model, receive individual attention and have opportunities to learn more, and obtain assistance in areas of academic deficiency.

Structured student tutoring programs involve volunteer students or students fulfilling a service learning requirement. For a program to be successful, specific, measurable goals need to be identified and evaluated; procedures for selecting and matching tutors and students to be tutored must be established; tutor training needs to be provided; ongoing support and supervision must be given to tutors; and teachers and administrators must support the tutoring program. Well-planned and implemented student tutoring

“As 21st century educators, we can no longer decide for our students, we must decide with them.”
-Ray McNulty

programs can improve student achievement, enrich students' self-confidence and self-esteem, and add to a positive school environment focused on high expectations and learning.

In some schools, upper class mentors remain with students through 9th and 10th grade and help monitor and celebrate academic success. In other instances, volunteer junior and senior students are assigned to the freshmen most at risk of failing. At Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago, upper class students make connections with their mentees in 8th grade and play a significant role in the orientation activities during the summer before the 9th grade year begins. At Roswell High School in Roswell, New Mexico, volunteer juniors and seniors who speak both Spanish and English are part of a formal organization to serve as ELL (English language learners) tutors for freshmen with language deficiencies. They are also on call by teachers to serve as classroom assistants and to interpret for parents with limited English skills during parent conferences and other parent programs. At Kennesaw Mountain High School in Kennesaw, Georgia, high school students mentor and tutor elementary students as part of their student leadership activities. Students travel to four elementary schools to assist teachers by providing one-to-one instruction to readers who need additional assistance under the Reading Is Succeeding Everyday (RISE) program.

Character Education

Character education is defined as the development of attributes and behaviors that promote high levels of personal and academic functioning, positive interpersonal relationships, a school environment conducive to learning and academic achievement, success in adult roles, and a civil society.

When a district or school considers a character education initiative, the question often arises: “Whose values are you going to teach?” The answer lies in selecting guiding principles that transcend many belief systems and resonate with community members regardless of their group affiliations.

Guiding Principles

A guiding principle is a positive attribute that serves as the foundation for the conduct of behavior individually and in relationships with others. Guiding principles can be viewed as character traits that lead to higher level functioning, create positive relationships with others, and promote a civil society. Guiding principles are qualities that most people support because they are viewed as socially appropriate and inherently valuable.

Guiding principles:

- are attributes of character
- influence an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behavior
- serve as guides to behavior in different roles
- direct personal and interpersonal behavior
- evolve over one's lifespan

Through the research efforts of the International Center, 12 guiding principles have been identified as key principles upon which to base a character education initiative. Collectively, they are referred to as the Twelve Guiding Principles of Exceptional Character. The guiding principles are:

Creating a Character Education Initiative

A character education initiative involves formulating a plan for a comprehensive, coordinated, schoolwide approach to incorporating guiding

adaptability	loyalty
compassion	optimism
contemplation	perseverance
courage	respect
honesty	responsibility
initiative	trustworthiness

The 12 guiding principles are the basis for the International Center's resource kit, *Character Centered Teaching — A Guide to Creating Teachable Moments for Character Education*.

The goal of character education is to provide rigorous and relevant character-building experiences in all areas of school life in order to help students learn, practice, and develop a commitment to the guiding principles.

Character education promotes:

- high levels of personal and academic functioning
- positive interpersonal relationships
- a school environment conducive to learning and high academic achievement
- success in adult roles
- a civil society

principles into the normal experiences and activities in the school day. Organization and implementation of a character education initiative are best accomplished through a partnership of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and members of the community, who come to agreement about which guiding principles will be included in the program and how they will be taught.

The Joy of Promoting Character

The faculty and staff at schools that have implemented character education initiatives typically find that it is a joy to promote character. Students benefit because they develop positive personal qualities that foster academic achievement. These qualities may also help them to overcome problems and reach their personal life goals as effective members of society. Faculty and staff benefit and enjoy promoting character by knowing that they have helped their students to find safe passage into adulthood and become productive citizens in a rapidly changing world. Also, they have the comfort of knowing that character education can help promote high academic standards, a peaceful school environment, and positive personal relationships.

The joy of promoting character can be found in the results reported by schools that have instituted comprehensive character education initiatives. Throughout the country, excellent outcomes have been reported when schools focus on developing positive personal attributes in students.

Dr. Daniel Goleman reviewed research from programs on character education, life skills, and emotional education in the book *Emotional Intelligence*. Summaries of the results of the studies he reviewed revealed that students who participated in these programs showed:

- Higher academic achievement scores and better school performance
- Better emotional self-awareness
- Better control of anger; less fighting
- Less aggressive behavior and more self-control

- More empathy, sensitivity to others, and better listening skills
- More friendliness and involvement with peers
- More helpful and cooperative behavior
- More positive feelings about self, family, and school.

Seven Tips for Success in Character Education

1. Develop a high profile, well-coordinated program.
2. Make a long-term commitment to character education.
3. Develop and maintain community support.
4. Begin with the character-building activities already in place.
5. Let staff who are already committed take the lead.
6. Develop a clear, focused, and consistent message based on the community's key guiding principles.
7. Establish a three-year plan to involve and train all staff.

Increasing Academic Success by Focusing on Positive Student Behavior

- ✓ Develop community support for and involvement in the character education initiative.
- ✓ Make parents partners in the initiative.
- ✓ Determine the community's key guiding principles.
- ✓ Provide staff development so that all staff can develop proficiency in character-centered teaching skills.
- ✓ Establish and communicate clear expectations for positive and appropriate behavior.
- ✓ Cultivate a caring school environment that focuses on positive relationships and respect between students and faculty.
- ✓ Hold students accountable for inappropriate behavior.
- ✓ Find alternative educational settings for students who persistently disrupt the learning environment.

Parent Partnerships

Despite uncertainties about many matters related to education, the research is clear about the value of parent involvement in schools.

Unquestionably, involving parents of high school students is not an easy task. Yet, a plethora of studies, including action research by the International Center for Leadership in Education, has found that parent involvement is a key factor in supporting and promoting student academic success. High schools with limited parent involvement historically are finding that a special 9th grade initiative can lay the foundation for continuing parent partnerships throughout the high school years.

School administrators often remark: “But I have an open-door policy for parents. Why aren’t more parents involved in our school?” Principals at successful high schools have learned that an open-door policy is somewhat irrelevant. The real issue is an “open heart.” Parents can sense a lack of sincerity from a mile away.

If schools truly want parents involved, they will find that parents respond best to “hands-on” principals who are actively involved with the parents. Here are some tips for school leaders from successful schools.

- Get to know parents on a first name basis and encourage them to address you by your first name.
- Sacrifice the administrative business suit occasionally for more informal dress if that is consistent with the parents you serve.
- Work hard to demonstrate to parents that they are equal to you as human beings; you just have different roles.
- Liberal use of humor breaks down barriers. Accept good-natured teasing from parents and enjoy a good laugh together.

Stephen Covey's fifth habit of highly effective people is a truism in partnering with parents: “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

“Educational research clearly shows that the support and involvement of students’ families and the community at large is fundamental to achievement in schools.”

-Alan M. Blankstein

- Demonstrate active listening. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Be aware of your nonverbal behavior. Realize that this communication says more than the actual words you speak.
- Practice truth-telling with parents. Be candid about the school’s challenges and adopt this philosophy: “In this school, we tell the truth. Our problems are opportunities. What makes us different is that by recognizing these ‘probleturnities,’ we have the chance to improve conditions for our children.”
- If you practice authenticity with parents, you will be able to anticipate and prepare for the types of questions and concerns that parents will present.
- One of the most important personal attributes for any school leader is visibility. When parents perceive that you are everywhere—at sporting events, concerts, performances—they make a judgment that this visibility means you care about their children. Yes, this type of visibility takes a great deal of time, but the dividends pay capital gains.
- When parents sense you care, they will open up and ask questions. In addition, the authentic leader is available to work with parents on a one-to-one basis.
- In engaging parents in partnerships, the focus should always be on the children and never on the attributes or behaviors of the parents. Experience has taught many successful administrators that when parents trust you and realize you care about their children, their behavior changes unobtrusively.
- Recognize that in order to develop trust among parents you must exhibit trustworthiness. Always be true to your word.

- Always remember that you and your staff work for the parents; they pay the taxes and elect the school board members who employ you.

When true parent-school partnerships are established, the word gets out that the principal and his or her leadership team can be trusted. When the inevitable school difficulties occur, this trust will pay dividends in terms of a large core of parents who will support the administration. The bottom line is that authentic parent partnerships will contribute to 9th graders being more successful in their academic endeavors.

How We Communicate with Parents

Effective schools recognize that there are multiple strategies used to communicate with and involve parents. Although necessary, the least effective communication vehicle is often the written word — newsletters, newspaper articles, and letters.

When school leaders make a commitment to authentic, long-term, and frequent partnerships with a significant core group of parents, experience indicates that one trusted parent may communicate with 10 to 20 others. In other words, a core group of 25 involved parents can easily serve as effective communicators for an additional 400 or 500 parents who interact with the core group through various means in the community.

A core group of 25 involved parents can communicate with an additional 400 or 500 parents.

Ways to communicate with parents include the following:

- daily updates from students
- person-to-person interactions at school events and community gatherings
- incentives for students to bring their parents to school programs

"Family always has been, and still is, the most important instructional resource in our society."

-Gary Fields

- cable television and radio
- churches and other community organizations
- electronically via e-mail and school Web pages
- classroom parent networks
- telephone
- interactions with trusted community leaders who are encouraged to communicate with school leaders about issues or concerns
- formal parent leadership organizations — PTA, parent councils, parent advisory organizations
- newsletters, both all-school and one specifically intended for 9th grade parents
- newspaper articles, pictures, and letters to the editor.

Finally, one of the most vital and often overlooked ways to communicate is through the inviting nature of a school's practices and policies. Sometimes called the five Ps of invitational education — people, programs, places, policies, and processes — the most successful schools conduct an audit related to them. How do we answer the telephone? How are parents greeted when they visit our school? Are our policies user-friendly and easily understood? How is the appearance of the outside of our school? Are our classrooms inviting places in which students truly want to learn? Is the school clean, are washrooms safe, and is graffiti removed immediately? In general, do we have a philosophy that our school should be the most inviting place in town?

Another way of communicating with parents that a number of schools have found successful is using the concept of student-led parent/teacher conferences. In this approach, the student conducts the conference and explains his or her academic progress, or lack thereof. David Douglas High School in Portland, Oregon, has experienced 95% parent participation at

the 9th and 10th grade levels in student-led conferences at the conclusion of the year. Of course, schools must provide teachers with professional development to understand thoroughly how these conferences should be conducted. Students must also be briefed on their responsibilities.

Meaningful Parent Involvement

For all high school parents, involvement must be meaningful. If parent involvement is not meaningful, parents will “turn off” and may not return. Ideas to make this involvement valued include:

- Hold in-depth discussions on the curriculum offerings available to 9th grade students and the learning expectations of teachers.
- Share instructional strategies.
- Give frequent updates on student rules and regulations; solicit parent involvement in suggesting changes.
- Always emphasize that by being involved on a regular basis, parents will be the most knowledgeable and the first to know about school challenges, successes, and planning.
- Meaningful parent involvement means easy access to the principal, other administrators, and often one or more school board members.
- Encourage parents to visit during the school day, sit in on classes, volunteer to chaperone field trips or serve as tutors, and so forth.
- It is important to sponsor programs for parents on how to make the transition to high school easier, such as creating a “survival kit” for parents of 9th graders.

Do we have a philosophy that our school should be the most inviting place in town?

- Facilitate discussions to help parents understand that they are all in this together. Many parents of 9th graders believe that the challenges they face with their child are unique when, in fact, they are the norm. Be sure to inject humor in the discussions.
- Encourage parents to develop mini-parent networks whereby they have easy access to the telephone numbers of other parents, develop a common set of expectations for their students, and are comfortable communicating with each other in order to know where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing.
- Limit or avoid fund-raising. Most parents are very tired of helping to raise money by the time their children get to high school.
- Above all, meaningful parent involvement should be fun and inviting. Food is normally involved. When people truly feel welcome, they will return.

Business-Community Partnerships

Schools have much to gain through partnerships with business, especially if the school has a small learning community with a career theme. This clear focus makes it easier to establish partnerships with businesses, create a business advisory committee, and solicit advice from business leaders and other professionals. With the transformation of the U.S. economy, the demand for workers with particular skill development has led business, industry, and labor to partner with schools to assist in preparing tomorrow's workforce. Schools should pursue business-community partnerships that are mutually satisfactory to students, teachers, educational programs, businesses, and community economic growth.

Benefits of Business-Community Partnerships

Having a business partner can be a significant benefit for a school. Among the many benefits of having a business partner are the following:

- *Schools* have more motivated students with better attendance, behavior, and achievement, which contribute to school improvement and image.
- *Students* gain an enriched curriculum; identify with successful role models; possess opportunities for significant work experience; gain knowledge, skills, and understanding; are recognized for achievement; have higher self-esteem; and possess a heightened sense of community.
- *Teachers* gain assistance in specific curriculum areas, opportunities for professional development, recognition for achievement, and access to technological advances and equipment.
- *Businesses* ensure a better prepared workforce and employees who are more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to their employers, and more productive at work. They also demonstrate their sense of civic responsibility and gain a level of consumer respect and loyalty that conventional marketing cannot generate.
- *Communities* enhance their local business climate and the vitality of their residential areas, both of which can aid in meeting the challenges of the future and ensure long-term economic growth.

Schools should pursue business-community partnerships that are mutually satisfactory to students, teachers, educational programs, businesses, and community economic growth.

Partnering Activities for Students

A variety of opportunities for students can be provided to enhance learning and prepare them for the world beyond school. These include:

Other Partnering Tips:

- ✓ Display student work at the business.
- ✓ Reward students for perfect attendance with lunch at the business cafeteria.

- Visits to a company/organization
- Classroom visits/talks by company/organization representatives
- Mentoring of students by business employees
- Opportunities for students to shadow in the workplace
- Career education and guidance
- Providing a congratulatory letter from a business leader to each student who makes the honor roll
- Developing student internships and job placement opportunities

Partnering Activities for Teachers

A business partnership supports teachers by keeping them up-to-date on current industry and business practices and assisting them in providing a relevant, meaningful curriculum. In return, the company's profile and reputation are enhanced. Activities include:

- Externships in business for teachers
- Business contributions to support instruction
- Employers serving as consultants to teachers
- Rewarding exceptional teaching performance
- Sharing in the company's training programs, stress workshops, time management seminars, and so forth.

Materials and Equipment

Businesses often have a wealth of resources to share. Supporting a school with materials or money can help it move forward with lasting effects on student achievement and ultimately on career success. Examples include:

- Surplus business equipment
- Surplus furniture
- Paper of all sorts
- Providing equipment to create a learning environment that is an extension of the workplace

Why Business-Community Involvement?

To continue to run a business successfully, employers will need employees who are team-oriented problem-solvers, are articulate, possess functional writing skills, understand human nature, and are fully versed in applied technology. With this range of skills, employees will perform at the level necessary to keep a business competitive. In educational terms, this means that adults must be lifelong learners. It is our responsibility to show students that education only begins in school. The presence of business emphasizes how real that aspect of lifelong learning is.

Business leaders know that if they are not learning something new all the time and applying that knowledge to their business daily, someone else will. The enormous technological expansion that the world is experiencing means that innovation is necessary to give the United States the ability to compete.

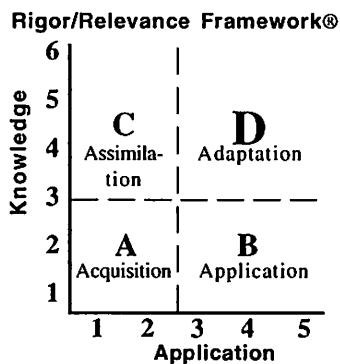
The outcome of high-quality education is a workforce that can provide better services and products for the consumer both in the community and beyond. Today, the academic skills and knowledge required of entry-level employees are often at a higher level than those required for college entrance.

Business leaders have a unique position in the community. They are admired because of their financial success, and this gives them an opportunity to influence people. This influence can help young people become better prepared for their first steps into a career.

Businesses often relocate to find a more suitable workforce. A world-class workforce in any community strengthens the economy of that community by providing more employment. Business is supported by the community. It is the responsibility of business to support the endeavors of the community, among which the education of its children is a primary concern.

The outcome of high-quality education is a workforce that can provide better services and products for the consumer both in the community and beyond. Today, the academic skills and knowledge required of entry-level employees are often at a higher level than those required for college entrance.

Examples of Business Partnerships



See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

At Kennesaw Mountain High School, community members and parents are strongly encouraged to participate in school activities in a wide variety of ways. This is most evident in the character education program, in which members of the community come to school to talk to students about character-related issues in the work place, in the community, and in society in general. With the school's deep commitment to teaching relevant skills that are based upon strong academic skills — in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework — community members are actively engaged in helping to identify and present D-level examples of the skills and knowledge students must have.

At Clark Magnet School in Glendale, California, corporate partners, including Jet Propulsion Laboratory, The Walt Disney Corp., and Raytheon Corp., provide internship opportunities and have hired several students in part-time technology jobs. Formal agreements with Intel, COMPAQ/HP, Cisco, and Novell have helped to implement the school's technology program. Other companies such as DreamWorks and Disney have provided assistance with curriculum development, field trips, and planning of the multimedia lab. These corporations also serve on the vocational steering committees and provide speakers and mentors for students. The Vertigo School-to-Career Coalition has also provided connections and support for student field trips and job shadowing experiences. As part of the industry-based certification grant, Cisco Systems, Inc. has provided in-kind contributions of \$200,000 in software, hardware discounts, and training materials in support of the Cisco Networking program.

Central Educational Center in Newnan, Georgia, had its genesis in community involvement. Business leaders concerned about the region's economy enlisted the support and involvement of educational agencies to investigate root causes of a mismatch between the knowledge and skills of school graduates and the needs of the labor market in Coweta County where the Central Educational Center is located. After several years of

brainstorming, investigating, and designing curriculum, the concept of the Center emerged. Central Educational Center is operated under the direction of a CEO charged with the responsibility of melding partnerships among parents, business, community, and educational agencies. The board of directors required by this school's charter has representation from business leaders, parents, and school personnel. Efforts are made to involve community and parents in determining the success of the Center's activities and to identify future needs. Business representatives acknowledge the importance of the Center to the economic vitality of the region through donations of machinery and technology, personnel to assist the school, and the use of the Center to train business personnel alongside of the Center's students. Industry leaders encourage acceptance of apprentices, job shadowing, and interns at their work sites.

Service Learning/Community Service

Many schools provide students with opportunities to engage in community service programs. Community service programs consist of volunteer efforts to bring a positive impact on the school or community at large. In some schools, a number of hours in community service are required for graduation. In other schools, this may be a voluntary requirement that gives students a special honor at graduation if they complete a specified number of hours. Engaging in these programs gives students an opportunity to gain life skills as they experience the real world through hands-on work. Some schools tie community service requirements to students' areas of career interest, so that the community service lends additional opportunity for students to explore a possible career choice.

Another benefit of a community service program is the opportunity to meet a variety of people in the workplace. These community members can be a source of insight to students about the field or profession associated with the community service. Participating in these programs indicates to future employers and college admissions personnel that a student has made a

"The school campus should be the community staging ground for the love and care of our children."
-Ray McNulty

meaningful contribution and is willing to “give back” talent, time, and expertise. Volunteering has many other intangible benefits. Students not only explore personal areas of interest, but also learn much about others while gaining personal satisfaction from giving.

Community service programs may also create effective school partnerships with city and town governmental agencies, churches and synagogues, and many volunteer, service, and civic organizations. Some examples of community service projects include developing local tourism brochures, rehabbing and refurbishing housing, processing recyclables, collecting food for food banks, producing and reporting a television news program, creating business displays, painting murals on community property, planting trees, developing reading/literacy programs, teaching computer courses to senior citizens, and so forth.

The significant difference between a community service program and a service learning program is that the latter involves active learning from real-world service work in the community that is combined with academic content and competencies. Meaningful service to the community is directly linked to student learning. The community service becomes the means for students to reach academic goals. Academic credit is offered for the service learning, since the curriculum is integrated into the volunteer work. In an effective curricular model for service learning, attention is given to:

- Preparation — what is the need; matching students’ skills and knowledge; collaboration with community partners; integration of curriculum into the service.
- Action — what the student will be doing; meaningful service with relevant learning experiences; builds upon the student’s skills and knowledge; the work is significant; the work is performed in a safe environment; the student experiences success and learns from failures.
- Reflections — using seminar, journal writing, and role-playing, students reflect on their experiences noting what occurred, what impact their

actions had, their reactions and feelings, and what they learned or rediscovered.

- **Demonstration and Celebration**—students show what they have learned through the service learning experience by presenting reports, writing articles about their experiences, and developing ongoing projects to benefit others.

At Excelsior Education Center in Victorville, California, rigorous and relevant cocurricular activities are a part of the community service graduation requirement. Here, students act as workshop, classroom, or lab assistants to directly assist in instruction on campus. At Kennesaw Mountain, students spend from 80 to 135 hours per year in community service. High school students do a great deal of mentoring and tutoring of students from “feeder” schools. Another activity that students at Kennesaw Mountain sponsored was a school dance for the county’s 300 students with moderate to severe disabilities. Special recognition was given each student through a formal receiving line at the dance.

Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activities

Extracurricular and cocurricular activities are an important part of successful schools. Through these activities, students have opportunities to develop a wide spectrum of personal and academic skills, as well as group process skills. Group process skills enable students to function effectively as part of a team.

Student leadership activities give students an extension of learning beyond the classroom. Activities include youth organizations and student government; performance opportunities and extended skill development through arts and music programs; supporting curricular activities through a wide variety of clubs and organizations; and encouraging commitment and diversity through special interest groups. There is strong evidence that student organizations

Extracurricular and cocurricular activities provide students with opportunities to form new relationships beyond those that are possible in an instructional setting.

build social and leadership skills and are important in supporting the curriculum.

Student organizations also give young people an opportunity to “connect” and develop a sense of identity and belonging within the school community. The extracurricular and cocurricular activities provide students with special opportunities and circumstances in which they can form new and supportive relationships with other students and adults beyond those that are possible in an instructional setting.

Research points to the value of extracurricular and cocurricular activities. In 1985, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) sponsored a national survey of high school principals and nearly 7,000 high school students in all 50 states. The survey, funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment in Indianapolis, was conducted by Indiana University in cooperation with the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Following are the results of that survey.

- 95 percent believed that participation in activities teaches valuable lessons to students that cannot be learned in a regular class routine.
- 99 percent agreed that participation in activities promotes citizenship.
- 95 percent agreed that activity programs contribute to the development of “school spirit” among the student body.
- 76 percent said they believe the demand made on students’ time by activities is not excessive.
- 72 percent said there is strong support for school activity programs from parents and the community at large.

Sports Programs

Sports programs, like extracurricular and cocurricular activities, give students opportunities to learn lifelong lessons. Sports are an extension of the educational program. The philosophy supporting the athletic program is an extension of the school's mission and goals. The activities that students engage in through sports programs are inherently educational. These programs provide teaching situations around teamwork, winning and losing, and hard work. By participating in sports programs, students develop more self-confidence and higher self-esteem and learn the value of healthy competition. The activities in a sports program foster students' success in adult life.

In general, sports programs help to develop students' positive attitudes toward themselves and school and decrease dropout rates and discipline problems. The overall value of sports programs is summarized in the study conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations.

Studies focusing on the academic performance of high school athletes in comparison to nonathletes reveal that students engaged in sports programs achieve higher grades, have better attendance, and are more engaged in school.

In a comprehensive, statewide study of the academic performance of high school student-athletes in North Carolina over a three-year period, the North Carolina High School Athletic Association found significant differences between athletes and nonathletes. Five criteria were used, including gradepoint average, attendance rate, discipline referrals, dropout rate, and graduation rate, for the 1994-95 academic year.

Students who compete in high school sports achieve higher grades and have better attendance and graduation rates.

	Athletes	Non-athletes
Grade-point average	2.86	1.96
Average number of days absent per 180-day school year	6.52	12.57
Discipline referrals	30.51%	40.29%
Dropout rate	0.7%	8.98%
Graduation rate	99.56%	94.66%

Supportive Structures

Cotton, K. *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance*; Imsher, K. "School Size"; Klonsky, M. "Small Schools: The Numbers Tell a Story. A Review of the Research and Current Experiences"; McRobbie, J. *Are Small Schools Better? School Size Considerations for Safety and Learning*; Page, L., et al. *National Evaluation of Smaller Learning Communities: Literature Review*

Small Learning Communities

Numerous studies and successful models in middle and high schools are substantiating the value of small-scale schooling. Academic and social benefits include improved attendance and graduation rates. Students achieve higher test scores in small schools; they are more likely to pass their coursework, graduate, and attain a higher level of education than students attending larger schools. Smaller class sizes and integrated curricula enhance and encourage the growth of teacher-student relationships. The opportunity for personalization in a small learning community also enables the teacher to be more cognizant of a student's performance and thus increases student accountability. Administrators and teachers can more easily reform curricula, teaching methodologies, instructional strategies, and assessment systems in small schools. Small schools also do better than large schools in closing the achievement gap between students in different ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Students feel valued and cared for in the personalized environment offered by a small school. They feel better about themselves and their academic future. Students' attitudes are more positive in a small school community.

Small learning communities capitalize on their downsized environment by implementing strategies that enable teachers to know all students well.

Teachers can become knowledgeable about students' strengths and weaknesses, build relationships with students, and respond to individual needs of students more easily in a small school setting.

Students and teachers experience a strong sense of belonging in a more personalized environment. Interpersonal relationships are fostered. Students feel less alienated and have more opportunities to participate in school activities because there is less competition for selection on athletic teams and in membership for extracurricular and youth leadership organizations. This is significant because involvement in extracurricular activities is often related to positive attitudes, high self-esteem, and appropriate social behavior.

Students in smaller schools have better attendance rates than those in larger schools. This is particularly true for minority and low socioeconomic status students. Dropout rates are lower, and graduation rates are higher than in large schools.

Disciplinary problems are reduced in small learning communities, which can be attributed to the strong teacher and other adult relationships students have, as well as the personalization of the environment. Students are suspended less and use drugs less than their counterparts in larger schools. Also, there are fewer instances of vandalism, assault, gang participation, theft, and aggressive behavior. Students feel safer in small schools because of their connections with adults. Moreover, parents are more likely to be involved in small schools.

Students from small learning communities perform as well or better than students from large schools on college-related success areas such as entrance examination scores, acceptance rates, attendance, grade point average, and program completion. Strong relationships are critical to rigorous work for students. Students are more likely to make a personal commitment to engage in rigorous learning when they know that teachers, parents, and other students care about their performance. Students are willing to continue making an investment in their learning when they are encouraged, supported,

Small schools have fewer instances of vandalism, assault, gang participation, theft, and aggressive behavior.

and assisted — much in the same way that a personal trainer might encourage an exerciser who lacks the will or confidence to continue.

Larger schools, with bureaucracies to manage and control their large number of students, have a tendency to spend more than small schools to support their efforts. Small schools may save money by doing away with some of the specialized staffing common in large schools.

Organizational Options for Small Learning Communities

Several different kinds of small learning communities are being established in schools, particularly high schools. With research overwhelmingly supporting the fact that students are more successful when they attend small schools, educational communities are turning to new organizational structures to support learning in this type of environment. Belief in the success of small learning communities is further evidenced by the financial support provided by public and private agencies to develop this new approach to learning.

Small learning communities may differ in size and structure, but they usually:

- are established with a small body of students who are taught by the same group of teachers
- share a designated physical space
- have an instructional theme

Most of the small school structures emerge from a larger organization within a building; however, some small learning communities are designed initially to be just that — small. These dedicated small schools have facilities that are deliberately structured to house smaller numbers of students.

The most common types of small learning community structures are schools-within-schools, house plans, magnet schools, and academies. In these configurations, the small learning community arrangement occupies its own space within a school or in a separate building. Under the house plan, students with varying abilities and backgrounds are grouped together. A house may

consist of a single grade level, such as freshmen houses, or a 9-12 grade grouping. In this configuration, students stay with house members and teachers throughout their high school careers.

In the magnet schools and theme academies, students are clustered around a special focus area of interest. A magnet may consist of integrated academic disciplines, such as a mathematics, science, and technology magnet, or focus on one academic area, such as a science magnet or performing arts magnet.

In academies, the special focus is generally a career. Some types of career academies include business and leadership, information technology, health services, engineering and design, and arts and communications. Students in magnet and career academy programs stay with the same teachers and group of students.

Schools-within-Schools

A school-within-a-school is a small autonomous program situated within a larger school physical plant. One school building may have several autonomous small schools within it. Students take all their classes within this school, and teachers teach all their classes within this structure. Students who are not in the school-within-a-school do not participate in any of those classes.

The school-within-a-school model allows for a high degree of personalization and student support because it encourages the development of sustained and continuous relationships between students and teachers. Sufficient time for collaborative planning is usually a characteristic of the school-within-a-school. This enhances the development of a strong community with a small professional learning community within that focuses on a common vision of high expectations, quality of teaching, and student achievement.

The focus is on a common vision of high expectations, quality of teaching, and student achievement.

A school-within-a-school is responsible to the district and ~~not to the~~ administrative leadership of the larger school that houses it. This type of organizational structure provides the small learning community with the opportunity to develop its own culture and program of studies. The school-within-a-school is self-governing with its own leadership. Scheduling, budgeting, personnel issues, and professional development are controlled by the leadership and staff of the school-within-a-school. The school-within-a-school has its own dedicated physical space in which to hold classes, and students and teachers are scheduled together and meet in this common area. A school-within-a-school may or may not have a curricular theme or set combination of courses for students.

House Plans

Under the house plan option, students in a large school are divided into smaller groups of students in the same grade or across grades. Students take all or most of their courses within the house, and teachers teach all or most of their classes within the house. Specific space may or may not be dedicated to the house.

The house structure allows for a high degree of personalization since students stay with house members and teachers. Students and teachers identify with the house and have an opportunity to build relationships within the smaller organization.

The impact of this design on curriculum and instruction is limited. The typical methods and levels of instruction take place. Students may also take coursework outside the house.

Vertical house plans refer to houses that serve students in grades 9 through 12 or grades 10 through 12. Typically, a school of 1,000 or more students is divided into groups (houses) of several hundred students. Ninth-grade house plans are similar to the vertical model but only consist of ninth grade students.

The house is under the administrative leadership of the school principal; it does not have autonomy from the larger school. Staff assigned to the house have limited control over the house's program and budget. The larger school determines the schedule and makes decisions about staffing, resources, finances, and student makeup. Since the house falls under the jurisdiction of the larger school, most collaborative efforts are limited. Teachers do not necessarily have common planning time, and professional development is designed on a schoolwide basis rather than by the house alone.

Freshman Academy/House

A small learning community that is growing in popularity is the freshman academy or house. Organized like a typical house, the freshman house provides a place and structure for “newcomers” to transition to the school. Freshmen are kept together in their own physical setting. They share the same staff, who frequently team teach in the core academic areas. In this structure, freshmen find additional support and attention from staff and begin to recognize and value their high school experience as a pathway to higher education and careers. The freshmen house is an “adjustment place” that enables students to learn and experience gradually the additional responsibilities of a high school program.

Academies

Academies are generally schools-within-schools that are designed around occupational themes or the arts. Students experience many real-world applications of learning and participate in work-based learning programs. School-to-work elements are immersed in the academic programs of students in academies. The academy consists of a group of students who stay with the same teachers for two to four years, resulting in a personalized and supportive learning environment. The course of study provides high academic standards that are integrated within career-technical education (CTE) or arts education areas of study.

In the arts, for example, there are a variety of career focus areas. These may include audiovisual technology and communications, visual communications art, commercial photography, graphic communications, telecommunications, journalism, multimedia production, and performing arts. Some typical examples CTE academies are business and leadership, information technology, health services, engineering and design, and finance.

Within the academy focus area, students prepare for all levels of jobs. An academy should not limit a student's career or job options any more than taking a traditional high school program does. All students have the necessary courses to enter colleges. Student may choose to enter the workforce or to continue their education.

Business partnerships are a key component of the academy model. Business partnerships may provide related career shadowing, internships, work-study programs, student financial aid, equipment, and occupational information.

Each academy has a business advisory board, which works with educators to determine and update curricular offerings and provide advice on academy options. The focus of the academy is often determined by student interest, but local businesses and industries can play an important part in the implementation of a particular career academy, since related internship/apprenticeship programs and potential jobs are important aspects of the academy's offerings. Members of the advisory board or their respective businesses may teach, mentor, and/or tutor at the academy.

Students take the majority of their courses within the academy but may take some classes outside. Within this structure, teachers usually teach most of their classes in the academy and have collaborative planning time, as well as time for academy-related professional development. The staff has

Comparison of Small Learning Community Options

School Characteristics	School-Within-a-School	House Plan	Freshman Academy	Career/Theme Academy
Changes Affect Entire School	No	Yes	No	Optional
Scheduling Changes	Significant	Significant	Minor	Significant
Creates Autonomous School	Yes	No	No	Optional
Requires Change in Curriculum	No	No	No	Yes
Curriculum Taught in Context	Optional	Optional	Optional	Yes
Advisor/Advisee Program	Optional	Optional	Yes	Optional
Internships/Job Shadowing/Community Experience	No	No	No	Yes
Increases Number of Administrators	Yes	No	No	No

some control over the program design. However, the academy coordinator or administrator usually reports to the larger school's principal. The academy's budget, schedule, and staff are determined by the larger school. Physical space may or may not be separate from the larger school context.

Alternative Scheduling

Various scheduling techniques that allow teachers to better meet student learning needs and to provide longer instructional blocks of time are implemented by many schools. Extended class time enables teachers to

Longer instructional blocks help meet student learning needs and enable teachers to share common planning and instructional time, as well as provide an enriched, in-depth program of study.

cover content in-depth, provide real-world applications, and incorporate time-consuming strategies into instruction, such as project-based learning and work-based learning. Alternative scheduling also permits community and business representatives to support learning during the school day. It is also easier to provide tutoring and allow some students additional time in areas needing improvement, while other students devote time to in-depth learning. The schedule does not control teaching and learning; the needs of the learner determine the schedule.

Highly successful schools emphasize how personalizing learning and enabling all students to succeed begin with creating master schedules around the needs of students. Other schools develop a master schedule around the convenience of adults and often cite the difficulty of changing a master schedule to meet student needs.

Extended learning time describes scheduling configurations that provide for longer class periods than the traditional 45-minute period. The extended learning periods translate into more time for students to spend on learning without interruptions and more time for teachers to develop in-depth instruction and more real-world applications of subject matter. The additional time also gives teachers more time to use a variety of instructional strategies to reach the diverse learning styles and needs of students. These larger blocks of time give teachers flexibility to provide a diversity of instructional activities.

Changing the schedule involves a major restructuring effort. The entire school community needs time to examine the research and successful practice, assess the need for such a program, collaborate with all the stakeholders, ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations and employee contracts, gain awareness and support, and analyze the fiscal impact. Scheduling modifications usually mean more instructional and learning time. Thus, major professional development support is needed to assist teachers in relying less on the standard lecture and seatwork approach to learning and more on individualized learner approaches and creative teaching strategies.

Block scheduling is the most frequently implemented form of alternative scheduling. “Block” defines any schedule format that has fewer but longer class periods than the traditional schedule, which has six to eight periods each day of no more than 45 minutes. There are a variety of configurations and possibilities when designing a block schedule. When choosing a particular method, consideration must be given to the number of semesters, length of school year, length of school day, length of class period, single or double class periods, and frequency of class meetings (daily or alternate days). The most common models of block scheduling are described as follows.

Block or 4 x 4 Block Schedule

Under this plan, students attend four classes per day for a semester. Classes are 85 to 100 minutes in length. At the end of the semester, students have completed four full courses; in the traditional schedule plan, it would have required one full year to complete them. In the second semester, students take four different courses. Some exceptions exist, such as for Advanced Placement and music classes. Full-year courses are maintained for these classes.

A/B Block

Using this method, students take eight classes for the entire school year divided into an A group and a B group. Each group consists of four classes that meet for approximately 90 minutes every other day. Thus, in this alternate day schedule, students and teacher meet every other day for extended time periods.

With the A/B block, there is increased instructional time on a daily basis. Students have fewer classes and assignments per day. The day off in between classes allows for “distancing time” in classes experiencing disciplinary or other problems.

Modified Block

This method combines some of the 4 x 4 block approach and the traditional 8-period schedule day. The schedule may provide a 4 x 4 block on four days during the week and a regular 8-period day on one day. Another version has students in two blocked classes each day along with three traditional shorter-period classes.

Flexible Schedule

In this plan, students follow a combination of the 4 x 4 block and the A/B block schedules. Class time varies from day to day. One example would be having students attend 90-minute classes three days per week, and on the other two days, students would take these classes for 75 minutes and have an additional advisement or resource period of 60 minutes.

The advantage of flexible scheduling is that more time is available for students to complete work, engage in short-term enrichment programs, and obtain additional assistance during the resource period.

Trimester Plan

With the trimester schedule, students take two or three courses for 60 days and earn six or nine credits per year. Variations within this plan include two long classes and one short class per day, two long classes and two short classes per day, and others.

The advantages of the trimester plan are that students focus on only a few courses per trimester, students and teachers prepare for fewer courses per trimester, teachers have a smaller student load per trimester, and fewer textbooks and instructional resources are required.

Advantages of Block Scheduling

Some of the frequently mentioned benefits of block scheduling include the following:

For Students

- Develop stronger interpersonal relationships with teachers and other students
- Spend more time on tasks
- Study more in-depth
- Learn time management skills
- Experience more active learning rather than passive learning
- Have fewer competing teacher expectations
- Have more one-on-one time with teachers
- Engage in more opportunities to apply knowledge to contextual and real-world situations
- Have more time to prepare for classes
- Experience less stress
- Are less likely to fail
- Have better attendance rates and fewer tardies, suspensions, and dropouts
- May obtain better academic results
- Have more opportunities to engage in writing skill development
- Develop higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving skills
- Are better known by their teachers
- Experience more personalized learning
- Are better able to focus on learning
- Master and retain subject matter more easily

For Teachers

- Experience less fragmented instructional time
- Spend more time on task
- Complete and evaluate instruction and instructional techniques

- Implement a variety of instructional strategies to address different learning styles and diverse student needs
- Able to focus on fewer subject areas
- Explore subject areas in greater depth
- Provide more opportunities for real-world applications of learning
- Reduce amount of lecturing
- Have opportunities for more one-on-one contact with students
- Have fewer classes to prepare for on a daily basis
- Gain opportunities for extensive personal interaction with students
- Know students well enough to adapt lessons to their learning styles, abilities, and interests
- Experience greater teacher communication and collaboration
- Appreciate opportunities for student projects and other instructional strategies requiring extended time
- Have fewer disciplinary problems
- Are better able to address discipline problems because of personal relationships with students and have more time in class to attend to these issues
- Can team teach more effectively
- Have greater opportunities for interdisciplinary/integrated learning
- Provide early interventions for students in need
- Teach students who are more engaged, motivated, and successful
- Have time for authentic assessment
- Possess a manageable workload
- Have more time to communicate with parents
- Find more opportunities for peer observations

Team Teaching

In team teaching, teachers are organized across departments in a team. The members of this team collectively represent the core academic areas of instruction: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These teachers are responsible for the learning of the same group of students

across the core academic subjects. The commonality of students and teaching assignments provides the team members with a far greater understanding of students and instructional goals. Team teaching adds to the personalization of the learning environment. Together the team focuses on each student's progress. Strengths and weaknesses across disciplines are identified.

Opportunities for common planning time across disciplines are usually provided to this team. During its meetings, this group not only discusses students and their needs, but also reflects on and develops common instructional practices that are most effective in achieving improved student results. The teachers also spend time improving their own practice through peer observations and sharing of best practices.

The team also engages in action research in which each member explores, discusses, and evaluates ways to improve teaching and learning. Team members work collaboratively to enhance the facilitation of learning with students. Through the team, teachers increase their sense of support and degree of accountability to their peers. Success is easier to achieve since the teachers are closely associated with one another in their attempts to meet the needs of their students. Common decisions made by this group include student expectations, textbook and resource selections, instructional technology support, curricular requirements, instructional practices, student assessment requirements, student placement, and professional development activities.

Common decisions made by this group include student expectations, textbook and resource selections, instructional technology support, curricular requirements, instructional practices, student assessment requirements, student placement, and professional development activities.

Staying with students for multiple years of instruction allows the teacher to develop more personalized learning experiences for each student.

Teaching Continuity

Teachers may stay with their students for multiple years of instruction. This gives the teacher a better understanding of a learner's strengths and

weaknesses, allowing the teacher to develop more personalized learning experiences. In some settings, teams of teachers remain with the same students over time. With the team approach, students are assured that they will be known by more than one adult, and both students and teachers are more likely to respect and support one another. See the previous section for a description of team teaching.

Other programs that ensure continuity of teacher and student are the advisement program and advocacy programs. They were presented earlier in this chapter. Mentoring programs also develop a sense of teacher continuity for the student.

Looping Opportunities

Looping brings teachers and students together for longer periods of time, providing the opportunity for teachers and students to get to know one another better. With looping, the teacher moves to the next grade with students, keeping students and teacher together for more than one school year. The number of years that students and teacher are kept together varies with the school's program. Typically, looped groups stay together from two to five years.

Some of the benefits of looping include:

- Teachers have more time for instruction; in the second year, students are already known, and class policies and procedures are already understood.
- Students' academic strengths and weaknesses are better understood by teachers.
- Students have less apprehension starting a new school year; they know what to expect.
- Students get to know one another well and thus develop stronger socialization and group skills.

- Students feel a stronger sense of belonging, which encourages student involvement.
- Job satisfaction is improved.
- Student achievement is improved.

A growing number of schools with successful 9th grade initiatives are finding creative ways to schedule teachers and counselors in order to personalize education for students. Although not common, looping of counselors and teachers is a practice worth noting.

Some schools loop the counselor from grade 8 to grade 9 and then back to grade 8 to start a new cycle. This ensures that there is at least one adult in the high school who knows the 9th graders. Some schools loop 8th and 9th grade teachers in such subject areas as English language arts or mathematics. The obvious advantage is that the academic program can begin early in the year because teachers already know the abilities of the students. These programs are also successful with special education students when inclusion specialists loop between grades 8 and 9.

Finally, another more common model is for 9th and 10th grade teachers to loop. The personalization factor continues, and students begin 10th grade with a greater chance for success.

Multiage Grouping

Multiage grouping is another organizational strategy that ensures continuity of teaching. This type of group involves putting students with different ages or from different classes and with different learning abilities together in the same classroom or group. Lessons and learning activities and tasks are developed to meet the different learning abilities within the multiage class.

The philosophy behind multiage grouping is that all students can learn and they learn at different rates. Student work is designed to match the developmental levels of the learners. The goal of a multiage grouping

structure is to have students of different ages and learning abilities progress at their own rate, rather than simply move along with a whole class. In multiage grouping, students are expected to do their individual best. Learning is more personalized. Teachers focus on the individual student's needs and strengths, creating a much richer relationship between teacher and student.

At Lake George Elementary School in Lake George, New York, staff describe their multiage program as “educating children in a flexible environment which considers all aspects of a child’s development. Children progress at their own individual rates without regard to age, grade, or a specific time frame. Evaluation and prescription are ongoing, providing a diagnostic framework for individual instructional needs. Children are grouped and regrouped according to the needs, ability, and achievement. Students are evaluated on their performance, rather than compared to their peers.” A strong team teaching approach and an open building plan facilitate multiage grouping.

Work-based learning reinforces academics, improves self-esteem, and motivates students through real-world applications of skills and knowledge.

School-based Enterprises

School-based enterprises are a model of work-based learning. This type of career and technical education consists of a high school course or program that functions as an actual business that serves the school and/or larger community. Academic and technical instruction gives students the background needed to understand and run the operations of the business, as well as produce the product or service being sold. In most instances, students receive academic credit for their participation in the enterprise. Typical examples of school-based enterprises are bookstores, restaurants, print shops, and auto repair services.

The school-based enterprise functions as a real business. The profit earned is reinvested in the business or in some cases, students may earn income. The school-based enterprise gives the students a new context to relate to their teacher. This shared business venture creates many opportunities for

teachers to model acceptable business standards and behavior, to get to know students in a different role, to observe students' abilities to perform in real-world applications of learning, and to build a collaborative spirit of learning and working in a joint venture. Research has shown that work-based learning reinforces academic and technical skills, improves students' self-esteem, exposes students to career options, develops an understanding of workplace culture and expectations, and engages and motivates students through real-world applications of skills and knowledge.

School-based enterprises are a mirror of work-based learning. In the school-based enterprise, students assume a greater responsibility for the success of the business enterprise than they would assume in a work-based learning program. Through the school-based enterprise, students experience a greater sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and pride as the business prospers.

At Excelsior Education Center in Victorville, California, students in career academies may participate in school-based enterprises. Academic requirements are incorporated into the specialty of the business organization. The business enterprises are student-run businesses on the school campus. Excelsior brings the business application model to the student and provides internships in the field as an adjunct to the enterprise. Specialty students spend a minimum of 50% of their time on campus taking courses and working in the enterprise. The business enterprises are directly partnered with and supported by local businesses involved in the same type of production or service. Across the career academies, student-run businesses exist in insurance and investment, banking, travel and tourism, construction, and computer repair. These internal businesses provide goods and services to Excelsior and the community while providing students with valuable field experiences.

Professional Learning Communities

In Peter's Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*, a learning organization is described as an initiative "where people continually expand their capacity to create

the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.” Such could be the definition of a professional learning community. A professional learning community is a group of educators, administrators, community members, and other stakeholders who come together on a regular basis over a period of time to collectively evaluate and improve their practice. The professional learning community’s focus is determined by its members and their purpose for professional study.

In schools, professional learning communities typically consist of teams of teachers who meet to work on specific topics related to instruction, assessment, and student learning. These teams promote action that is research-based. The members select a focus or question for study that is site-based. Data related to the question or area of research is gathered, analyzed, and tested. Team members inform and improve their practice through this structure using ongoing dialogue, reflection on practice, and research.

The professional learning community is defined by supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collaborative learning and practice, and supportive conditions. These aspects enable the group to meet and engage in problem solving and develop new ideas that can be put into practice. The benefits of professional learning communities for staff include a reduced sense of isolation, increased commitment to the goals of the school, a collaborative spirit of responsibility for student achievement and school success, improved teaching and classroom management, and a greater willingness to make changes to improve teaching and learning. Teachers who participate in professional learning communities are inspired, motivated, and rejuvenated. Obviously, these communities indirectly enhance the experiences of students in the classroom.

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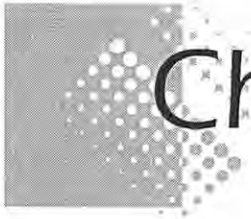
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Chapter 5

Building Staff Relationships

How to Build Relationships

Relationships built in school change and develop over time. Schools engage in specific practices to improve the quality of the connections that influence staff collaboration. These practices are divided into three categories:

- **Collaborative Behaviors** are ways teachers behave to form good relationships.
- **Collaborative Initiatives** are school initiatives contributing to staff working together.
- **Collaborative Structures** are organizational changes that build staff cooperation.

Collaborative Behaviors

- ✓ Showing Respect
- ✓ "Being There," Frequent Contact, Active Listening
- ✓ Enthusiasm, Positive Humor, Avoiding "Put-downs"
- ✓ Encouragement, Identifying Talents and Strengths
- ✓ Celebrating Accomplishments, Praising Peers, Being a Role Model
- ✓ One-to-One Communication, Encouraging Staff to Express Opinions/Ideas

Staff collaboration begins with behavior training. There are specific initiatives, programs, and structures that help to create high levels of staff cooperation, but these will only be fully effective if there are behaviors that support staff collaboration. Behaviors begin with those modeled by the school leader, so each leader should reflect on those behaviors that he or she exhibits and request constructive feedback from colleagues and subordinates.

Showing Respect

Respect is one of the most often cited essential behaviors. In any school community, there are multiple roles for staff. Sometimes there exists a hierarchy of teachers based on the perceived importance of what they teach. There are certain courses — such as gifted programs, Advanced Placement courses, or college level courses — that carry prestige because they are serving elite students. Often, teachers compete to be selected to teach in these programs. All teachers should be respected equally, whether

it is the AP Calculus teacher or the resource mathematics teacher working with struggling English language learners. You, as school leader, should pay close attention to the way you treat each teacher and every staff person in the school. Likewise, it is important to call attention to any behavior by staff that shows disrespect. Disagreements are natural and can lead to improvement, but an effective staff is able to disagree and still respect one another.

“Being There,” Frequent Contact, Active Listening

Another key set of behaviors is “being there,” frequent contact, and active listening. “Being there” means giving full attention to each and every person, regardless of how busy you are or how trivial his or her question seems. “Being there” requires full attention in each personal contact. School leaders are always busy and have incredible demands on their time. In spite of this burden, it is important to give each person his or her full attention. By encouraging this behavior in others, you will build the foundation for improved staff relationships. A large part of respecting and supporting staff members is communication. Frequent contact, whether it be verbal or written, is essential for collaboration. How a staff communicates is established through the administration. Consider how memorandums, meetings, and e-mails can enhance relationships within the school walls. Finally, remember that active listening—the rephrasing of what you hear as a question or opinion to be sure you understand the other person’s point of view—is an excellent way to show respect and communicate.

Enthusiasm, Positive Humor, Avoiding “Put-downs”

Enthusiasm and positive humor make the hard work of school less burdensome. Enthusiasm is contagious, and when staff members observe another being excited, energetic, and smiling, it helps to diminish feelings of frustration and fatigue. Be passionate and look for opportunities to exhibit

positive humor. Take your work seriously, but do not take yourself too seriously. Look for opportunities to poke fun at your personality and role as school leader. When seeking humor, be sure to “avoid put-downs” when making fun of others. When a staff is frequently complimented and encouraged, the occasional joke is taken as good humor. However, if the only feedback from others or the leader is humor, that is perceived as a “put-down.” The result can be devastating.

Encouragement, Identifying Talents and Strengths

Leaders need to make a special effort to encourage others. Ask staff to take on new responsibilities, try new things, or attempt to accomplish something again in hope of greater success. Write encouraging notes or work to identify unique talents or strengths.

Celebrating Accomplishments, Praising Peers, Being a Role Model

When staff members make extra efforts or significant progress, celebrate accomplishments and encourage peers to praise each other. Leaders need to model these behaviors.

One-to-One Communication, Encouraging Staff to Express Opinions/Ideas

Leaders are perceived as the organization member most likely to stand up and speak in front of the whole group. While this may be true, some of the most important work, and least visible, is one-to-one communication. Large group meetings may be useful for reinforcing the vision, but it is one-to-one communication that is essential for building staff relationships. These conversations are opportunities to provide personalized encouragement,

coaching, and feedback on negative behaviors. When trying to get volunteers to take on a new challenge, staff may be reluctant to volunteer in a group meeting. However, a one-to-one conversation can create a more comfortable setting for a staff member to take on something new. These conversations are also important in encouraging staff to express ideas and opinions.

Social Activities

Developing shared visions and goals for the school community and encouraging collaboration are enhanced by opportunities for teachers to meet, socialize, and get to know each other as “people.” This is particularly important at the start of a school year. Unlike most jobs, teachers have four, six, or eight weeks of separation from their fellow employees during summer vacation. At the beginning of a new school year, there is some trepidation and uncertainty as staff reconvenes to begin another year. Welcoming luncheons, picnics, and breakfasts that may be sponsored by the administrative leadership or the parent organization are ways of developing and rekindling friendly and supportive relationships. These beginning-of-the-school-year activities are especially significant for the new teacher. These events provide a setting for new staff introductions. New staff members and student teachers gain support when they are invited to go to lunch, when they are introduced by a staff member to others, when they are offered assistance in locating classrooms or supplies, and so forth. These small yet significant activities send a message of collaboration and build trust.

Throughout the school year, other social activities such as retirement celebrations, holiday parties, end-of-the-year picnics, golf leagues, sports teams, birthday recognitions, and others enhance collaborative, supportive staff relationships.

Collaborative Initiatives

- ✓ Social Activities
- ✓ Team Building
- ✓ Mentoring
- ✓ Instructional Coaching
- ✓ Peer Review
- ✓ Rewards, Recognition, Incentives
- ✓ Demonstration Classrooms
- ✓ Character Education
- ✓ Conflict Resolution
- ✓ Professional Development
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Family Partnerships
- ✓ Community and Business Partnerships
- ✓ Community Service
- ✓ Celebrations

Team Building

Authentic relationships are fostered by shared work and shared responsibilities. Providing opportunities for staff to work together and to participate in team-building strategies and training sessions support collaboration. Team building may be integrated into the school's framework by having groups of students taught by a particular interdisciplinary group of teachers and when the school is organized in small learning communities. These teams usually share the same physical space and have common planning time. The most significant aspects of team teaching are sharing the same students and the opportunity to personalize learning for students. Together, the team can more easily focus on the needs of the student.

Before individuals can be expected to contribute well in team teaching, they need to develop a friendly relationship and build trust. Team-building strategies such as trust walks and ropes courses are effective ways that instructional leadership can use to foster trust among staff. These professional development programs create a sense of interdependence—team members “sink or swim” together. The interdependence realized through these types of activities hopefully carries over to the collaborative, collective capacity and creativity of the teaching team.

Instructional leadership needs to cultivate an awareness of unity for all team members; members of the team must each recognize there is an opportunity to contribute to the team, to learn from others and work with them to achieve common goals. Leadership empowers the team to act together to reach a joint objective. These team characteristics enable the team to function effectively in a participative leadership manner. All members of the team feel responsible for the team's success; all members of the team have a common purpose and share a sense of ownership in the work of the team; and communications within the team create a climate of trust and openness.

Mentoring

Mentoring brings together the “experienced” educator and the “new” teacher. This type of support helps the new teacher learn the school rules and policies, understand expectations, perceive existing staff relationships, and become familiar with the physical locations of particular aspects of the building. The most worthwhile aspect of a mentoring program is the supportive relationships that the mentor provides the mentee. The mentee has someone to consult with and question when uncertainty is present over any aspect of the school community—its people, places, events, and so forth.

The mentor also assists the mentee with improving instructional practice. Typically, new teachers attend training sessions, as well as have the expertise and guidance of a mentor for their first year in the district. The training might focus on district expectations, curriculum, lesson design, instructional strategies, classroom management styles, and assessment. The mentor teacher observes the new teacher’s classroom and assists with instruction, management, classroom systems and procedures, and opportunities for professional growth. The mentor might also model or demonstrate effective teaching strategies for the mentee. The trust and honesty developed through a meaningful mentoring program establishes space for classroom observations and demonstrations by the mentor for the mentee and the mentee for the mentor.

The mentor assists the mentee in strengthening pedagogy, best instructional practices, and relationships with students. The mentor may refine and further develop instructional strategies, new skills, and ways to help students be more successful. Sometimes, the mentor may be surprised by the professional and personal growth realized through this supportive activity. Eventually, the mentoring experience redefines the relationship between the new teacher and mentor as colleagues, peers, and friends.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaches act as on-site professional developers who assist teachers in implementing proven instructional practices. The instructional coach and the individual teacher (or team of teachers) forms a partnership to analyze the teacher's (team's) needs and discuss research-based ideas and solutions. They also work together to find ways to meet those needs. Knowledge is gained "on-the-job." The coach and the teacher mutually address areas needing improvement. Often, the coach models the instructional practice for the teacher. The coach then observes the teacher engage in the same practice. Action research is frequently carried out as the mentor and mentee share ideas, identify problems, create solutions, and "try out" research-based practices.

The mutual, supportive relationship created by the coaching model enriches not only the professional learning, but also the collegiality, friendship, and collaborative spirit of the coach and teacher. The coach analyzes the teacher's needs, observes classes, suggests proven practices and interventions, models the suggested modifications in instruction, and observes and provides feedback. As a result, a form of professional learning community develops that becomes the means to deliver more effective instruction to improve both teaching and learning.

See Chapter 7 for the activity Support #4 - Peer Review of Lessons.

Peer Review

Although the format of the peer review process differs from school to school, the objective is always the same—to help teachers improve instruction. Peer observation involves using one's peers to examine aspects of teaching and learning. It is an opportunity for staff to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and to work together to improve. The overall goal is to establish a culture of self-study that stimulates continuous inquiry, reflection, information sharing, and success. Just as educators provide teacher-to-student support, peer observation provides teacher-to-teacher support.

To make the peer observation process more valuable, conferencing before and after instruction needs to take place. The quality of student work is also a valuable part of the peer review process.

Rewards, Recognition, Incentives

Everyone likes to be recognized and/or receive some type of reward for work well done. Educators are no exception. Rewards, recognition, and incentives motivate teachers to participate in the school community. Rewards must be known, and the criteria for receiving them need to be clearly defined for teachers. It is important to recognize an instructional success, the attainment of a degree or completion of a particular professional development activity, or the development of a curriculum, curricular map, or pacing guide. The work of those engaged in the creation and implementation of these initiatives are a few examples of teacher contributions that should receive some sort of public validation.

As with learners, teachers respond positively to recognition and are motivated to continue to develop activities and initiatives that improve teaching and learning. Typical incentives for educators are financial honorariums, time allotted during the school day to engage in the development of various initiatives, and the opportunity to assume a leadership capacity. Just as schools have the “Student of the Month,” some schools have the “Teacher/Employee of the Month.” A teacher might be awarded a temporary, special parking place near the building for a school contribution. Inclusion of teacher accomplishments in the school newsletter to parents or in the student newspaper are other common ways to provide teachers with recognition. Summer scholarships for additional study in the teacher’s discipline or area of expertise are an excellent incentive for some educators. Candidates for this type of an incentive usually have to apply and indicate why they deserve this award. Another type of summer program is an internship in a local business organization. Again, application is usually required.

Whatever the prize, the teacher will respond to this form of recognition and support. With teacher recognition, the value and esteem of the profession is affirmed, and indirect gratitude is expressed for the contributions of the individual educator.

Demonstration Classrooms

In a demonstration classroom, teachers visit sites (demonstration classrooms) that provide teacher-to-teacher observations and collaborative teaching. Typically, the demonstration classroom in-service program consists of the following:

- Before visiting the demonstration classroom, teachers participate in an in-service that focuses on the curricular objective of the demonstration classroom and on the successful instructional strategies used to implement the curricular objective. For example, elementary teachers may want to learn how to establish learning centers in their classrooms. Demonstration teachers would first instruct the participants on the definition, value, impact on student achievement and engagement, and aspects of successful instruction to implement the learning centers, and so forth. Challenges and successes of the implementation of learning centers would also be discussed.
- Teachers are asked to think about and eventually implement learning centers in their classrooms.
- Interested teachers visit demonstration classrooms to observe students and teachers within the learning center model. Visiting teachers observe student and teacher behavior and discuss their observations with the demonstration teacher and fellow visiting teachers.
- A follow-up session is then held with the participants in the visitation and the teachers who facilitate the demonstration classes.
- Participants implement learning centers in their classrooms.
- Teachers of the demonstration classes visit the participants' classes.

- A postvisitation conference is held, and teachers and participants reflect and discuss the value and success of the learning center model.

The demonstration classroom provides multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in professional discourse and better understand their own practice. This approach gives teachers confidence in implementing a new form of instructional strategy and builds teacher-to-teacher dialogue and support.

Character Education

Character education refers to activities and behaviors that focus on the development of personal characteristics that promote high levels of personal and academic functioning; positive interpersonal relationships; a school environment conducive to teaching, learning, and academic achievement; and successful adult roles and contributions to society. Most character education programs contain guiding principles that form the basis of the program.

The International Center has identified 12 guiding principles to consider when building a character education program. These guiding principles, described in Chapter 4, are adaptability, compassion, contemplation, courage, honesty, initiative, loyalty, optimism, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness. In well-planned character education, these principles become part of the normal experiences, activities, and interactions in the school day. Faculty and staff promote and model these guiding principles. This has a positive result in both faculty and staff. Functioning by these guiding principles ensures the creation of a more sensitive, caring, friendly, cooperative, and helpful staff.

Character education programs for staff have the same benefits as character education programs for students. Staff, as well as students, perform more effectively, have better control of their anger and frustration level, are

See Chapter 4
for more detail
on character
education.

more self-controlled, and are more willing to share with others. Staff recognizes that character education can strengthen positive personal relationships.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict occurs when individuals or groups do not obtain what they want or believe is right. Since life consists of dealing with people's lives, jobs, children, ego, and sense of mission, conflicts appear inevitable. However, conflict may be minimized or resolved. Conflicts frequently occur when the organization or group has poor communication, when someone seeks power at the expense of others, when there is dissatisfaction with the current leadership, when leadership is weak, when there is a lack of openness and honesty, and sometimes when there is a change in leadership.

Conflict may be destructive or constructive. It is destructive when it polarizes people and decreases collaboration and cooperation. Sometimes, conflict may cause attention to be diverted to areas that are not significant. In some instances, conflict may lead to irresponsible behavior. Conflict is constructive when it helps to relieve anxiety and stress. As people learn more about each other in a conflict situation, cooperation, support, and understanding become more natural responses. Conflict may result in providing solutions to the problems facing the group.

Recognizing the cause of conflict is necessary to resolve the problem. Causes of conflict include:

- needs or wants are not being met.
- knowledge is limited.
- values are not the same.
- expectations are unrealistic.
- assumptions are made and translated into fact.
- perceptions and values are questioned.
- differences in personality, values, race, or gender become evident.

Groups experiencing conflict must collaborate to reach some sort of consensus or general agreement. When group members collaborate, respect and support are given to each individual. All members are permitted to provide their opinions, whether they agree or disagree. Holding different points of view is commonplace and healthy for a group. However, the group eventually gets to a point of acceptance and reaches some form of consensus.

Throughout the conflict resolution process, staff members experience and demonstrate respect for one another; a consensus is not reached until everyone has an opportunity to share ideas and willingly agrees to the compromise.

Professional Development

Central to the development of relationships is a common understanding and ownership of the school's mission, vision, and core values. Thus, it is essential for staff to have professional development opportunities to engage in activities and discussions that enrich the school community. Trust and support is rooted in common agreement over what students should know and be able to do, what effective instruction looks like, what successful practices and research-based strategies are most effective in improving instruction and student achievement, and what behavior is acceptable between teachers and students (and teachers and teachers). Staff needs to not only know and agree on these essential components of the school community, but also realize that their daily actions and decisions are consistent with these beliefs.

Building supportive relationships may become a priority of professional development. Measuring teacher's trust in each other, the instructional leadership, and the school in general may reveal significant areas for staff to focus on in professional development. Conversations may reveal staff's

strengths and areas of concern. These findings may be used to determine next steps and goals for the entire staff.

Certain professional development models encourage building and strengthening relationships. Peer coaching, mentoring, team teaching, peer reviews, and professional learning communities are models that support teachers and make relationships stronger. Instructional leaders need to consider these when designing professional development activities. Individuals are brought together through these professional development models to work together on areas of mutual interest. In some schools, an individual is hired to provide professional development on an ongoing, daily basis. This individual may be the instructional coach, mentor, facilitator of a professional development learning activity, or observer of a new instructional technique; this on-site professional developer provides in-service that meets the needs of staff.

Providing and strengthening networks and communication systems also support staff relationships. It may be necessary to train school staff on effective communication skills or conduct workshops to revitalize strategies that are already in place. Utilizing available technology to improve communication among staff members might take the form of a faculty chat room or Web site where ideas, concerns, questions, and successes may be shared.

Travel

When teachers are given the opportunity to travel together to attend professional conferences and workshops or to chaperone students on field trips, the travel experience sets up an opportunity for relationships to form and grow. If staff members attend a conference together, then conversation will, no doubt, occur over the value of the ideas learned and its relevance to their own school community. Perhaps out of this travel experience, a core

group of individuals may initiate dialogue about a new program, curriculum, assessment instrument, and so forth.

Another form of travel is teacher travel exchanges. There are a number of programs available for teachers to explore. Typically, a teacher might exchange positions with someone in his or her own discipline; or a teacher may exchange with someone living in a country where the language that the teacher teaches is spoken; or a teacher may exchange with someone who is living in a culture about which the teacher teaches.

Some school districts offer teachers an opportunity to take a sabbatical. Often, during the sabbatical, the teacher may travel to enrich his or her knowledge of subjects he or she teaches. International experiential education opportunities allow teachers to learn unique pedagogical approaches found in different parts of the world. Other study abroad programs may focus on countries where students live in poverty and may face daily challenges unlike any students in our country face. In these situations, the teacher usually meets with members of the business community and other leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and its impact on education.

Internships, exchange programs, and scholarship and grant programs help many teachers expand their understanding of countries around the world. Districts that provide any of these travel programs are supporting the continuing professional growth of their staff.

Family Partnerships

Making connections with a student's family usually strengthens the support a student receives for learning and gives the teacher support for instructional activities, classroom rules and policies, grading systems, and so forth. Teachers and instructional leaders need to reach out to parents to engage

them in their student's program. Some ways that schools attempt to involve parents include:

- social events such as a family outing, picnic, “get to know your school” night and so forth
- volunteer tutoring or chaperone programs
- dinner events that include a brief program focusing on one of the priority instructional areas or explaining an assessment program
- presentations through the guidance department about college admissions and scholarship opportunities and financial assistance programs
- meetings to explain specific programs
- student-led conferences
- parent-teacher organizations
- school visits.

Community and Business Partnerships

Having a community or business partner may bring many benefits to a school, classroom, and teacher. Teachers gain advice in curricular areas — especially in career and technical education programs or career academies, where members of the business community serve as advisors. It is difficult for an educator to stay current in some of the business practices within some career clusters. Businesses may offer teachers an opportunity to do an internship or work over the summer vacation. This experience will provide the teacher with valuable insight into the expectations and requirements of a particular workplace and field. Businesses may also donate up-to-date equipment to the school or allow students and teachers to access their equipment.

A community and/or business representative may support instruction by providing mentoring programs to students, providing internships to students in career and technical education programs, or serving as tutors to students in need of academic assistance. Individuals from the community and

businesses may also become a part of a school's character education program. At Kennesaw Mountain High School in Kennesaw, Georgia, business and community representatives coteach the character education program. A senior student presents a guiding principle and then the business or community representative provides a real-world example from business practices of the significance of the character trait or guiding principle.

The community and/or business representatives can also support teachers by providing an award for an exceptional teacher performance or a program that is possible through the collaboration of the business and the teacher representative.

Community Service

A number of schools have a graduation requirement asking students to complete a specified number of hours in community service programs. For the teacher who oversees or facilitates these community service programs, the opportunities to obtain support for educational programs and activities are great. The teacher, who finds opportunities for students to spend in community service, meets many community members and speaks with representatives from various community and governmental agencies, churches and synagogues, and civic and service organizations. These programs create positive public relations for the school, students, and staff. Also, the teacher may form agreements that foster a stronger relationship between the school and community.

Just as students participate in community service programs, many educators participate as members of a variety of community organizations. These memberships provide opportunities for the teachers to create a better school image, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the school and its mission and goals. Also, the networking that may occur through these connections may lead to additional partnerships with the school. Some groups that teachers may participate in are Rotary, Habitat for Humanity, hospice

volunteers, Chamber of Commerce, book study groups, Bible study groups, business training associations, and so forth.

Celebrations

Celebrations and rituals are inherent to a school's culture. These celebrations vary from school to school. One held in common by most schools is graduation. The pomp and circumstance, the ritual of caps and gowns, and the role the teacher plays in this special event provide great satisfaction, pride, and evidence of support to the teacher.

Celebrations are formal, public evidences of success. When these involve staff members and their accomplishments, they become a means of renewing staff's enthusiasm and commitment to their profession. Celebrations are an excellent means of supporting staff and creating positive, collaborative relationships.

Collaborative Structures

- ✓ Small Learning Communities
- ✓ Clustered Classroom Buildings
- ✓ Team Teaching
- ✓ Grade Level Teams
- ✓ Building Leadership Team
- ✓ Professional Learning Communities

Small Learning Communities

Small-scale schooling through formal and informal organizational structures not only personalizes learning for students but also personalizes staff relationships. These teachers form a team and have more opportunities to get to know students—and each other—very well. Working with fewer staff, the environment fosters strong relationships among teachers. Opportunities to interact, to plan and develop curriculum, to create assessments, and to initiate various strategies and curricular options are more numerous within the small learning community structure. This is because teachers work together to meet the needs of the students within the smaller structure.

Teachers usually teach all of their classes within the small learning community. They share common planning time, collaborate on instructional

decisions, and have time for professional development that is related to the theme of the small learning community. Within this structure, staff finds support from one another through joint efforts to reach the individual needs of their shared students and to make the small learning community a success. Teachers become knowledgeable about each other's strengths and maximize on those strengths to compliment the success of the entire small learning community and not just individual teacher's classes.

In some small learning communities, the staff shares control over the schedule, budget, and program design. This gives staff additional opportunities to work together and understand and support one another. If the small learning community is a career academy structure, staff shares interest in the theme of the academy. The degree of personalization that small learning communities offer students is also present for teachers within the small learning community. With smallness of size, teachers get to know one another better and recognize and respect each other's similarities and differences. A sense of caring and support is nurtured within the small learning environment. The small learning community also affords staff opportunities to implement interdisciplinary instruction.

See Chapter 4
for more detailed
information on
small learning
communities.

Clustered Classroom Buildings

The most frequent way to design elementary schools is to have a common grade level in one wing of the school. This makes it easier for students of a particular age to be together and for teachers teaching a common grade to collaborate. However, at the secondary school level, it is traditional to group teachers by subject area, making it easy for teachers in this common subject area to collaborate. As a result, students move frequently and over long distances in school. This structure makes it hard for teachers who have the same students to collaborate. This structure gives precedence to the needs of the content over the needs of the students. Many schools are attempting to change this by clustering classrooms of the teachers that need to collaborate about groups of students. This more student-centered

collaboration can be facilitated by classroom assignment and building construction. For example, a recently constructed building to serve 1,300 high school 9th graders (an enormous educational challenge) was designed with clusters of five classrooms as a “pod” off intersecting corridors of the school. Near the cluster of classrooms, a new teacher workstation was created. As a result of this design, the school saw a significant increase in staff collaboration and intervention to improve student achievement.

In existing secondary schools, some schools reassign classrooms to cluster 9th grade and/or 10th grade classrooms in one wing of the school. This makes it easier for teachers to collaborate and discuss common students and their needs. Another variation is to cluster classes together that might team teach or share students. For example, a history classroom and an English classroom for 9th grade students might be clustered next to each other. This allows these teachers to meet often and actually group students for team teaching around common themes.

Team Teaching

In the small learning community option, classrooms were positioned near each other to facilitate collaboration for instruction of a common group of students. One form of team teaching takes this collaboration to the next level and places these students and a pair or more of teachers in the same large classroom. These team teaching situations make it easy to draw on the strengths of each teacher to develop enhanced learning experiences for students. For example, a school might create a humanities block by combining traditional English and social studies classes. Teachers from each of these disciplines form a team and work with students in a double block of class time. They lead students through a variety of literature, history, reading, writing, and reflection activities that make connections between language and history. In another example, three teachers from the disciplines of mathematics, science, and technology created a triple period, project-based curriculum to help students develop required math

and science concepts through applied activities. In addition to formal joint teaching assignments, team teaching can also be *ad hoc* when teachers come together for a specific lesson. In this case, a mathematics teacher in a Health Academy may bring in a health teacher for a lesson illustrating how mathematics is applied in the real world of medical research. Even this *ad hoc* team teaching can be supported to become a common practice by school leaders encouraging this practice by recognizing creative ideas and providing procedures for other staff to cover classrooms when necessary.

Another team teaching structure organizes teachers from the core academic areas into a team to collectively teach a group of students. All the teachers in the team share the same students. The commonality of teaching assignments brings teachers together to plan instruction and to meet the needs of the students under their responsibility. Working in the team structure, staff members have opportunities to reflect on instructional practices that are most effective in raising student achievement. In some instances, team members may focus on improving their practice through peer observations and collaborative scoring. Action research frequently takes place among the team members. They explore, discuss, practice, and evaluate methods of improving teaching and learning. Through the team teaching approach, individual members find support from one another and sense shared accountability for the success of the students and the team.

As a team, the members may be given responsibility to jointly decide what resources should be purchased, student expectations, curricula, assessments, and professional development opportunities. They might even be given the responsibility of determining professional and student placements. Working together on these and other initiatives strengthens the collaboration of the team; a sense of interdependence motivates individual team members to assist and support others for the success of the team as a whole.

Team teaching is the exception to the way most teachers have taught and learned. It requires patience, which enables teachers to compromise and share responsibilities. However, the rewards are significant—teachers learn

from one another and create better instruction. This form of staff collaboration is important in improving the quality of teaching and learning through the combined strengths of educators.

Grade Level Teams

Probably the most rapidly growing example of staff collaboration is grade level teams. These types of teams have been more common in elementary schools, where teachers at a particular grade level meet to compare curriculum plans and ensure that instruction is similar across classrooms. These types of teams are an essential part of staff collaboration. It is a strategy for sharing teaching ideas and discussing students that are not succeeding. In secondary schools, grade level teams were traditionally less common, and teachers most often met as departments to share ideas within a subject.

Grade level teams developed differently at the secondary school level. As concerns rose about lack of student achievement, particularly in 9th grade, teachers were asked to meet as a grade level team. This is more easily accomplished when a team of teachers is scheduled with a common group of students. This collaboration allows teachers to examine student success (or failure) across all subjects. If there is an inconsistent pattern of failure, the conversation may lead to ideas on what type of intervention would be successful for a particular student. Even if there is no obvious solution, the group of teachers is likely to be more creative in identifying a solution. Also, the group can commit to making changes in all of the classrooms, rather than each teacher experimenting and trying to intervene on his or her own. This type of group collaboration is an important avenue to early and effective intervention and helping to make students more successful.

In allocating time for teams to meet at the secondary level, it often provides more benefit to students to assign grade level team meeting time. Teachers will naturally find time to meet and discuss ideas with teachers of the same

subject, but it often requires a “push” of common meeting time to provide for a grade level team meeting.

School Leadership Team

Leadership is one of the keys to school success. That leadership is started and modeled by the traditional school principal but is not reserved for a single individual. Successful schools abound with models of distributed and shared leadership. In nearly all schools, it takes many leaders in various roles to make a successful school. This does not mean that a school has many independent decision-makers all leading a school toward their own unique visions of learning. Shared leadership is successful only when there is a common vision for the school community and individual teachers and groups of teachers make incremental decisions consistent with that vision.

There are many different structures for staff involvement in building leadership teams. For example, there might be a traditional team composed of an elementary teacher from each grade level or a secondary school teacher from each department. In a school with multiple magnet programs or career academies, there might be a leadership team representing just that portion of the school community. Multiple teams may also be formed around school functions, priorities, or goals, such as safety, instruction, partnerships, literacy, or technology.

For each of these building leadership teams to function effectively, they need to have the following:

- Clear responsibilities consistent with overall school vision
- Opportunities to meet frequently
- Accountability through recording and communicating decisions and actions
- Skills in communication and consensus decision-making.

Professional Learning Communities

A staff that functions as a professional learning community comes together for learning within a supportive community. Participants interact, test their ideas, challenge one another's ideas and interpretations, and process new information gleaned from one another. Typically, teachers come together to focus on topics of their choice that are related to instruction, student achievement, and assessment. The professional learning community is characterized by supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application of learning, and supportive conditions that enable the group to meet regularly and solve problems and make decisions.

The results of professional learning communities for teachers include the following:

- Decreased sense of isolation
- Increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school
- Sense of collaborative responsibility toward student achievement and school success
- Renewed motivation to teach
- Lower rates of absenteeism
- Increased knowledge about students' needs and successful teaching practices

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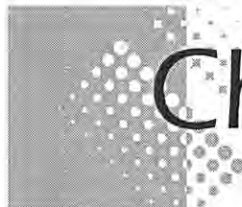
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Chapter 6

A Model for Leadership and Change

Why, What, and How of Change

Status quo is not an option.

Change in schools is dynamic.

Embrace change — do not avoid it.

The continuation of public education as we know it today is not guaranteed. The actions of school leaders will determine the fate of schools in the 21st century. One thing we know for sure — status quo is not an option. Everyone is seeking change in schools. While all educators must play key roles in changing our schools, the burden is even greater for those in leadership positions. Leaders must respond to change appropriately and show others the way.

Change in schools is dynamic. There is no detailed recipe to follow. The International Center for Leadership in Education has worked with schools across the country to identify models, share best practices, and support school leaders in facilitating changes that lead to improvement. This work has revealed that schools usually need to progress through three consecutive stages in order to achieve high academic standards for all students. These three stages require understanding *why*, *what*, and *how*.

- *Why* involves convincing educators, parents, and community members as to why a school needs to change.
- *What* involves using good data, research, and best practices to determine what needs to change once people understand why.
- *How* involves determining how to change the school once people understand and embrace the why and the what.

Regrettably, many schools begin their improvement efforts in the reverse order — by first deciding how to do things differently. That is, they find a “solution” without clearly articulating the need or problem. Yet, if staff and stakeholders do not believe their school must change or understand what needs to change, the suggestion for how to change is likely to be ineffective or rejected. The solution is worthless for a problem that has not been acknowledged. This resource kit is concerned with how to provide leadership

to staff trying to improve their schools. It is not about simply adopting best practices, but rather about creating a culture that recognizes strengths and weaknesses, encourages innovation and initiative, and adapts best practices and ideas from others.

The nature of change is that it must be unique to local needs, forged through consensus, and built upon the unique strengths of each school. There is no one single solution to improving our schools. A combination of strategies is necessary to achieve a new vision of learning. The goal is not to make every school the same but to enable each school to construct its own solutions. These solutions must be consistent with a vision of rigorous and relevant education supported by positive relationships with students.

Change must begin with community expectations. The school and any improvement efforts must reflect the needs of the community. Leaders need a plan plus a set of tools for working with people throughout the change process. Facilitation of change requires having the strategies and techniques work effectively and at the right time with people to create change.

Why Change Schools

School reform begins with a desire by some — and at least a willingness of others — to be led. The administrators and staff in the most successful schools embrace change as exciting and challenging, rather than intimidating and threatening. These educators seem to understand that schools today need to be updated in order to keep pace with a changing society and economy.

The driving force to improve U.S. schools must come from a recognition that our schools are not adequately preparing students for the future society in which they will live and work. Parents and community leaders must also be apprised of the fact that, in many cases, the skills, knowledge, and

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“Everything has
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If we do not
change these,
we drift toward
unparalleled
catastrophe.”
-Albert Einstein

"The best way to cope
with change is
to create it."
-Thomas Feranda

behaviors needed for entry-level employment today outstrip those needed for entry into higher education.

This nation's fixation on preparing young people for college, while a worthy goal, can become an impediment to achieving world-class education standards. Parents and others must recognize that while we continue to prepare our young people to be good citizens and ready them for higher education, we must also add a third important purpose to education—learning to apply academic skills needed for the increasingly sophisticated workplace. Then parents and community leaders must be convinced that schools need to change. We will be able to create the type of pressure necessary to support moving the curriculum to a more relevant base. School districts that have been successful in creating a culture or environment to support change have used a variety of techniques: print, radio, and television media; special events and presentations; community partnerships; and parent and student focus forums. While Americans as a group seem convinced that this country's schools must change, most parents and taxpayers think that their schools are just fine. High-performing schools clearly understand the realities of a changing society and, rather than feel threatened by these changes, seem to embrace the need for schools to evolve.

The International Center has assisted school leaders in creating community and staff awareness of the need for change. Through research, presentations, print materials, white papers, newsletters, and video, the International Center helps schools address the *why* of school change.

What to Change in Schools

Schools are restructuring in order to enable all students to achieve at higher levels. The goal of providing a challenging curriculum requires rethinking the traditional assumptions of how schools operate. Schools and communities across the nation are taking bold initiatives to redesign learning. What have schools changed? There are several common elements observed in most

education restructuring initiatives aimed at achieving rigorous and relevant learning. Following is a list of the 10 key components of school improvement. This list represents a summary of research conducted over the past two decades and is supported by direct observation of schools that have participated in the International Center's annual Model Schools Conference and Successful Practices Network.

"We can and should
shape the future,
because if we don't
someone else will."

-Joel Barker

10 Key Components of School Improvement

1. Create a **culture** that embraces the belief that all students need a rigorous and relevant curriculum and all children can learn.
2. Use **data** to provide a clear, unwavering focus to curriculum priorities which is both rigorous and relevant by identifying what is essential, nice to know, and not necessary.
3. Set **high expectations** that are monitored; then hold both students and adults accountable for continuous improvement.
4. Create a **curriculum framework** that drives instruction toward both rigor and relevance and leads to a continuum of instruction between grades and across disciplines.
5. Provide students with **real-world applications** of the skills and knowledge taught in the academic curriculum.
6. Create **multiple pathways** to rigor and relevance based upon students' interests, learning styles, aptitudes, and needs.
7. Provide sustained **professional development** focused on improving instruction.
8. Obtain and leverage **parental and community involvement** in schools.

9. Establish and maintain a **safe and orderly school**.
10. Offer effective **leadership development** for administrators, teachers, parents, and community members.

Characteristics of Successful High Schools

“Educational change depends on what teachers do and think — it’s as simple and as complex as that.”
-M. Fullan and S. Steigelbauer

In 2004, the International Center, in conjunction with the Council of Chief State School Officers and with financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, conducted a study on the most successful high schools in the country to understand the characteristics that made them effective schools. This investigation provided nine central characteristics of excellent performance in high schools:

1. Focusing instruction around students’ interests, learning styles, and aptitudes through a variety of small learning community approaches, most commonly academies
2. An unrelenting commitment by administrators and teachers to excellence for all students, with a particular emphasis on literacy across the curriculum
3. A laser-like focus on data at the classroom level to make daily instructional decisions for individual students
4. An extraordinary commitment of resources and attention to 9th grade students
5. A rigorous and relevant 12th grade year
6. High-quality curriculum and instruction that focuses on rigor, relevance, relationships, and reflective thought
7. Solid and dedicated leadership

8. Relationships driven by guiding principles
9. Sustained and supported professional development

The research clearly illustrates that schools need to build rigor, relevance, and relationships. This is more than a new alliteration for the 3Rs of learning. Rigor, relevance, and relationships are embedded in nearly all of the nine characteristics of high performance high schools. Thus, the focus of this resource kit is to address the *what* of K-12 school reform as described in research and conveniently summarized as rigor, relevance, and relationships.

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high schools.

How to Change Schools

Schools that have first gone through a process of discovering *why* they must change, followed by an analysis of data which identifies *what* they must change, are far better positioned to determine *how* they need to change. The real challenge is breaking free of traditions and assumptions that have become standard operating procedures our schools.

Creating an environment in which educators and students at every level feel safe in questioning current practices and procedures is an important component of the processes that the successful schools use to improve. In fact, some highly successful schools of a decade ago have faded as models. This happened in spite of the implementation of the strategies previously identified. It appears that they are no longer regarded as innovators because they became institutionalized in their rules and regulations, policies and procedures, and thinking. To maintain success over a long period of time, schools need to engage constantly in reflective thinking. They must question and evaluate not only their established ideas, strategies, procedures, and programs, but also their more recently embraced improvements. The truly successful schools seem to possess a restlessness and ongoing passion for continuous improvement. They shun any sense of “having arrived” at success

“Progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds, cannot change anything.”
-George Bernard Shaw

Improvement must be an ongoing commitment.

and continually strive to improve and reinvent themselves. Clearly, reforming schools is a process, not an event.

Leaders of change in high-performing schools view the process of how to change differently from many other schools. These leaders are willing to take risks because they believe there is no choice but to change. They understand that playing it safe is more dangerous than taking a risk and that there is no protected harbor from the storm. Therefore, they take control and steer the ship through the storm, rather than merely trying to keep it afloat in turbulent waters.

The International Center has studied schools and districts identified as successful in creating higher and different standards to determine the process they followed. While no single set of steps can adequately describe what the most successful schools have done, the Model for Change in Figure 1 describes six strategies that appear to be systemic to any successful change process in U.S. education. The strategies will overlap, and the process is never finished because improvement must be an ongoing commitment. However, these phases in the Model for Change will help guide school leaders in the roles and interventions to use in leading change.

Improving education requires not only change in organizations, but also change by individuals. For some educators, change is very difficult, requiring that they confront the habits and techniques that have served them well. But the reality is that the ways we have taught and tested in the past may not be adequate for the needed innovations.

Change does not come easily or swiftly. Attempting to adopt a “best practice” from a model school is not as easy as just identifying the practice and putting it in place. Figuring out how to help people adapt to change and implement best practices requires skillful intervention by the school leaders who are agents of change.

Barriers often viewed as obstacles to change include money, time, and regulations. But these are not true barriers. They are symptoms of the

attitudes of people. People are the only real obstacles. If we can change people, anything is possible. To become an agent of change, leaders must sharpen their people skills. Facilitating change is about working effectively with people. Schools will only change if the school staff feels personally committed to the change. Additionally, innovations may not be sustainable over time unless the changes are implemented carefully.

If we can change
people, anything
is possible.

Successful schools have demonstrated that the best way to develop innovative practices is to involve as many people as possible in formulating education plans. This includes not only administration and staff, but also parents, students, and other members of the school community. Consensus building through these constituent groups is not a quick and efficient process; however, it yields a better and more lasting result. Shared decision-making generates a larger pool of ideas and proposals. Once a consensus is reached, the process builds ownership and commitment to ensure those plans are carried out and supported.

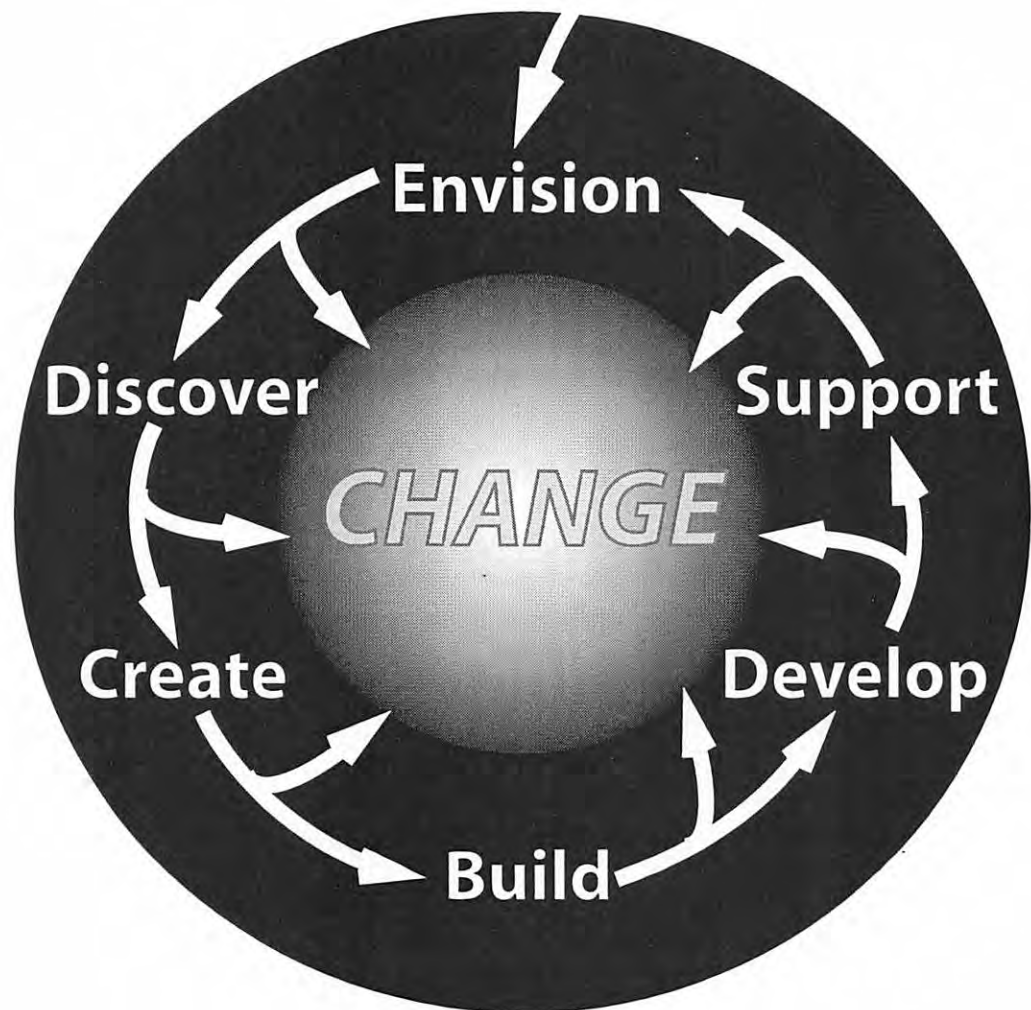
**Empowering
Individuals in
the Change
Process**

An effective shared decision-making process requires training of individuals to both facilitate the process and participate in building consensus. Shared decision-making also requires training to focus on the key planning issues. Time should be spent on those decisions which will make a difference rather than focusing on administrative details. Schools need to help staff develop the tools needed to participate in the process and focus on the types of decisions that lend themselves to shared decision-making.

Transformation will only succeed if the people affected by the change feel ownership of the change. People do not always resist change; often, they welcome it. People resist the changes they have no say in or no control over. Change can be a powerful, exciting, and positive experience. The objective is not to figure out how to convince people to accept a change but to scaffold the change process in such a way that people can feel part of the process and influence the result. This is the ideal. In practice, there is

**Tools for
Change**

Figure 1. Model for Change



too little time and too many people to involve everyone completely in every decision. The key is to recognize that for change to be implemented effectively the people involved must be part of the process.

Planned change in an organization results from a constant flow of activities, as represented in the Model for Change (Figure 1). That change begins with activities that define a vision, or the Envision strategy. However, other activities or interventions are necessary in this continuous process of change. The role of the leader and the involvement of people in change vary with the stage of the change process. These phases (Envision, Discover, Create, Build, Develop, and Support) represent types of strategies which are effective in working with people to change organizations. In the center of the model is organization Change. Creating that change is not a linear process; it is a constant cycle of interventions and activities necessary for change to occur. Change is influenced by the way people work together in each of the phases represented in the model

The key is to recognize that for change to be implemented effectively, the people involved must be part of the process.

Change Strategies

The model is divided into six phases, each with unique change strategies. These strategies represent the approaches or group techniques that are used at appropriate times.

Envision — Dream the Possible

By envisioning, people come to believe that things can be different in the school. Through the vision of a leader, people can imagine what it would be like to have problems solved, processes run more smoothly, or outcomes be more successful. In contrast, when change is imposed, it is often opposed.

“Change is not a one time event, but a process which must be constantly managed.”
-Daryl Conner

Discover — Focus on Competence of the Organization

Discovery involves posing tough questions to help people reflect on the positive aspects of the organization related to the vision. Instead of starting with a deficit model or negative talk about “what’s wrong with our school,” start with a close look at strengths. Reflecting on success stories and posing “what if” scenarios can help the staff discover what is possible in organizational change.

Create — Design Solutions through Kaleidoscope Thinking

Creating requires getting people to think in innovative ways by considering as many different ideas and perspectives as possible. The purpose of this strategy is to expand people’s perspectives and generate novel and unique solutions to problems. Divergent thinking is healthy and should be deliberately planned.

Build — Forge a Consensus for Change

Building is somewhat the opposite of creating. Here, the purpose is to get people thinking alike by building consensus. In this strategy, it is important to develop plans and activities to achieve a common vision. Enough details must be in place to determine the resources necessary to start implementation, but it is good for some details to be left out. This provides the opportunity to engage more people in defining the specifics.

Develop — Cultivate the Growth of People

Change will not succeed unless people develop the skills necessary to understand change. This strategy also refers to building good communication. People will participate more actively and learn more if they understand the nature of the change. Developing is not about formal professional development workshops, although they may be useful. Developing is about setting a climate in which staff has rich opportunities to learn and share experiences. People must feel free to take risks and try new things. In this type of environment, staff will grow and develop.

Support - Sustain People through Implementation

Support is the most neglected strategy, and this neglect often limits the impact of a change. People are naturally tentative when making a change. To be sure that implementation continues, people in the organization who are struggling to adopt the change need follow-up and coaching. For those who are successful, rewards and recognition are extremely valuable in reinforcing the change and making people feel good about it. Financial resources must not be forgotten when providing assistance for change. Too many good ideas have been labeled as ineffective because there was inadequate support for implementing that change.

*"There is no such thing as a problem-free change."
-Ray McNulty*

Each of the six groups of strategies in the Model for Change is critical to an organizational change. They apply to many aspects of education, from changes in teaching and learning to building a new school. There is a logical order to the phases. However, things rarely go smoothly in the real world. Often, organizations must revisit a phase to correct a weakness. For example, if people become confused about the change, more attention should be paid to discovery, to focusing on the positive aspects of the school. Sometimes, feedback indicates that some part of the change is not working. It is then necessary to return to creating and brainstorming how to improve that specific aspect of the change.

If any one of these phases is not carried out effectively, problems will arise. Leaders must be able to sense where people in the organization are and what their needs are. Leaders must focus on the correct strategy for working with people and select the right tool.

Key Strategy Considerations

There are many techniques for working with individuals and groups in each of the phases. Leaders should adjust their style and activities depending on the strategy. The following includes key considerations for each phase.

Envision

- Focus on the future
- Do not lay blame
- Paint mental pictures
- Use metaphors
- Be enthusiastic
- Keep the message simple
- Repeat, repeat, repeat

Discover

- Focus on the positive
- Reflect on what works well
- Develop mental images of high performance
- Ask “what if” questions
- Tell success stories about personal development
- Focus on and work from what is known

Create

- Encourage divergent thinking
- Build trust
- Provide extensive information
- Use brainstorming
- Allow open participation
- Recognize that it is okay to feel uncomfortable

Build

- Encourage convergent thinking
- Give adequate lead time
- Use consensus decision-making
- Provide “situational leadership”
- Be empathetic to human needs

Develop

- Use outside people to start
- Use inside people to carry out
- Provide “just-in-time” development
- Encourage and support personal development
- Use skilled communicators
- Keep communication simple
- Get verbal commitment to change

Support

- Provide adequate resources
- Give recognition and rewards
- Evaluate and revise
- Consider individual differences
- Provide follow-up
- Expect results and inspect progress

Using the Right Strategy

There is a time and place for everything. One way to be an effective leader and agent of change is to take the right action at the right time. The right action, of course, depends on the symptoms of your organization and the phase of change process. The following chart shows negative characteristics of an organization that indicate a weakness in making a successful change. Opposite each set of symptoms is the strategy you should use.

Symptoms If people are/have...	Phase Focus on...
Apathetic, Uncommitted	Envision
Unproductive, Low Morale	Discover
Committed to Status Quo, Tunnel Vision	Create
Confused, In Conflict, Anxious	Build
Fearful, Frustrated, Lacking Confidence	Develop
Tentative, Slow Implementers, Discouraged	Support

Summary

Schools are very much people organizations. Becoming a leader and a successful facilitator of school change is about working effectively with people. By clearly understanding this fact and developing the skills to work with groups and individuals, leaders can become agents of change and help to create the schools our children deserve.

Further Reading

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Chapter 7

Leadership Activities

Introduction

This chapter provides activities to use in the leadership role of working toward rigor, relevance, and relationships. As used here, activities is an inclusive term for a variety of practical tools and resources. Included are checklists, handouts, forms, group activities, and strategies to help with the various leadership tasks. Some activities focus on rigor and relevance, while others are focus on relationships. Some relate to all three.

Each activity has an overview of the purpose, which describes where and how it might be used most appropriately. Most have a suggested length of time to help with planning. The procedure is described to give step-by-step directions for using the activity. Where appropriate forms and handouts are provided as well.

These activities are only suggestions; they are compiled of activities from hundreds of interactions with educators in workshops plus best practices in schools. School leaders should feel free to modify these activities based on their experiences, prior work in the school, and the needs of the staff.

The companion CD has electronic copies of the activity handouts. The electronic versions make it easier to duplicate copies and make modifications.

The Leadership Activities are grouped in six sections that parallel the six phases of the change model: Envision, Discover, Create, Build, Develop, and Support. This grouping reinforces the timing and purpose of each activity in addressing the full change process. Timing of change activities depends on the needs of the group. It is not a straight, sequential process. For example, there are times when it is necessary to challenge group members to make them more creative and other times when it is necessary to try to build consensus. This chapter is set up to allow for choosing activities that fit the need at a specific time. There is not an expectation that a group would do all of the activities. Rather, the leader should select activities that meet the situation and help the group move forward.

List of Activities

Envision

insert page#s when final

1. Futures Wheel
2. Personal Perceptions
3. The Truth About Needs and Wants
4. Shared Vision for a Classroom
5. Personal Vision for Relationship Building
6. Developing a Character Education Program

Discover

1. What Matters Most
2. Standards Alignment
3. Identifying Rigor and Relevance
4. Sharing Success
5. Organization Timeline
6. Epigram
7. Carousel
8. Force Field Analysis
9. Student Focus Groups
10. Relationship Surveys
11. Schools That Say “Welcome”
12. Personalization Survey
13. 10 Key Components Fundamental to School Improvement
14. Parent Survey
15. Consider Instructional Coaching
16. Readiness for Interdisciplinary Instruction

Create

1. Rigor/Relevance Challenge
2. Identifying Community Resources
3. Metaphors
4. Brainstorming
5. Role Discussion
6. Affinity Diagram
7. Character Centered Lesson Plans

Build

1. Bumper Clumper
2. Images of School
3. Delphi Survey
4. Jigsaw Discussion Groups
5. Raising the Level of Rigor and Relevance
6. Establishing Team Roles
7. Productive Meetings
8. Taking Action
10. Morning Meeting
11. Book Study Group
12. Improving Student Relationships to Support Learning
13. Celebrating Valuable Qualities in Others
14. Considering Small Learning Communities
15. Communicating with Parents

Develop check titles from here down

1. Reflection on Learning
2. This and That
3. Understanding Learning Styles
4. Planning Rigorous and Relevant Instruction
5. Lesson Review
6. Data-driven Curriculum Reflection
7. Selecting Instructional Strategies
8. Leadership for Reading in Content Areas
9. Integrating Technology
10. Individual Professional Development
11. Powerful Designs for Professional Learning
12. Daily Professional Learning
13. High Quality Professional Development
14. Raising the Level of Rigor/Relevance Through Interdisciplinary Projects
15. Character-Centered Teaching Staff Development

Support

1. Action Research
2. RSVP
3. Peer Teaching Observations
4. Peer Review of Lessons
5. Consider Instructional Coaching
6. Effective Instructional Coaching
7. Checking for Rigor/Relevance
8. Plus Delta Reflection
9. Asking the Right Questions
10. Recognizing Good Character
11. The Interview

Envision 1**FUTURES WHEEL****✓ Purpose**

This activity is a variation on brainstorming which focuses on the impacts of change by identifying likely consequences and needs. The futures wheel is a technique to examine the most likely consequences from a specific trend or decision. It asks individuals in small groups (6–8 people) to agree on potential consequences of the selected trend or potential decision. This enables a group to examine thoroughly the impact on the organization. The activity can also be used as an icebreaker at the beginning of a workshop.

✓ Preparation

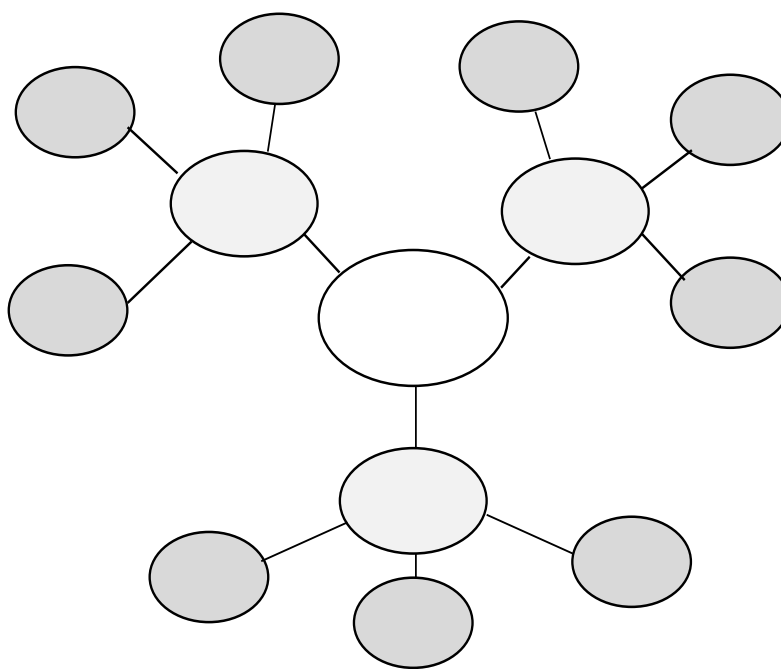
- Identify clear changes, events, or trends, which are placed in center of the Futures Wheel (e.g., new student assessment, policy, or schedule change).
- Orient facilitators.
- Prepare handouts and/or easel chart for groups to work on.

✓ Procedure**Time**

30–60 minutes, depending on group size/complexity of questions

1. Write the trend or decision the group is focusing on in the center circle.
2. Write three consequences of that trend or decision in the connecting circles. At least one should be positive and another negative. The group should work to achieve consensus on what consequences to include.
3. Based on the initial consequences, the group should list second- and third-level consequences. The total list of consequences gives some indication of the impact of a trend or decision. The results of “wheel” brainstorming can be written in the form of a final list or narrative.

FUTURES WHEEL CHART



Envision 2

PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS

 Purpose

This technique is useful in presentations to help an audience better understand the vision of an organization. Visions are often big ideas that, even when described in graphical terms, are hard for people to fully understand. What people do understand is personal experience. This activity helps to relate organization vision to personal experience by analyzing characteristics of personal experience.

 Preparation

Before trying this technique with a presentation, experiment with a couple of people or a small group to test the scenario and questions that you will pose. It is helpful to have visuals that pose the beginning scenario and the questions that you will ask the group. List the vision. List 4–6 criteria that could be used to evaluate characteristics of that vision. Then for each criteria list two extremes, one positive characteristic and one negative. The following table shows criteria and characteristics for an example of developing a vision of student-centered learning.

Vision: Student-Centered Instruction

Criteria	Characterisitics	
	Positive	Negative
Initiation	Self-started	Required
Dependency	Work with others	Work alone
Use of Time	Flexibility	Fixed time
Rewards	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Learning	Application	Theory

Procedure

Time

10–15 minutes (can
part of a large-group
presentation)

1. Introduce to the audience the specific aspect of the vision of the organization that you are trying to get them to internalize. For example, you remind school staff that the vision of the school is to develop student-centered instruction and state that student-centered instruction is not difficult to understand. You would like them to think about a personal experience that will help to illustrate student-centered instruction.
2. Ask them to think about a specific type of personal experience. Pick a type of experience that has some connection to the vision on which you are focusing. For example, if the vision is of student-centered instruction, ask them to think about a personal learning experience that transformed their lives by opening new opportunities or giving them greater satisfaction. If you were focusing on student-centered instruction, you might ask them to think about personal experiences as a student.
3. Then ask a series of questions with a choice of two extreme alternatives. For example, in focusing on student-centered instruction, ask questions about the characteristics of their personal learning experience: Who initiated it? Did they work alone or with others?, Were there time limitations? Were the rewards intrinsic or extrinsic? Was the learning primarily application or theory? In this example, most audiences will describe their personal experiences as having the same characteristics as student-centered instruction. As you pose each question, have audience members raise their hands in response to their choice. If you've constructed your questions well, the characteristics of individuals' personal experiences will relate to the student-centered vision of the organization. It is even more powerful if you have a slide that lists the positive characteristics and then present that slide after polling the audience on their opinions. Their opinions should represent exactly the characteristics of the vision you are working toward. You can then connect their personal experiences to the vision of the organization. In that case an organization vision is not an abstract imposed change but something that is consistent with their own personal experiences and something they are more likely to support.

Envision 3

THE TRUTH ABOUT NEEDS AND WANTS

Purpose

This facilitated discussion focuses on the needs and wants of students in the area of relationships. As educators, we strive to provide for the needs of students, such as basic nutrition, safety, a sense of belonging, and recognition and development of self-esteem through learning and competence.

Meeting these needs is often a challenge because of limited resources and outside influences. However, another obstacle is that wants often seem to conflict with needs. For example, students need structure and discipline, but they want freedom.

At one level, these seem to be opposites. In truth, good parents create family rules and activities that provide structure and discipline but still allow choice and recognize individuality. It is an oversimplification to say that students want freedom, and it will make them happy. The truth is that they both structure and freedom.

Schools that are creating a vision to meet the needs of students in the area of relationships will find that this activity stimulates teachers to think about the inherent contradictions in student needs and wants. Using this discussion as a background, they can then better define the vision of what the school should be doing to meet the relationship needs of students.

Procedure

Time

1. Meeting with a school staff or a leadership team, introduce the group to the challenge of creating a school vision in regard to student relationships. Begin by discussing some student needs or wants related to relationships.
2. In advance, write the following statements on 3" by 5" cards. Distribute the cards to different people in the group.
 - Students need/want friends.
 - Students need/want to be singled out.
 - Students need/want relationships with adults.
 - Students need/want to known.

Students need/want to belong to a group.
Students need/want to feel that others care about them.
Students need/want a mentor.
Students need/want recognition.
Students need/want to be left alone.
Students need/want to be seen as individuals.
Students need/want to be like everyone else.
Students need/want to be listened to.
Students need/want to be a winner.

3. Tell the group that these cards reflect statements that some people use to describe students. Are they true or false and why? Select one person to read his or her card, choosing either *need* or *want* when reading the sentence (the reader must decide whether that statement is a need or a want). Then ask the group to react to the statement that has been read. Is it true? Are there exceptions among students?
4. During the discussion, list those characteristics that are true needs, those that are wants, and those that are perhaps both.
5. Next, begin a discussion of the vision of the school regarding student relationships. Answer this question: What would a school look like that had positive learning relationships for students?

Envision 4

SHARED VISION FOR A CLASSROOM

Purpose

To be effective, all classrooms need to have rules and procedures. As teachers are introducing their classroom procedures, engaging in a brainstorming activity such as this will help students to understand the direct connection between those procedures and the individual needs and expectations of each student. This brainstorming activity enables a teacher to build understanding with students about the need for classroom rules and procedures. It asks students to reflect on their personal needs and expectations and consider those of others.

Preparation

- Students should have experience in brainstorming. If they do not, they will need preliminary activities to understand the guidelines for effective brainstorming.

Materials

- Large sheets of newsprint, butcher paper, or a blackboard

Procedure

Time

30–40 minutes

1. Review with students the rules of brainstorming: all responses recorded and no judgmental comments on others' ideas.
2. Indicate to students that every student has needs that must be addressed in an effective classroom. This brainstorming activity will ask each student the following:
 - What would you like this classroom to be like?
 - How would you like to be treated by the teacher and other students?
 - What would make this an effective class for you?
3. Have students tell how they like to be treated in a classroom and what makes an effective class. It is often helpful to use a go-around procedure, which gives every student the opportunity to reflect on the question personally, form a response, and then offer brainstorming suggestions. This is particularly true with younger students, who may be more hesitant to offer opinions.

4. All responses are recorded so that the group can see them. Many of these comments will be negative such as, “I don’t want to be embarrassed,” or “I don’t want to be picked on.” It is acceptable at this brainstorming level to record those negative comments.
5. Review the list of ideas suggested by students and consolidate or link ideas that are similar in nature.
6. Begin to draft a second list, this one a list of classroom rules and procedures that address the ideas in the first list—how students wanted to be treated and how to achieve an effective class. In many cases, the teacher will need to form the negative statements into positive classroom procedures. For example, the statement such as, “I don’t want to be embarrassed” could be reframed as “All individual grades will be kept confidential,” or “All students will value the work of other students,” or “All students will respect fellow students’ workspace.”

Envision 5

PERSONAL VISION FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to challenge each staff member to clarify his or her personal vision for student relationships. Much of the literature and best practice is about creating an *organizational* vision. The aspect of a *personal* vision is often neglected.

Typically, selected staff meet and reach a consensus on a vision statement that is then communicated to all staff. It is hoped that through participation in the forming process and repeated communication that all staff will accept and support the vision. That is not always the case. An important next step is to have all staff reflect on their personal actions and commit to a personal vision consistent with the organizational vision.

Because of the complexity and personal nature of relationship building, an especially important step is that each staff member takes the time to create a personal vision around the goal of relationship building.

Procedure

These individual and group activities help teachers relate a school vision to their own practices. They should be done after a school vision on relationships has been established. Below there are three separate activities (A, B, and C) leading up to creating a personal vision (D).

- A. Describe the School Vision in Your Own Terms
- B. Reflect on Personal Goals and Values
- C. Connect School Vision with Personal Mastery
- D. Describe Your Personal Vision

Time

1. To set the stage for this reflection, first review the school vision. Another powerful introductory activity is to listen to students. Have a group of students discuss live or record a discussion of what they think about teacher-student relationships and how these relationships affect their learning. When working with teachers of the lower grades, it may be effective to have older students reflect on elementary and middle school experiences.

2. Ask teachers to do Activity A, “Describe the School Vision in Your Own Terms.” Then assign teachers to pairs and have them share with each other. Depending on the size of the group, you might have teachers report some of the responses.
3. Have teachers work on Activity B, “Reflect on Personal Goals and Values.” Have teachers work in pairs to create this activity but not report the responses.
4. Next, ask teachers to complete Activity C, “Connect School Vision with Personal Mastery.” Have teachers report the characteristics that they want to embrace, but let them keep personal the practices they feel they want to let go.
5. Finally, in Activity D, have teachers complete the draft of the personal vision. These could also be shared. If the group is large, have them share them in pairs to create some accountability that they have completed the task.

Activity A. Describe the School Vision in Your Own Terms

“We know that once the vision is clear, the how is invented along the way.”
—L. Tice

Describe the ideal student-teacher relationship that supports high levels of student learning—a learning environment where students enjoy school, work hard, encourage each other, take risks, show initiative, and celebrate achievement. Focus on what the teacher is doing. What does he or she do and say—and, perhaps more important, how does he or she behave—that creates a strong learning relationship with students?

Activity B. Reflect on Personal Goals and Values

A personal vision must be connected to your personal values and goals. Before beginning to define your personal vision, reflect on personal goals and values related to teaching. This can be done alone or with a colleague. Ask each other the questions and then summarize your answers.

“Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.”
—Carl Jung

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”
—Japanese proverb

“Some men see things the way they are and ask, ‘Why?’ I dream things that never were, and ask ‘Why not?’”
—George Bernard Shaw

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.
—Carl Yung

Questions to help reflect on your goals and values:

- Motivation: Why do you teach? Is it for same reason that you entered teaching? Would enter teaching again?
- Goals: What do you want to accomplish in teaching? What are your personal goals? What are your goals for your students? What is the goal for your school?
- Competence: How do you measure success? How do you know you have done a good job? What gives you satisfaction in teaching?
- Values: What makes a good teacher? What are the characteristics you value in other teachers? Who do want to be like and why?

Summarize in writing your responses to the questions.

Activity C. Connect School Vision with Personal Mastery

Make two columns on a sheet of paper, one titled “Embrace” and one titled “Let go.” In thinking about the school vision for improved student learning relationships, list under “Embrace” examples of your teaching that enhance student relationships. Include teaching strategies, procedures, specific lessons, activities, clubs, behaviors—anything that you currently do that improves learning relationships. In another list, identify specific practices or behaviors that may inhibit your students and you from achieving the school’s vision of relationship building.

Activity D. Describe Your Personal Vision

On a sheet a paper, write a statement of your personal vision. This vision should relate specifically to how you, in the future, see the students you work with experiencing positive relationships that support high levels of learning. Describe what it would be like for an outside person to observe the way your students work, interact with each other, and relate to you. Include in the vision a description of your actions and how you fit in the picture.

Envision 6

DEVELOPING A CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Purpose

Character education refers to initiatives that help to develop the behaviors that promote high levels of academic functioning in students, positive interpersonal relationships, and a school environment conducive to learning and academic achievement. Character education also builds success in adult roles and a civil society.

More extensive information on creating developing character education programs is described in Chapter 4, “Building Student Relationships.” This activity summarizes the steps in developing and implementing a comprehensive character education program

Procedure

Step #1:

- Create a leadership team to direct the implementation of the character education program. This team will carry out the steps below.
- Brainstorm answers to the question, “What do we want to accomplish by establishing a character education initiative?” List problems or positive goals. This is the beginning of an initial assessment of the needs for a character education initiative.
- Discuss the importance of community involvement in the development of your character education initiative. Consider what might happen if you do not involve the community at the outset.
- Begin the process of organizing your Community Advisory Panel by deciding how you will advertise for panel members. Are there specific individuals or community groups who you may want to personally invite to be members?
- Brainstorm names of individuals who may have the organizational and interpersonal skills to be the facilitator of the Community Advisory Panel.

Time

A series of meetings/
events over several
months

- Develop a timetable for community involvement. How long will it take to advertise for panel members? When will the panel begin meeting? Estimate how long it will take for the panel members to complete their work and establish recommendations they can present to the board of education. Set a tentative date for the presentation to the board.

Step #2

List the activities, programs, or projects already established in your school which may promote character building.

Step #3

Organize a meeting of key community members. Form groups of 6-8 people. Ask groups to discuss the following questions (written on a chart or photocopied into a handout for easier access):

- Who are the role models for children today? How are the role models different from 50 years ago?
- What are the important reasons why a character education initiative is needed in your school or district?
- What benefits do you hope will develop for students, faculty, and the community from implementing a character education initiative?

After 20 minutes, allow each group time to report on their answers.

Step #4

Using the information gathered during the meeting of community members, develop strategies to establish a clear commitment to a comprehensive character education initiative.

Step #5

Decide how to develop and keep the support of parents and the community.

Step #6

Determine the types of school-wide activities and approaches needed in the school or district (for example, service programs, developing key guiding principles).

Step #7

Develop a detailed character education plan. This plan should include a mission and vision statement, as well as goals and timelines.

Step #8

Decide how the initiative will be evaluated and who will perform the evaluation.

Step #9

Establish a three-year action plan to involve and train all faculty and staff members. To develop the plan, reflect on these questions:

- Why is a character education initiative being developed?
- What problems or issues do administrators, teachers, or students hope the initiative will address?
- Will the character education initiative be implemented district-wide or at one school?
- Do teachers and administrators have the motivation necessary to participate in a character education initiative?
- What obstacles to development of a character education initiative exist, if any, within the school system?
- What are the strong points of the school system which can be used to facilitate the implementation, promotion, and maintenance of the initiative?
- What is the level of motivation of parents and community leaders to participate in the initiative?
- What obstacles outside of the school system may impede the development of a character education initiative?
- What strengths are there outside the school system which can be used to facilitate the implementation, promotion, and maintenance of the initiative?
- What are any other issues, concerns, or important factors that the planning committee/consultant needs to know?

Discover 1

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Purpose

This icebreaker goes beyond the standard introduction and allows participants to share their perspectives on what matters most.

Preparation

Have a visual prepared with the specific topics and questions you plan to use (see below). Also, it is helpful to use personal examples to indicate to the group the type of responses you expect.

Procedure

Time
30 minutes

Ask participants to introduce themselves. In addition to their names and school responsibilities, ask them to share one or more of the following topics. Ask participants in small groups to complete all four. With large groups, when the introductions might take too much time, ask them to select only one or two topics.

For a large-group variation, divide the group into smaller groups to do the introductions. Another variation is to have the group pair off. Ask participants to share responses and then introduce their partners.

- **Education Hero:** What person (living or dead) embodies the characteristics of the ideal teacher? It should be someone you admire in the education field. It can be as personal as a former teacher, or it might be a noted and admired researcher, leader, or author.
- **Best Teaching:** Of what teaching are you most proud? What teaching moment, lesson, course, student, or group of students seemed to turn out most satisfyingly? It could be in formal teaching or parenting or coaching. Describe that best teaching moment.
- **Fantasy Learning:** Imagine you have the magical power to change anything. What skill or knowledge would you grant to all people that would make the greatest difference?
- **Last Lesson Plan:** You have learned that you have one day left on this earth. We have assembled a group of students who admire you. What is the last lesson you would teach them.

Discover 2

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Purpose

This activity helps teachers and administrators recognize all of the processes involved in ensuring the alignment of instruction with standards and measures the progress of their school in completing these processes.

Preparation

- Make Copies of Characteristics of Standards Alignment Checklist

Procedure

Time

30–40 minutes

1. This activity can be done as an individual or in groups.
2. Use the Checklist to reflect on current practice related to standards alignment in the school and/or district.
3. Following review using the Checklist, school leadership teams can use the information to plan action steps to address all characteristics.

Characteristics of Standards Alignment Checklist

Output	Always	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never	Characteristics	Process
School culture That Emphasizes Standards					Standards are part of the conversation of student achievement.	Developing an Understanding of Standards
					Accountability systems are based on standards.	
					Data is collected to measure achievement of standards.	
					Recognition and celebrations are designed around standards.	
Local priority Skills and Knowledge					Teachers have a short list of priorities for instruction.	Analyzing Community Needs Analyzing State Tests
					Priority needs of the community are known to all.	
					Key areas of state/standardized assessments are known to staff.	
					Teachers have identified how their instructional areas relate to these priorities.	
Local Curriculum Frameworks					District has local curriculum standards and student competencies.	Developing Local Standards
					Local curriculum is linked to state standards.	
					Teachers have access to and use these curriculum resources.	
Curriculum Maps					Curriculum topics are sequenced, assigned to a grade level and time of the year.	Curriculum Mapping
					Teachers have had input in the development of curriculum maps.	
					Teachers have access to and use curriculum maps.	
					Teachers have linked lesson plans to these curriculum maps.	

Characteristics of Standards Alignment Checklist, continued

Output	Always	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never	Characteristics	Process
Crosswalks Between Career and Technical Education (CTE), the Arts, and Academic Areas					CTE/arts courses have been analyzed to identify content that supports academic standards.	Connecting Academic Areas with Career and Technical Education and Arts Education
					CTE/arts teachers have a priority to reinforce academic standards.	
					There are frequent conversations between CTE/arts and academic teachers to share instructional ideas.	
					Applied academic courses are developed and offered.	
					Professional development is provided on integrating academics and CTE and the arts.	
					Team teaching of CTE/arts and academic teachers is practiced in school.	
District/school Improvement Plans					Root causes of obstacles to student achievement have been identified.	District/School Improvement Planning
					A comprehensive plan sets the priority for use of funds, instructional improvement, teacher evaluation, and professional development.	
					Professional development and staff evaluation are aligned with priorities.	
Teacher Instructional Plans					A consistent process is used by teachers to develop instructional plans.	Instructional Planning
					The instructional planning process is supervised.	
					Instructional plans are shared among teachers.	
					Teachers have access to resources to help develop instructional plans.	

Characteristics of Standards Alignment Checklist, continued

Output	Always	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never	Characteristics	Process
Local Assessments					Local assessments are developed consistent with district and school priorities.	Selecting/ Developing Local Assessments
					Teachers have input to decisions regarding the selection and use of standardized tests.	
					Teachers have access to resources to develop local assessments.	
					Local assessments and scoring guides are shared among teachers.	
					Local assessments are developed to parallel those used in state assessments.	
					A balance is achieved between recall assessments and performance measures.	
Instructional Improvement Priorities					Each teacher has a personal plan for improvement priorities consistent with district goals and based on student achievement results.	Analyzing Student Achievement
Academic Intervention Services					There is a district plan for academic intervention services and processes for referring students and terminating services.	Analyzing Student Achievement
					Parents are fully informed of options for students and referrals.	
					Teachers understand the plan and refer students for services.	
Revised Instruction					Teachers facilitate instruction that supports the standards.	Instructional Improvement
					Teachers offer a variety of instructional activities and methods.	
					Instruction is motivating to students and they are actively engaged.	
					Teachers exhibit interest in continual improvement.	

Discover 3

IDENTIFYING RIGOR AND RELEVANCE

Purpose

This activity allows participants to begin to apply what they have learned in the rigor and relevance activities. It is a group activity in which participants can rely on one another and reinforce the learning among all in the group.

Preparation

Prepare the following:

- Rigor/Relevance Framework Worksheet (one per group)
- Sample Middle Level Mathematics Student Performances (cut into single pieces and placed in an envelope or plastic bag)
- Answer Sheet for Mathematics Student Activities in the Rigor/Relevance Framework

Procedure

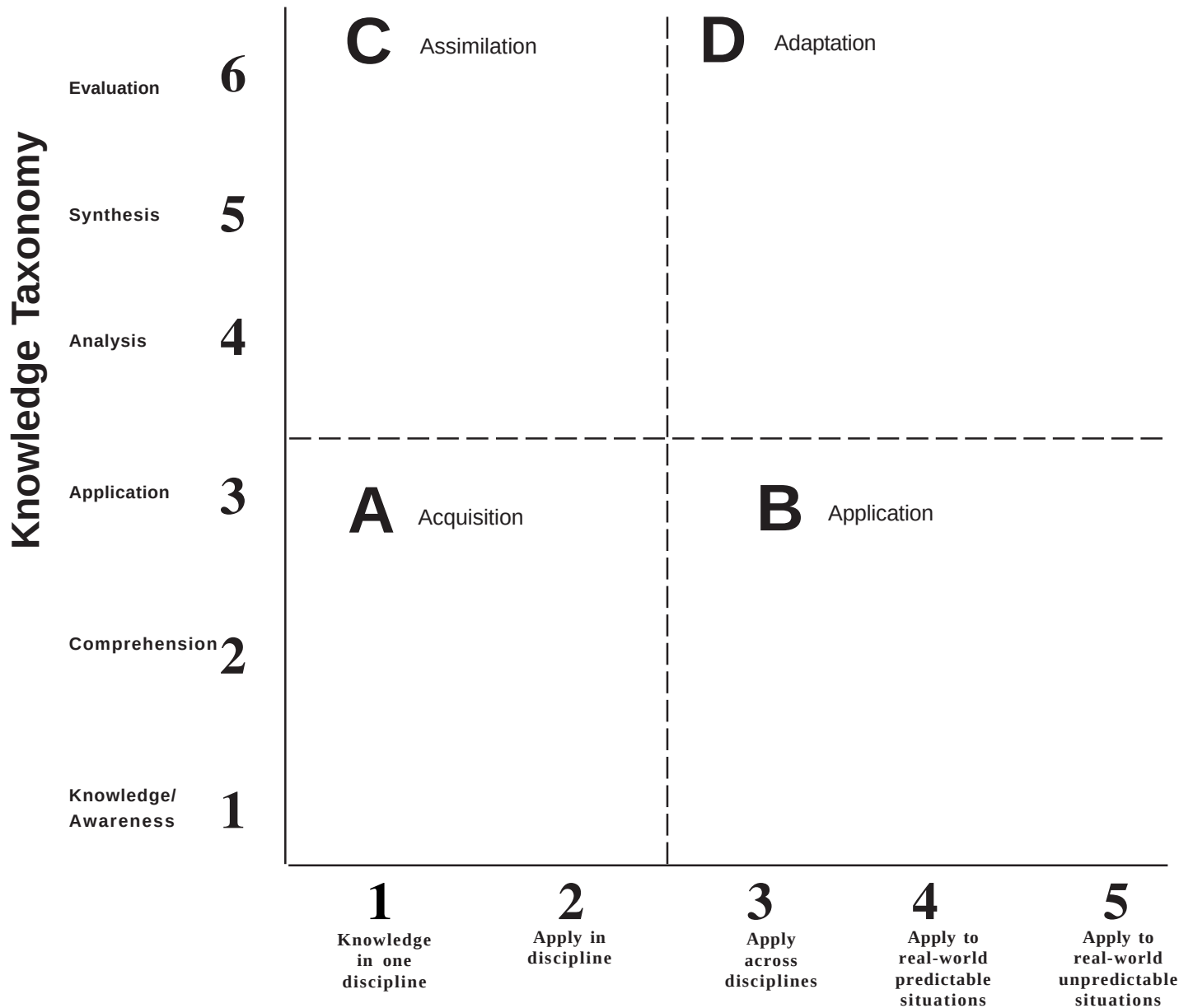
Time
20 minutes

1. Organize participants in groups of 3–4 people. Introduce this activity as a way to apply their knowledge of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Note: Participants should have exposure to the Framework through presentation or reading pages 1–10 of *Rigor and Relevance Handbook*.

2. As a group, have participants place each of the student performances in the proper quadrant using the worksheet.
3. Have them check their work against the answer sheet.
4. Discuss any differences.

Rigor/Relevance Framework Worksheet



Application Model

Sample Middle Level Mathematics Student Performances

Calculate paint needed for a summer business painting houses.

Calculate percentages of advertising in a newspaper.

Calculate percents of daily requirements met through a typical school lunch.

Calculate potential combinations of a group of variables, such as wardrobe components, and estimate the probability of any one combination being picked at random.

Calculate volume of regular solids.

Determine the largest area for a fixed perimeter.

Estimate sums of complex fractions.

Evaluate equivalency and relationship of decimals and fractions.

Evaluate objects for similarity and congruence.

Express probabilities as fractions, percents, or decimals.

Fill in missing numbers for ordered pairs for an algebraic function.

Find and measure the sides and angles of a right triangle using the Pythagorean theorem and trigonometric ratios.

Graph the perimeters and areas of squares of different sizes.

Hold a competition to determine when using a calculator or doing mental math is most efficient.

Make a scale drawing of the classroom.

Measure angles with a protractor.

Measure interior angles of polygons and discover the relationship between number of sides and sum of angles.

Obtain historical data about local weather to estimate amount of snow, rain, or sun during a given season of the current year.

Organize and display collected data, using tables, charts, or graphs.

Plan a large school event and calculate resources (food, decorations, etc.) needed and costs.

Play a simulated baseball game and calculate statistics.

Plot the coordinates for quadrilaterals on a grid.

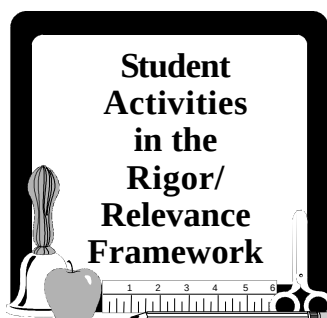
Select a computational operation to solve a word problem.

Test consumer products, such as absorbency of paper towels, devise a scale, and illustrate data graphically.

Use basic properties of equality to solve equations with one variable.

Use graphing calculators and computer spreadsheets to organize and analyze data.

Mathematics



6

Quadrant C Assimilation

- Measure interior angles of polygons and discover the relationship between number of sides and sum of angles.
- Graph the perimeters and areas of squares of different sizes.
- Express probabilities as fractions, percents, or decimals.
- Evaluate equivalency and relationship of decimal and fractions.
- Determine the largest area for a fixed perimeter.
- Fill in missing numbers for ordered pairs for an algebraic function.
- Evaluate objects for similarity and congruence.
- Estimate sums of complex fractions.

5

4

3

2

1

Quadrant D Adaptation

- Hold a competition to determine when using a calculator or doing mental math is most efficient.
- Obtain historical data about local weather to estimate amount of snow, rain, or sun during a given season of the current year.
- Use graphing calculators and computer spreadsheets to organize and analyze data.
- Test consumer products, such as absorbency of paper towels, devise a scale, and illustrate data graphically.
- Plan a large school event and calculate resources (food, decorations, etc.) needed and costs.

Quadrant A Acquisition

- Select computational operation to solve word problems.
- Calculate volume of regular solids.
- Measure angles with a protractor.
- Find and measure the sides and angles of a right triangle using the Pythagorean theorem and trigonometric ratios.
- Organize and display collected data, using tables, charts, or graphs.
- Use basic properties of equality to solving equations with one variable.
- Plot the coordinates for quadrilaterals on a grid.

Quadrant B Application

- Make a scale drawing of the classroom.
- Calculate percents of daily requirements met through a typical school lunch.
- Calculate potential combinations of a group of variables, such as wardrobe components, and estimate the probability of any one combination being picked at random.
- Calculate percentages of advertising in a newspaper.
- Play a simulated baseball game and calculate statistics.
- Calculate paint needed for a summer business painting houses.

1

2

3

4

5

Discover 4

SHARING SUCCESS

Purpose

This activity is particularly useful in an organization that is undergoing significant change from outside pressure or is distracted with a number of negative influences. It could be the creation of a new school or the appointment of a new administrator. In the midst of significant turmoil, there is a natural tendency to focus on the most negative aspects of organization's condition.

This group activity forces staff to think about the positive, particularly about the characteristics of the organization when a positive climate existed. By reliving some of the stories of an effective organization, a group can begin to move the focus of attention from the negative aspects of a current situation to the conditions that need to be created to have a positive work environment and a progressive organization.

Preparation

Participants should be in groups of no more than six to eight and have the opportunity to sit comfortably around a conference table. If working with larger groups, divide into smaller groups, each with a facilitator who understands the purpose of the activity and can keep the group on task and focused on the objectives.

Procedure

The presenter introduces the activity by openly talking about some of the outside pressures and negative aspects of the organization which must be dealt with. The presenter then encourages the group to put those tasks aside.

Time

45–60 minutes

If a group is particularly distracted, a useful technique for getting the group to put those ideas aside is to have people write down the current problems or issues that occupy their thoughts on small sheets of paper. Then the presenter collects all of those sheets of paper and puts them in a box or container in the corner of the room, saying that these problems are set aside right now and will be addressed at a later time.

Tell the group that in order to address the current problems adequately and to focus on our real goals, it is useful to reflect on previous successes within the organization. Charge each of the groups to discuss success stories from their experiences in the organization. These stories should be examples from when they personally felt empowered and successful, and there was a strong sense of cooperation and effectiveness within the organization.

Ask each of the facilitators to charge each member of the group to think about an example. Ask each facilitator to give three to four minutes of quiet time so that each person can think about the story to share with the others. These should not be brief descriptions but should tell a detailed story which specifically mentions people, describes what happened and how people felt.

After each group has shared individual stories, if time permits, you might share some of the best stories with the entire group.

Follow up with a discussion of the characteristics of the organization present these stories that created this feeling of success. These characteristics become important to focus on in identifying the goals to work toward in the current problem or crisis.

Discover 5

ORGANIZATION TIMELINE

Purpose

Often reflecting on the significant events and achievements of an organization allows current problems to be seen in light of the organization's historical strengths and mission. Each school is different. It is important to understand the history of the school as a basis for addressing current needs.

Preparation

Use a chalkboard or several connected sheets of newsprint to create an appropriate timeline for the history of this particular school.

Procedure

Time

20–30 minutes

1. Divide the participants into small groups of six to eight people.
2. Charge each group to identify five to ten significant events (positive or negative) in the history of the school organization. Identify the event and the approximate year it took place. Give each group 10 minutes to complete this task and ask one group member to be prepared to report the results.
3. Convene the large group and begin to record a timeline of significant events identified in the various small groups. Begin by asking for the earliest recorded year among the events listed by each of the small groups and continue in chronological order until all of the events have been listed on the newsprint or chalkboard in front of the audience.
4. Once the entire timeline is assembled, discuss for a few moments with the entire group the most significant events that have occurred. As facilitator, make any connections between the events in the organization timeline and current issues confronting the organization.

Discover 6**EPIGRAM****✓ Purpose**

One of the ways to discover effectiveness within an organization is to reflect on the organization from a different perspective. Epigrams are the short verses or expressions we all grew up with. They are the expressions that capture the best wisdom in our culture. We repeat these epigrams so frequently that sometimes we lose sight of their important meanings. This group activity uses epigrams in a different context and applies them to a school organization. By taking epigrams from a different context and applying them to a reflective conversation about schools, school staff can develop insight into the strengths and weaknesses of a school organization.

✓ Preparation

Organize the room in which participants meet in pairs or groups of three to engage in a conversation. Prepare a variety of epigrammatic statements on 3" by 5" cards (see below). It is not necessary to have a unique epigram for every conversation pair; however, there should be at least 20–30 different epigrams.

The following are examples of epigrams that you might consider in developing this activity.

Time
40–60 minutes

- To thine own self be true.
- The devil made me do it.
- A watched pot never boils.
- Live and let live.
- Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS)
- Don't dissipate the day.
- It ain't over till it's over.
- Out of sight, out of mind.
- What goes around comes around.
- If you want it right, do it yourself.
- You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.

Procedure

1. Rather than use epigrams you have prepared, an optional activity is to have participants prepare their own epigrammatic statements. Display a transparency of two or three as examples and then ask each participant think of their own favorites and write one on a 3" by 5" card. Collect all of these cards and mix them up.
2. Distribute the epigram cards you have prepared—or those generated by the participants—to each of the pairs or triads (give each group two or three from which to choose).
3. Ask each of the groups to apply their chosen epigram to their school or organization. Ask them to indicate what this epigram means to their organization in terms of the way the organization should operate or the core principles and procedures within the organization.
4. List some of the important “discovered” observations on an overhead for the group to observe.

Discover 7

CAROUSEL

Purpose

This activity will engage participants in brainstorming. Thus, they will become familiar with the technique, practice the guidelines for effective brainstorming, and evaluate their own success in using the strategy and its effectiveness in helping them to generate ideas.

Preparation

- Large sheets of newsprint
- Colored markers
- Masking tape or thumb tacks

Procedure

Time

45-60 minutes

See Create #4 for a Brainstorming activity.

1. Post large sheets of newsprint on the wall at various places around the room. Have a brainstorming topic or question on each sheet.
2. Review the guidelines for effective brainstorming.
3. Divide the participants into groups of six.
4. Have each group choose a recorder.
5. Designate a timekeeper for the activity and instruct the timekeeper to give a signal after three minutes.
6. Have each group start with a different colored marker in front of one of the posted pieces of newsprint.
7. Instruct the groups to brainstorm responses to the posted question/topic. Indicate that they will only have three minutes on each topic.
8. After three minutes and the time signal, direct the groups to move to the next sheet on their right.
9. Have the groups brainstorm quickly and add to the new sheet.
10. At the time signal of three minutes, direct the groups to move again to their right and repeat the process.

11. Continue this procedure until each group has brainstormed responses to all of the topics posted.
12. Have each group return to the topic where they began. Have groups look over ideas and see what was added to the list.
13. Instruct the groups to organize the ideas into categories and eliminate repeated ideas.
14. In their same groupings, have the participants discuss the effectiveness of the brainstorming in helping them to generate ideas and evaluate how well they followed the guidelines for effective brainstorming.

Sample Topics

- Guidelines for Effective Brainstorming
- When to Use Brainstorming
- Steps in the Brainstorming Process
- Brainstorming for English Language Arts Instruction
- Brainstorming for Mathematics Instruction
- Brainstorming for Science Instruction
- Brainstorming for Social Studies Instruction
- Ways Visual Tools Enhance Student Learning
- Characteristics of Effective Professional Development
- How to Involve Parents and the Community in Your School

Discover 8

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Purpose

An organization can be considered balanced among several forces, often working in opposite directions. No change will take place unless an imbalance of these forces occurs. A method of planned change called force field analysis was developed by Kurt Lewin.

Forces moving toward the change are called “helping forces.” These are opposed by an equal number of forces against the change called “hindering forces.” Change can be planned by first analyzing the helping and the hindering forces. Once these are clearly identified, it is easier to achieve the change by (1) reducing or eliminating a hindering force, (2) strengthening a helping force, or (3) changing the direction of any force.

Typically, when groups assemble, they focus on problems, which results in talking about overcoming obstacles. This activity helps to clarify both negative problems and positive influences.

Preparation

Organize the room where participants can meet in small groups of no more than 8–10 people. Have newsprint to record responses. Designate and orient a facilitator to lead each group.

Procedure

Time
1–2 hours

1. Identify a primary goal or change that is proposed.
2. Have each group list each of the hindering forces—obstacles to making the change or achieving the goal (often easier to start with hindering forces).
3. List each of the helping forces—the positive features that would support making the change or achieving the goal.
4. Once the lists are complete, prioritize the list, and select three to five of the most significant helping and hindering forces.
5. Work with each of the forces and brainstorm specific action steps that will strengthen helping forces, reduce hindering forces, or change the directions of forces. These lists of possible actions provide good ideas for further development of work plans.

Discover 9

STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Purpose

Students, particularly secondary students, can provide excellent feedback on the levels of rigor, relevance, and relationships. This can be done through a survey, but actual focused conversations with groups of students are an excellent way to gauge the level of what is happening in school.

Procedure

Select students randomly to include in focus groups. The groups should be approximately 8–12 students. Encourage students to be honest in their observations. The discussion is intended to measure the level of rigor, relevance, and relationships in the school. The purpose is not to evaluate any specific teacher, administrator, or student, so avoid referring to any teacher or student by name.

As an option to ensure that students feel comfortable in sharing perspectives, consider using third-party facilitators and recorders. Another option is to work with a partner school that is also interested in conducting student focus groups. Train student facilitators and then schedule them to conduct the focus groups in the other school. Students will be very open and honest with a peer whom they do not know.

Time

30–40 minutes
for each group

Following are potential questions to include in the focus groups:

- What is it about this school that you most enjoy?
- If a new school leader came to this school with many ideas to make changes, what would you argue strongly should never be changed?
- If a new school leader asked you what should definitely be changed, what would be first on your list?
- Are most students challenged in their work, or can you slide through classes?
- Do you think that you are adequately prepared for the next level of education?

- What are examples of work you do in classes that makes you think?
- What are examples of work you do in classes that definitely will be useful—work that applies to the real world?
- What are examples of teacher actions that show they care about you and how well you do in school?
- What are some activities that have helped you to get to know other students?
- What are ways that teachers provide additional help when you need it, and how often does that occur?
- What are examples of teacher or staff actions that show that they do not care about you or respect you?

Discover 10

RELATIONSHIP SURVEYS

 Purpose

Developing learning relationships can be a data-driven decision by using the Relationships Framework and surveys that match this framework. Collecting data from staff, students, and parents will help to assess where a district is in regard to the level of relationships. Schools can then celebrate the current level of success and begin to examine changes in behaviors, procedures, and programs to make a difference in learning relationships.

 Procedure

Have staff, students, and parents complete the surveys. Anonymous responses are better. If you have a large student population, you may sample each group. Tabulate the results. Each of the questions is broken into levels of the Relationship Framework. This data will give you an indication of what progress you have established in building positive learning relationships and what you need to work on.

There are three separate surveys. The first gathers feedback from students on how the teachers support the learning relationship. The second is another student survey that gathers feedback from students on peers. The third is a parent survey to get feedback on both teachers and peers.

On the survey, the levels of the Relationship Framework are omitted. A letter designates the questions that relate to a level of the Framework as follows:

Section A	Level 0	Isolation
Section B	Level 1	Known
Section C	Level 2	Receptive
Section D	Level 3	Reactive
Section E	Level 4	Proactive
Section F	Level 5	Sustained
Section G	Level 6	Mutually Beneficial

Responses are on a five-point scale: SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, N - Neutral, D - Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

When adding up responses, count Strongly Agree as five, Agree as four, and so on. Then add all the responses to each section. You can then average the response for each level of the Relationship Framework. You will have a value between five and 25. You can then judge how well your teachers and students have attained each level of the Relationship Framework.

Learning Relationships - Student Survey of Teachers

Directions: Read each of the following statements. For each statement check the circle at left that best describes your answer.

SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, N - Neutral,
D - Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

Section A

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers do not take an interest in me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel like a number rather than a person in school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers disrespect me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel alone in this school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers do not miss me when I am absent.

Section B

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most of my teachers know my name.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most of my teachers know who my friends are.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teachers know my parents.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most of my teachers are familiar with the community or neighborhood.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers take an interest in my future goals and education plans.

Section C

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel that I belong (am accepted and liked) at school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most of my teachers like me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I have opportunities to ask teachers questions about what we are learning.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I talk with teachers in settings outside of class.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers make me comfortable to ask them any question.

Section D

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ There are teachers I could ask to write me a recommendation for a job, an award, or for college.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teachers treat me with respect.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers are willing to help me with a personal problem.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers accept me for who I am.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teachers trust me.

Section E

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers pay attention to all students, not just the top students.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teachers really care about me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teachers always keep their promises.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers expect me to do my best all the time.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers help me catch up if I am behind.

Section F

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel supported by teachers.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ The support I get from teachers encourages me to learn more.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I respect most of my teachers.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I want to keep in touch with my teachers after I leave school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teacher talks frequently to other students that are not in my class.

Section G

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ People at this school are like family to me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I respect all my teachers.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I trust my teacher with any secret.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My teacher makes me feel special and unique.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ All students in my classes enjoy being in school.

Learning Relationships – Student Survey of Peers

Directions: Read each of the following statements. For each statement check the circle at left that best describes your answer.

SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, N - Neutral, D - Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

Section A

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students do not take an interest in me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel like I don't belong in this school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students disrespect me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel alone in this school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students do not miss me when I am absent.

Section B

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students know my name.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I have several friends.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My friends know my parents.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I have shared things about my family and background
with other students.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students enjoy the same things I do.

Sue will line these second lines
up later

Section C

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel that I belong (am accepted and liked) at school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most of the other students like me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most students work well together in groups.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students do not make fun of me when I make a mistake
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students make me comfortable to ask them any question.

Section D

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ There are other students I can count on to help me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students treat me with respect.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students are willing to help me with a personal problem.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students accept me for who I am.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Students in my school help one another, even if they are not friends.

Section E

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Everyone gets along well in my class.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students really care about me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students always keep their promises.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students are pleased when I do a good job in school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students will help me with school work.

Section F

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel supported by other students.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ The support I get from other students encourages me to learn more.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I respect most of my other students in class.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I want to keep in touch with my classmates after I leave school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Many different groups of students work or play together outside of class.

Section G

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ People at this school are like family to me.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I respect all my other students.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I trust other students with any secret.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students make me feel special and unique.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ All students in my classes enjoy being in school.

Learning Relationships – Parent Survey of Relationships

Directions: Read each of the following statements. For each statement check the circle at left that best describes your answer.

SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, N - Neutral, D - Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

Section A

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers do not take an interest in my child.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students disrespect my child.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers disrespect my child.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child feels alone in this school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students pick on or bully my child.

Section B

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child has several friends at school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It has been easy to get to know my child's teacher.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I am confident that my child has teachers that care about her/him.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child's teachers are familiar with the community or neighborhood.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers take an interest in my child's future goals and education plans.

Section C

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child feels that he/she belongs (is accepted and liked) at school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most of my child's teachers like my child.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child has opportunities to ask teachers questions about what he/she is learning.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I talk with my child's teachers regularly.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Other students are supportive of my child getting good grades in school.

Section D

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers are willing to provide extra help in order for my child succeed.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child's teachers treat my child with respect.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers are willing to help my child with any personal problem.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers accept my child as a unique individual.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I trust my child's teacher.

Section E

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers pay attention to all students, not just the top students.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child's teachers really care about my child.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child's teachers always keep their promises.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers expect my child to do his/her best all the time.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Teachers help my child catch up academically if she/he is behind.

Section F

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child feels supported by his/her teachers.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ The support my child gets from teachers encourages my child to learn more.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I respect most of my child's teachers.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I want to keep in touch with my child's teachers after my child leaves school.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Many different groups of students work or play together outside of class.

Section G

SA A N D SD

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ People at this school are like family.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I respect all my child's teachers.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I trust my child's teacher with any secret.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ My child's teacher has been exceptional in making him/her feel special and unique.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ All students in my child's classes enjoy being in school.

Discover 11

SCHOOLS THAT SAY “WELCOME”

Purpose

Relationships in schools are very intangible and hard to quantify. And yet, it is very easy to get a sense of the relationship atmosphere when you first walk into the school. Staff can begin to identify the level of relationships by thinking about what school appears to be to visitors.

Procedure

Use this following checklist to reflect the characteristics of your school toward visitors.

Schools that Say “Welcome” Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate your school’s relationship with parents. Does your school say “welcome” in every aspect of the school culture?

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Office staff greets visitors in a friendly, courteous way.
☐	☐	When parents pass staff in the hallways, they are greeted warmly.
☐	☐	Staff members offer assistance if anyone appears lost or is new to the school.
☐	☐	Teachers, staff and students answer the telephone in a friendly, professional way.
☐	☐	A welcome sign (in all common languages of the community) and school map are displayed near the entrance.
☐	☐	There is an area where visitors can easily find information about the school and curriculum.
☐	☐	The school holds regular social occasions or events where parents and school staff can get to know each other.
☐	☐	An orientation program is provided for new families in the district.

- ☐ ☐ Parents are welcome at all times in the school building and classrooms.
- ☐ ☐ The community uses the building frequently for planned events.
- ☐ ☐ Translated signs and materials as well as translators are available for parents with limited English in order for them to understand the curriculum and participate in activities.
- ☐ ☐ Information about school rules, parent-teacher conference, school and classroom policies, and bus and lunch schedules is available to parents/guardians.
- ☐ ☐ A resource center exists for parents and teachers that has comfortable furniture. It provides parenting information and has support available (e.g., copy machine, computer, desk) for parents' school-related activities.
- ☐ ☐ There is a bulletin board on which parents can post news and announcements.
- ☐ ☐ The library is accessible to parents.
- ☐ ☐ Principal and staff are willing to listen to parent/guardian concerns about issues.
- ☐ ☐ Volunteers are visible, offer greetings, and are knowledgeable about the school.
- ☐ ☐ Security staff members, if present, are friendly in carrying out their duties to identify visitors.
- ☐ ☐ There is ample and convenient parking available for parents when they visit the school.

Discover 12

PERSONALIZATION SURVEY

Purpose

One of the strategies to get all students to high level of rigor, relevance and relationships is through personalization. The opposite of personalization is letting student “fall through the cracks” and not take advantage of learning opportunities.

Procedure

Use the following survey to collect information on the degree of personalization in your schools.

The following general survey of student attitudes toward school was design by the Endicott Center for Research and Educational Advancement for administration to students in grades 6-12. Although not all of the questions relate to personalization, a great many do.

School/Classes

YES	NO	
☐	☐	School is a welcoming and friendly place.
☐	☐	I am proud of my school.
☐	☐	I know the goals my school is working on.
☐	☐	I enjoy being at school.
☐	☐	I have been recognized for something I have accomplished at school.
☐	☐	I think bullying is a problem at school.
☐	☐	School is boring.
☐	☐	At school I am encouraged to be creative.
☐	☐	Students have a say in important decisions made at school
☐	☐	My classes help me understand what is happening in my everyday life.

Teachers**YES NO**

☐	☐	Teachers care about my problems and feelings.
☐	☐	Teachers care about me as an individual.
☐	☐	Teachers are concerned about my learning.
☐	☐	My teachers are aware of my learning needs.
☐	☐	Teachers care if I am absent from school.
☐	☐	If I have a problem, I have a teacher with whom I can talk.
☐	☐	I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me.
☐	☐	Teachers enjoy working with students.
☐	☐	Teachers have fun at school.
☐	☐	Teachers make school a fun and exciting place to learn.
☐	☐	My teachers have time for me.

Respect

☐	☐	Students respect teachers.
☐	☐	Teachers respect students.
☐	☐	Students respect each other.

Parents

☐	☐	My parents care about my education.
☐	☐	My parents like my school.
☐	☐	My parents think going to college is important.
☐	☐	My parents feel comfortable talking to my teachers.
☐	☐	Teachers let my parents know what I do well.

Discover 13

10 KEY COMPONENTS FUNDAMENTAL TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Purpose

In its work with model schools, the International Center for Leadership in Education has identified dozens of characteristics of successful schools. The International Center has also completed a meta-analysis of school improvement models and research studies. All this data was organized into ten key components.

1. **Culture of High Expectations and Support** - Create a culture that embraces the belief that all students can benefit from a rigorous and relevant curriculum and provides personalized relationships between adults and students to support high levels of achievement.
2. **Data-driven Decisions** - Use data to provide a clear, unwavering focus to curriculum priorities that are both rigorous and relevant, instruction that is personalized and school improvement that is continuous.
3. **Accountability** - Set high expectations that are monitored, and then hold both students and adults accountable for students' continuous improvement in the curriculum priorities.
4. **Articulated Curriculum** - Use a framework to organize curriculum that drives instruction toward both rigor and relevance and leads to a continuum of instruction between grades and across disciplines.
5. **Rigorous and Relevant Instruction** - Teach students through experiences that are challenging; stimulate reflective thought and are real-world applications of skills and knowledge.
6. **Personalized Learning** - Create appropriate transitions into and from school and multiple pathways to rigor and relevance based upon a student's interests, learning style, aptitude, and needs.

7. Professional Learning Communities - Foster development of a highly collaborative staff and provide sustained professional development focused on the improvement of instruction.
8. Partnerships - Obtain and leverage parent and community involvement resulting in positive relationships with schools.
9. School Climate - Establish and maintain a safe and orderly school.
10. Leadership - Offer effective leadership development for administrators, teachers, parents, and community.

In order to assist schools in reflecting on their own practice and discovering strengths, these ten characteristics we expanded into a rubric. For each of the ten components a number of characteristics were identified to help schools assess these components.

Procedure

Use the rubric with school leadership teams to assess strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Rubric for 10 Key Components Fundamental to School Improvement

1. Culture of High Expectations and Support - Create a culture that embraces the belief that all students can benefit from a rigorous and relevant curriculum and provides personalized relationships between adults and students to support high levels of achievement.

Prior to completing this portion of checklist, please review and reflect on:

Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey Parent Focus Group Interviews Student Focus Group Interviews	School Observation Classroom Observation Student Work Analysis School Improvement Plan and Reports School Practices Analysis Curriculum Processes

	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. References to high student expectations appear in vision and mission statements of the school.					
2. The belief is reflected in student and teacher handbooks.					
3. The belief is pervasive among school personnel, with no apparent dissenters.					
4. The belief is evident in conversations with students.					
5. Students have a clear and ambitious picture of what they will do in the future.					
6. Students know and understand the meaning of high quality work.					
7. The need for high expectations is communicated to parents and community in newsletters, reports, and school policies; at school events and parent conferences; and on the school's Website.					
8. Student achievement is recognized and celebrated frequently.					
9. The school's emphasis on learning is reflected in the displays, posted materials, and awards within the building.					
10. The school is designed to promote sustained student relationships with adults.					
11. The schedule is designed to promote sustained student relationships with adults.					
12. Every student has an adult advocate and a personal plan for progress.					
13. Staff are dedicated to helping all students meet state and local standards.					
14. Students perceive staff as caring and concerned with their education achievement.					

Comments:

2. Data-driven Decisions - Use data to provide a clear, unwavering focus to curriculum priorities that are both rigorous and relevant, instruction that is personalized and school improvement that is continuous.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Classroom Observation Curriculum Review			Student Performance Data School Improvement Plan and Reports Available Data Sources School Practices Analysis		
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. There are measurable goals tied to the school vision.					
2. The staff has identified a few important priorities that serve as a common focus throughout the school.					
3. The school's program of work is aligned to the vision.					
4. There is a willingness to explore ways to use data to measure progress.					
5. The school collects data to determine the amount of high rigor/high relevance instruction...					
6. The school has data on student performance related to students' goals.					
7. Data is used to highlight gaps that exist between student performance and real-world expectations.					
8. The school examines data for all 9 subgroups to measure success of all students.					
9. Student achievement data is used to plan staff development.					
10. Student achievement data is used to reward teacher and staff performance.					
11. The school assessment program is based on district and state standards.					
12. The school uses data to align curriculum both vertically across grades and horizontally across subjects.					
13. Assessment data is provided to parents and students in a form they understand and to teachers in a format that can be used to make informed instructional decisions.					
14. The school regularly reviews data to develop school improvement plans and to monitor progress.					
15. The school looks for trends in data over time.					
16. The school collects and uses follow-up data on student satisfaction and success beyond school.					
17. The school uses multiple indicators, including student work, to analyze student performance, not just one set of test scores.					
18. The school prepares regular reports that celebrate student and faculty achievements and communicate school goals.					
19. Student literacy levels are measured continuously and this data is compared to literacy achievement goals.					
Comments:					

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

3. Accountability - Set high expectations that are monitored, and then hold both students and adults accountable for students' continuous improvement in the curriculum priorities.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Parent Focus Group Interviews Student Focus Group Interviews Classroom Observation Curriculum Review			Student Work Analysis Student Assessment Analysis Student Performance Data School Improvement Plan and Reports Available Data Sources School Practices Analysis		
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. No excuses are accepted for students not being successful. Unmet expectations are seen as a problem that can and must be corrected.					
2. Additional time, resources, and other interventions are available to students not meeting expectations.					
3. All students, regardless of ability, have opportunities identified in the curriculum to engage in higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving tasks.					
4. The school uses a variety of rubrics as often as applicable so that students know what quality work looks like.					
5. Student progress is monitored frequently with formal and informal assessments.					
6. Student progress reports are regularly shared with students and parents.					
7. Faculty members meet regularly to discuss the progress of individual students.					
8. Students and parents agree to academic expectations.					
9. Advisement/mentoring programs are available to all students and help identify students who are at risk of not meeting expectations.					
10. All students are regularly encouraged to do their best work and to "go the extra mile." Extra effort is encouraged and rewarded.					
11. Literacy is an important priority throughout the school.					
12. Pre-testing in classrooms is used often to ensure that students are consistently challenged but not overwhelmed.					
13. There is evidence of increased enrollments in stretch courses such as AP/IB and higher rates of student achievement.					
14. Academic intervention services are available immediately when a student does not meet expectations rather than waiting until next year.					
15. Administrator evaluations are based on student achievement.					
16. Teacher evaluations are based on student achievement.					
Comments:					

4. Articulated Curriculum - Use a framework to organize curriculum that drives instruction toward both rigor and relevance and leads to a continuum of instruction between grades and across disciplines.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Classroom Observation Curriculum Review Student Work Analysis Student Assessment Analysis Student Performance Data School Practices Analysis Curriculum Processes					
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. A process is in place to design and update curriculum based on analyses of state standards, assessments, and local priorities.					
2. There is agreement among teachers about the academic skills and knowledge to be taught.					
3. Common rubrics have been designed and are used across disciplines in such areas as writing, research projects, demonstrations, problem solving, and decision making.					
4. Teachers regularly collaborate and design interdisciplinary lessons and projects linked to high-priority standards.					
5. There is evidence that all teachers, regardless of subject area, take responsibility for delivering high priority academic skills and knowledge.					
6. Literacy development is addressed in all disciplines.					
7. Instruction is aligned with curriculum and state and local assessments.					
8. Curriculum topics are sequenced. There is a school wide delivery plan.					
9. Faculty work together to create learning experiences that are challenging, allowing students to think independently and extend their knowledge.					
10. Learning experiences relate to problems or situations connected to the world beyond school.					
11. Learning experiences allow students to become actively engaged in tasks that lead directly to learning objectives.					
12. Faculty receives reading levels of students and review the reading levels reflected in their textbooks.					
13. Faculty shares techniques/ strategies that successfully differentiate learning for students functioning at different literacy levels.					
14. Instruction demonstrates that textbooks are used to support learning rather than a "cookbook."					
15. The process used by teachers to develop instructional plans is consistent across the school.					
Comments: 					

5. Rigorous and Relevant Instruction - Teach students through experiences that are challenging; stimulate reflective thought and are real-world applications of skills and knowledge.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey Parent Focus Group Interviews Student Focus Group Interviews		School Observation Classroom Observation Curriculum Review Student Work Analysis Student Assessment Analysis Curriculum Processes			
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. There is a strong focus on teaching the application of content knowledge to real-world situations through class and individual projects, hands-on activities, and various methods of communication.					
2. Faculty regularly reviews instructional practices and makes modifications to make them more relevant.					
3. Students understand the purpose of instruction and how skills and knowledge can be applied.					
4. A good portion of student work is analytical – research papers, projects, demonstrations, experiments, extended writing.					
5. The curriculum focus is competence, not coverage.					
6. Faculty has time to engage in reflective thought and to collaborate and develop skills and plans to meet the needs of all students.					
7. Faculty work together in interdisciplinary teams to create learning experiences that focus on the application of knowledge in real world settings.					
8. The school uses community resources to bring relevancy to the instructional programs.					
9. Students are typically asked to present their work to their peers.					
10. Faculty uses strategies to connect learning to students' experiences and previous learning.					
11. Students work collaboratively in groups.					
12. Assessment practices are rich and include a variety performance measures such as portfolios, projects, peer reviews, presentations.					
13. Teachers regularly demonstrate how to apply learning and use real-world examples.					
14. Internships and/or community service projects are a major focus of the instructional program.					
15. Community representatives are invited to participate as advisors, mentors and reactors to student work.					
Comments: 					

6. Personalized Learning - Create appropriate transitions into and from school and multiple pathways to rigor and relevance based upon a student's interests, learning style, aptitude, and needs.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey Parent Focus Group Interviews Student Focus Group Interviews School Observation Classroom Observation Curriculum Review Student Work Analysis School Practices Analysis Curriculum Processes					
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. Teachers know their students very well (examples: teachers attend after-school events, have lunch with students, make it a practice to call students' homes, and are involved with advisement/mentoring programs).					
2. Teachers are skilled in ways to differentiate instruction and regularly employ such practices.					
3. Special programs and structures are in place to ensure the successful transition of students into and out of high school.					
4. Applied academic programs have been developed based on student needs and interests.					
5. It is common practice, supported by the school schedule and structure, to vary amounts of instructional time and resources to accommodate differing student needs to achieve proficiency.					
6. Teachers use a variety of instructional approaches and strategies in the classroom.					
7. Surveys are used to learn about student interests.					
8. Students have choices and options regarding their learning.					
9. Pre-testing and other data is used as a tool to individualize instruction.					
10. The school is organized around the needs of students.					
11. Media centers, and study labs are readily available to all students.					
12. Counseling services are readily available to all students.					
13. Technology is used effectively as a tool to differentiate instruction and as a resource for all students.					
14. Organized extra-curricular organization and athletics provide adequate opportunities for students to develop interests and abilities in addition to academic achievement.					
Comments: 					

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

7. Professional Learning Communities - Foster development of a highly collaborative staff and provide sustained professional development focused on the improvement of instruction.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on: Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey School Improvement Plan and Reports School Practices Analysis Curriculum Processes					
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. Teachers keep up with new ideas in their fields and employ innovative and effective instructional practices.					
2. Professional development is a significant school wide emphasis.					
3. Acquiring/developing a high-quality staff is considered the most important factor related to student achievement.					
4. Teachers have time, opportunities, and incentives to reflect critically and analytically on what they are teaching, not teaching, and why.					
5. Root causes of obstacles to student achievement have been identified and serve as topics for staff development.					
6. A comprehensive plan sets the priority for use of funds for instructional improvement, teacher evaluation, and professional development.					
7. The professional development program is aligned with the instructional improvement plan.					
8. The school has a process to share best practices of faculty throughout the school (study circles, peer reviews, etc.).					
9. Every teacher and administrator has an individual improvement plan.					
10. Resources and research are routinely collected, distributed, and discussed with staff.					
11. Professional development programs are routinely evaluated and modified accordingly.					
12. Faculty teamwork is a "way of life" in the school.					
13. The use of faculty time and resources reflects the school's emphasis on development of literacy skills and independent learners.					
14. The culture of the school includes celebration of both student and faculty achievement.					
15. Teachers meet to review the quality of learning experiences and offer suggestions for improvement.					
16. Available resources are discussed to determine the appropriate uses to meet the goals and mission of the school.					
17. Students also take an active role in the professional learning community by sharing knowledge and teaching others.					
Comments:					

8. Partnerships - Obtain and leverage parent and community involvement resulting in positive relationships with schools.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey		Parent Focus Group Interviews School Improvement Plan and Reports School Practices Analysis			
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. School policy goes beyond “open door” to “open heart” in inviting parents and interested community members to play an active role in the education process.					
2. Parents and community members participate in school activities.					
3. The school actively seeks parents and community members to work in the school as volunteers or paraprofessionals.					
4. Faculty and administrators have the belief that educating students is more effective when parents understand and buy into the principles upon which the school operates.					
5. Conditions and personnel in the school are inviting and welcoming, which encourages and supports parental involvement.					
6. The school uses a variety of resources and strategies to help parents understand the standards, assessments, and academic achievement requirements for students.					
7. The school has taken steps to make the media center, athletic facilities, and other school facilities available to community when possible.					
8. The school conducts satisfaction surveys with parents and community.					
9. The school actively seeks and involves parents on advisory committees for the purpose of school improvement.					
10. Many of the school’s programs are supported by parent/community booster clubs.					
11. The school/district has established a non-profit 501(c) (3) education foundation to support education goals.					
12. The school conducts focus groups regularly for parents and community members.					
13. Administrators and teachers are active in the community.					
14. The school tracks data on parent involvement and has specific goals to increase parent involvement and support.					
15. It is common for the principal, other administrators, and/or teachers to visit parents at home and community agencies.					
16. Teachers are encouraged to communicate regularly with parents in writing, by phone, and in person concerning student successes and needs.					
17. The school seeks ways to increase community participation in the life of the school (free admissions, coupons, senior discounts, volunteer opportunities, etc.).					
Comments: 					

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

9. School Climate - Establish and maintain a safe and orderly school.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on:					
Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey Parent Focus Group Interviews			Student Focus Group Interviews School Observation Classroom Observation School Practices Analysis Curriculum Processes		
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. School staff fosters in students a sense of responsibility for appropriate behavior and creates an environment in which students can learn well.					
2. Students feel safe at this school.					
3. Faculty feel safe at the school.					
4. Discipline is handled in a fair, firm, and professional manner. There are appropriate interventions for disruptive students.					
5. The school tracks student behavior data and monitors incidents.					
6. The faculty accepts responsibility for improving student behavior.					
7. The school has options for students to mediate conflicts					
8. The school has a comprehensive character education program in place.					
9. Student, parent, and faculty handbooks are well organized and clearly spell out the expectations for student behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior.					
10. The adults in the school are excellent role models for students and frequently find opportunities to demonstrate and explain positive character traits.					
11. Adults in the school make it a habit to talk with all students in a positive and reassuring way. Adults treat students with respect.					
12. School personnel have the habit of catching and rewarding good behavior rather than catching and punishing bad behavior.					
13. The general appearance of the school and grounds reflects a safe and orderly environment.					
14. The school has a welcoming attitude to visitors while maintaining the security of the building.					
15. All staff members, including bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and office personnel, are seen as contributors to achieving the mission of the school.					
Comments:					

10. Leadership - Offer effective leadership development for administrators, teachers, parents, and community.					
Prior to completing this portion of the checklist, please review and reflect on: Administrator Interview Staff Interviews Teacher Survey Parent Focus Group Interviews Student Focus Group Interviews School Observation Curriculum Review School Improvement Plan and Reports School Practices Analysis Curriculum Processes					
	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. The principal assumes, but shares, responsibility for all phases of school operations as well as relations within the school, with the school district, and with the community.					
2. School staff feel that leadership provides clear direction and adequate support in helping to achieve school goals.					
3. A strong collaborative relationship exists between the administration and the leadership of the teachers union.					
4. Adults in the school share meaningful feedback and suggestions for improving their work.					
5. The adults believe they have a responsibility to help set the tone for student behavior and create an atmosphere of high expectations					
6. Many teachers are involved in decisions that impact the entire school, not just their individual classrooms.					
7. The faculty and administration demonstrate effective teamwork and leadership.					
8. The administration uses leadership teams, advisory groups, and community representatives to gather information and share goals.					
9. Administration demonstrates that student achievement is a priority by their actions and use of resources to support it.					
10. Administration uses technology (media, newsletters, public service announcements) to communicate the mission of the school to students, faculty, and community.					
11. Current leaders are actively involved in recruiting and mentoring future leaders.					
Comments: 					

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

Component	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
1. Culture of High Expectations and Support - Create a culture that embraces the belief that all students can benefit from a rigorous and relevant curriculum and provides personalized relationships between adults and students to support high levels of achievement.					
2. Data-driven Decisions - Use data to provide a clear, unwavering focus to curriculum priorities that are both rigorous and relevant, instruction that is personalized and school improvement that is continuous.					
3. Accountability - Set high expectations that are monitored, and then hold both students and adults accountable for students' continuous improvement in the curriculum priorities.					
4. Articulated Curriculum - Use a framework to organize curriculum that drives instruction toward both rigor and relevance and leads to a continuum of instruction between grades and across disciplines.					
5. Rigorous and Relevant Instruction - Teach students through experiences that are challenging; stimulate reflective thought and are real-world applications of skills and knowledge.					
6. Personalized Learning - Create appropriate transitions into and from school and multiple pathways to rigor and relevance based upon a student's interests, learning style, aptitude, and needs.					
7. Professional Learning Communities - Foster development of a highly collaborative staff and provide sustained professional development focused on the improvement of instruction.					
8. Partnerships - Obtain and leverage parent and community involvement resulting in positive relationships with schools.					
9. School Climate - Establish and maintain a safe and orderly school.					
10. Leadership - Offer effective leadership development for administrators, teachers, parents, and community.					

Discover 14

PARENT SURVEY

Purpose

Parent perspective is important in determining if the school is meeting the needs of students.

Procedure

This survey is a version of the 10 Key Components Fundamental to School Improvement converted into a parent survey form. Use this with parents to gather feedback on strengths of the school and areas in need of improvement.

Parent Survey Form

Directions: Our school is committed to the following 10 Key Components Fundamental to School Improvement. This survey will be used to collect feedback from parents on the degree to which schools are achieving these characteristics. Your observations are welcome and appreciated. Check **Yes** if you think this characteristic exists, **No** if you think not, and **NMI** if you Need More Information.

School: _____

Name:(Optional)_____ Date:_____

A culture that embraces a rigorous and relevant learning

Yes No NMI

☐	☐	☐	Do students know why they are learning?
☐	☐	☐	Are students given opportunities to apply what they have learned?
☐	☐	☐	Are students active and working in classrooms?
☐	☐	☐	Are the most able students challenged?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school help prepare students to live in a culturally and ethnically diverse society?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school foster development of sound character, democratic values, ethical judgment, and good behavior?

Data-driven decisions

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Is student achievement measured frequently?
☐	☐	☐	Are multiple measures used to measure student achievement?
☐	☐	☐	Do parents get regular reports on student achievement?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school have specific quantifiable goals for student achievement?
☐	☐	☐	Do students get feedback on their work?
☐	☐	☐	Over a period of years, are test scores improving?
☐	☐	☐	Do teachers check and grade homework regularly?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school survey parent satisfaction?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school survey former students for success?

High student expectations, monitored for continuous improvement

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Are there high expectations for all students?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school display examples of excellent work?
☐	☐	☐	Are the students interested in what they are doing?
☐	☐	☐	Do struggling students get help?
☐	☐	☐	Do teachers provide clear expectations for the class and outline required student work?

Organized curriculum that drives instruction

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Does the school have a clear written philosophy or mission?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school work to achieve mission?
☐	☐	☐	Is curriculum tied to state standards?
☐	☐	☐	Do the principal and teachers refer to the school goals?
☐	☐	☐	If there is an emphasis on a particular approach to teaching and learning that is carried out through all instruction?
☐	☐	☐	Do the teaching materials seem up to date?

Real-world applications

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Does student work include meaningful, real-world application of skills and knowledge?
☐	☐	☐	Do teachers explain how learning will be used in the real world?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school have examples of interdisciplinary instruction?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school have active community advisory committees with input on curriculum?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school require or encourage community service?

Multiple pathways to rigor and relevance

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Are there multiple course options for students to meet core academic requirements?
☐	☐	☐	Are there options for students to take extra time to meets standards?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school offer extensive options in athletics, drama, music, art, or other activities?
☐	☐	☐	Are core math, language arts, and science skills connected to career and technical instruction and the arts?
☐	☐	☐	Are there school programs that meet your child's needs?

Sustained development of highly qualified staff

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Do the teachers have a background in the subject they are teaching?
☐	☐	☐	Are many teachers teaching outside the field in which they are certified or hold a degree?
☐	☐	☐	Is there a high turnover rate for teachers?
☐	☐	☐	Do teachers have opportunities for professional development?
☐	☐	☐	Do new teachers receive support to enhance their skills?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school recognize and reward excellent teacher performance?

Parent and community involvement

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Does school staff welcome and encourage parent involvement?
☐	☐	☐	Are there expectation and/or requirements of parents?
☐	☐	☐	Are there parent volunteers?
☐	☐	☐	Are there ways the school communicates with families?
☐	☐	☐	Are other community members involved in the school?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school have partnerships with businesses or other institutions?
☐	☐	☐	Are parents involved in decisions about the education of their children?
☐	☐	☐	Does the school have a parent advisory or policy group such as a site council?
☐	☐	☐	Do all the ethnic groups in your community have a representative voice in school policy making?

Safe and orderly school

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Do you feel comfortable walking into the school?
☐	☐	☐	Do students treat others well?
☐	☐	☐	Is the building clean and well maintained?
☐	☐	☐	Are the restrooms clean and neat?
☐	☐	☐	Do students appear happy and relaxed?
☐	☐	☐	Are the buildings well organized and adequate for the number of students?
☐	☐	☐	Are there clear rules for discipline that are enforced fairly and consistently?
☐	☐	☐	Are there positive rewards for good behavior?
☐	☐	☐	Are there well-established levels of discipline for different infractions?
☐	☐	☐	Are students taught methods of resolving conflicts?
☐	☐	☐	Are there standards for student behavior? Do students know what these are?

Effective leadership

Yes	No	NMI	
☐	☐	☐	Is there stable leadership in the school?
☐	☐	☐	Is the principal visible throughout the school?
☐	☐	☐	Is the principal knowledgeable about instruction and school activities?
☐	☐	☐	Are the roles of other administrators clearly defined?
☐	☐	☐	Are faculty, staff, parents, and/or students involved in school planning and decisions?
☐	☐	☐	Are important decisions about the school made by school personnel rather than by district staff?
☐	☐	☐	Is the school or district developing future school leaders?
☐	☐	☐	Is the principal respected by staff and students?

Discover 15

CONSIDER INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Purpose

Based on current research and effective instructional practice, instructional coaching is an on-site, job-embedded professional development practice that creates a collaborative professional learning community and provides sustained support for individual teachers. An instructional coach teaches teachers about strategies and classroom routines that have been validated through research. The coach assists the teacher in a specific content area, continuously focusing on improvement of instructional practice and student achievement.

Procedure

Activity A

To determine whether instructional coaching would be appropriate for your school community, hold focus groups to gauge interest, readiness, and support.

Focus groups may consist of teachers, building and district administrators, and board members. Encourage everyone to participate openly in discussion. Consider an outside facilitator and recorder to ensure full participation in the discussion.

The following are potential questions to consider:

1. Why should our district consider instructional coaching?
2. Is there dedicated time for teachers to meet and discuss their practice?
3. Will a coaching program respond to needs suggested by data analysis?
4. How can coaching reach all teachers as a means of sustaining growth in instructional practice?
5. How can instructional coaching foster collegial sharing and instruction-based exchanges among teachers?
6. Is there adequate school and central office support?

7. Where will the coaches come from?
8. What criteria will be used to select coaches?
9. Will there be any monetary compensation for coaches?
10. What indicators will be used to measure the success of the coaching program?
11. What indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of the coaches?

Activity B

1. To raise an awareness of instructional coaching and its value and to develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of a coach, divide staff into small groups and have them brainstorm the characteristics of an athletic coach and the value that the coach brings to individual team players, the team as a whole, and the organization the team represents. Encourage participants to refer to examples from their own lives, or the experience of their children or students who have been influenced by a coach.
2. Invite a respected coach to address the group and share his perceptions of his role, responsibilities, and contributions.
3. Invite a successful student athlete to address the group and share how a coach influenced him. What was learned from the coach? What value was the coach to the individual player?
4. Consider the insights about athletic coaching gained from the presentations by the coach and athlete in relation to the role of an instructional coach. What might be similar? What might be different? Is there a parallel in value to individuals and the organization?

Discover 16

READINESS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTRUCTION

Purpose

One of the important aspects of rigorous and relevant learning is the break down of rigid disciplines in school. As you move toward rigor and relevance you need to facilitate teachers from different disciplines working collaboratively to create interdisciplinary instruction.

Procedure

Use the following checklist individually or with school leadership teams to determine whether you are ready for interdisciplinary instruction.

Readiness for Interdisciplinary Instruction Checklist

YES	NO	
		Getting Ready
☐	☐	Teachers have a short list of priorities for instruction.
☐	☐	Everyone knows the priority needs of the community.
☐	☐	Staff members know key areas of state/standardized assessments.
☐	☐	District has local curriculum standards and student competencies.
☐	☐	Career and technical education and arts courses have been analyzed to identify content that supports academic standards.
☐	☐	Career and technical education and arts teachers have a priority to reinforce academic standards.
☐	☐	Teachers use a consistent process to develop instructional plans.
		Getting Started
☐	☐	Teachers have access to curriculum resources.
☐	☐	Teachers have access to resources to help develop instructional plans.
☐	☐	Local assessments are developed consistent with district and school priorities.
☐	☐	Teachers have access to resources to develop local assessments.
☐	☐	Teachers offer a variety of instructional activities and methods.
		Doing It
☐	☐	Applied academic courses are developed and offered.
☐	☐	Professional development is provided on integrating academics and career and technical education and the arts.
☐	☐	Team teaching of career and technical education/arts and academic teachers is practiced in school.
☐	☐	A balance is achieved between recall assessments and performance measures.
☐	☐	Parents are fully informed of options for students and referrals.
☐	☐	Teachers facilitate instruction that supports the standards.
☐	☐	Instruction is motivating to students, and they are actively engaged.
☐	☐	Teachers exhibit interest in continual improvement.

Create 1

RIGOR/RELEVANCE CHALLENGE

Purpose

This activity reinforces the Rigor/Relevance Framework and encourages teachers to think about creative instructional activities that will raise the level of instruction.

Preparation

- Index cards (one per group)

Procedure

Time

10-15 Minutes

1. Working in groups of 5–6, have participants brainstorm instructional topics for any subject which are generally taught at low levels of the Rigor/Relevance Framework — Quadrant A. Encourage participants to think of a low-level memorization assignment through which they or their children suffered. Some examples are: defining vocabulary words, identifying mechanical devices in physics, math operations (addition, etc.).
2. Have the groups select one of their topics that is a good candidate for improvement and write it on an index card.
3. Collect the cards and redistribute them, making sure no group gets its card back.
4. Have the groups write a skill and knowledge statement for the topic which is in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. They should then suggest at least one instructional activity that would raise student performance to the stated level.
5. Have groups report on: (1) their assigned skill, (2) the higher level that is their target on the Rigor/Relevance Framework, and (3) their instructional activities.

A motivational twist can be added by appointing a couple of judges and giving a prize to the group that is most creative. The activity can also be expanded to have participants use a Rigor/Relevance Worksheet to create skill and knowledge activities for Quadrants B, C, or D.

Create 2

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Purpose

This brainstorming activity generates ideas on community resources that might cooperate in helping teachers develop real-world instruction.

Preparation

- Chart paper

Procedure

Time

10-15 minutes

1. Have participants work in groups of 4–6 to list 10 community resources (people, businesses, organizations, facilities, groups) that might be willing to work with the school.
2. Have groups share their lists.

As an added twist, if time allows, ask groups to develop a list of 10 more computer resources. To counteract the groans, offer a reward (e.g., box of candy) to the first group that gets 10 new items.

Create 3

METAPHORS

Purpose

According to Merriam-Webster, a metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.” Metaphors can help individuals examine a problem or issue from a different perspective by highlighting different relationships or characteristics. Organizations often operate in crisis mode trying to solve individual problems. Frequently individuals do not step back and think about the problem from many perspectives. This group discussion activity encourages individuals to think “outside of the box” and also brings in an element of humor, which helps to place an issue in a less threatening context. This activity works best when a large group is addressing a problem within the organization. It may also be used to assess the general morale and characteristic of an organization.

Preparation

- Identify the problem or issue.
- Create worksheets for individuals to use to supporting the conversation. This worksheet can be a simple two-column chart. Label the left-hand column “Problem/Metaphor” and the right-hand column “Characteristics.” Participants will write the problem in the first column. In the second column, participants will write characteristics of their metaphor that apply to schools and their problem.
- Prepare a list of metaphors to share with the group. An example of metaphors that are used to describe business organizations or business problems relates to sports teams. These types of metaphors often address the characteristics of competitiveness, team spirit, and unique individual characteristics.

Procedure

Review the steps in the metaphor process.

1. Divide participants into groups.
2. Each group will review or identify a problem.

Time
30 to 40 minutes

3. Explain how metaphors may be used to further define, and sometimes give new perspective, to a particular problem. Walk the entire group through an example of using a metaphor to analyze a particular issue. Say, “For example a school is like a garden. The year starts with great anticipation. There is a lot of work in preparation by the gardener before it is time to plant. Plants grow slowly just like children change slowly. Constant attention is necessary to protect the young plants and young children from the harsh environment, pest and weeds. When the plants fully develop, the gardener takes great pride in the results and it is hard to image how the transformation from seed to mature plant was accomplished.”
4. Answer any clarifying questions.
5. Allow time for each group to brainstorm a number of metaphors that may describe the problem.
6. Using the worksheet, groups will select a metaphor and brainstorm characteristics of the organization or issue which are represented by the metaphor.
7. Allow time for each group to share their individual metaphors and descriptions with all participants.

Create 4

BRAINSTORMING

Purpose

Brainstorming is a technique used to create solutions for problems. It involves generating a list that includes a wide variety of related ideas. In a group setting, brainstorming can be extremely effective. Participants not only come up with new ideas, but also build on associations from other people by developing and refining them. Better ideas are created through group brainstorming than individual responses to questions or problems.

Procedure

Ground Rules for Brainstorming

Time

Before beginning any effective brainstorming session, ground rules must be set. Ground rules for person to person interactions are established to make the most of the brainstorming session. These rules should be respected as a way to foster teamwork and creativity. When these ground rules are violated, people stop being creative.

When teams create their own rules, they are more meaningful. Try performing a mini-brainstorming session around creating brainstorming ground rules. This activity provides a nice opportunity to practice the skills necessary for an effective brainstorming session. It also allows the team to take ownership of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. The facilitator should only participate in the brainstorming session if key rules are not mentioned. Once the list of rules has been created, gain consensus that the session will be conducted according to these rules. Post them in the room.

Here are four key ground rules that are useful when conducting a brainstorm:

- **There are no poor ideas.** It's a brainstorming session, not a serious matter that requires only serious solutions. Remember, this is one of the more fun tools of group processes, so keep everyone involved.
- **Don't criticize other people's ideas.** This isn't a debate, discussion, or forum for one person to present advantages or seek a better solution.

- **Build on other people's ideas.** Often an idea suggested by one person can trigger a bigger and/or better thought by another person. A variation of an idea on the board could be the solution to the problem at hand. It is this building of ideas that leads to out of the box thinking and great ideas.
- **Quantity over quality.** Brainstorming is about quantity the more creative the ideas, the better. As a facilitator, challenge your team to develop as many ideas as possible, and compare this team's performance to previous brainstorming sessions.

Steps in Brainstorming

Successful brainstorming sessions keep the following procedures and characteristics in mind:

1. Include participants from a wide a range of disciplines and with as broad a range of experiences. Diversity brings many more creative ideas to the session.
2. Define the problem you want solved clearly, including all criteria that must be met.
3. Set a time limit. Time should vary depending on the complexity of the issue. In any case, keep it short –5 to 20 minutes. Time constraints often push people to think more quickly and share more openly.
4. Keep the session focused on the problem at hand.
5. Prevent criticism or evaluation of ideas during the session. Criticism introduces an element of risk for group members when putting forward an idea. This stifles creativity and cripples the nature of a good brainstorming session.

6. Encourage participants to be enthusiastic and uncritical. Try to get everyone to contribute and develop ideas, including the quietest members of the group.
7. Have fun. Encourage team members to come up with as many ideas as possible, from solidly practical ones to wildly impractical ones.
8. Encourage people to develop other people's ideas, or to use other ideas to create new ones.
9. Appoint one person to write down ideas that come out of the session. Writing ideas on a flip chart or board adds to the credibility of the brainstorming session because it affirms to the author of the idea that his/her idea was captured.

Questions to consider while preparing a brainstorming session:

- Who will lead or facilitate the brainstorming session?
- Who will participate in the brainstorming session?
- Who can quickly record the brainstormed ideas without slowing down the group?
- Where will the brainstorming session be held?
- What materials are needed (easel, flip chart, white board, pens, etc.)?
- What is the goal of this session?

Ideas for More Effective Brainstorming

SMARTBoard technology allows the information written on the Board's surface to be saved as a computer file. The SMARTBoard provides a neat visual display of ideas for the group with the added convenience of recording the ideas automatically in electronic form. This functionality ensures that your ideas will not be lost and can be accessed and reviewed at any time. Saving your ideas to a computer file also eliminates the need for individual note-taking during the session and leaves everyone participating.

E-brainstorming allows group members to meet virtually through the use of a computer. Like group brainstorming, E-brainstorming works best when all participants are present at the same time. A facilitator is essential to this process. The facilitator compiles the suggestions and sends them out for review and follow-up at different intervals. Although this method can be less spontaneous than face-to-face brainstorming, it has several advantages. Anonymity through the computer can empower shy or insecure members, and can also prevent intimidation by higher-ranking staff members.

Word association involves brainstorming lists of words and then finding relationships between key words on each list. For example, imagine you want to create a new motto for a school. You could start with the root word “your school” and use word association to come up with a list of single-word ideas to describe the school, such as “success, fun, wisdom, rigorous.” Then you could brainstorm other lists for each word until you have several groups of words. In the end, there might be seven or eight groups based on one word association. The motto may be created using a word from each of the lists and creatively link them together.

Opposite ideas help team members think “outside the box.” Instead of thinking about how a problem can be solved or how a situation can be improved, take the opposite approach. Brainstorm a list of ways to make things worse. Taking this approach can often open up new avenues of ideas when brainstorming positive solutions later.

Paired brainstorming is done in partners, instead of a group. Divide participants into pairs and have each person offer a rapid-fire response. Encourage partners to keep giving answers back and forth—even if they get off track—until neither can think of anything further. Collect the ideas from each pair and compile into a total group list.

Plan-ahead brainstorming allows participants extra time to think about the problem at hand. Alert participants of the problem or challenge a few days before the brainstorming session. Ask them to bring ideas to the meeting.

Carrot-and-stick brainstorming motivates participants to work past “brain blocks” or other hindrances. While facilitating a brainstorming session, be prepared to offer ideas that will help stimulate participants if they get stuck or start looking at the challenge from only one perspective. When ideas start to slow, push them to generate “x” more ideas. Providing a time constraint can also help. Entice participants to come up with more ideas with a “door prize.” This can simply be a bag of candy given to the first person who can come up with five more ideas.

Reflective brainstorming requires participants to write ideas down on paper or index cards about the issue or problem at hand. Collect all of the ideas and redistribute them. It doesn’t matter if participants get their own ideas. Taking turns, have each person read the idea they were given out loud. This allows the ideas to be presented anonymously and may enable some ideas to come up that participants might otherwise be uncomfortable presenting. When all the ideas have been read, begin team brainstorming.

Add an idea is a technique used to brainstorm on paper, instead of out loud. Give each participant a stack of index cards. Have each person write down their idea and then pass the card to the left. On the new card, he or she should read it, write another idea, and then pass the card to the left. This continues until each card has been passed to each person. If someone can’t think of an idea, he or she should write a question and other people can start answering it. Rounds are slower in this form of brainstorming because people need more time to read ideas and answer questions. However, it is an excellent way for people to comfortably share ideas if public speaking is an issue. The facilitator then collects all the cards and sorts them into categories.

Free writing allows participants to select and organize materials in a way that makes sense to them before talking about it with others. Free writing allows participants to “think out loud” on paper without concerning themselves with clarity and correct grammar; it is simply a tool to get ideas from their heads to paper. Some people are more comfortable drafting their ideas individually rather than shouting them out in a group.

Create 5

ROLE DISCUSSION

Purpose

Role Discussion is a strategy used with small groups to address a particular problem or issue in an organization. Typically, small group discussions allow individuals to bring their own perspectives to a conversation. Individual perspectives are often limited by the speaker's background and interests. In order to more fully address a particular issue, it is often helpful to create a role-playing situation which will enable a small group to examine a particular issue from a variety of perspectives. This technique requires each participant to take on a specific role, helping to stretch their view of the issue beyond the normal discussion.

Preparation

- Define and describe each role on paper in order to give each participant a better understanding of the role they will play. It is best to distribute these as separate items on cards or small strips of paper so that each participant focuses on only one assigned perspective.
- Write out the issue and present it clearly to the group.
- Assign a facilitator to lead the discussions related to the role playing. This individual must be able to lead and/or record comments from the role-playing discussion.

Procedure

Time

30-40 minutes

1. Explain that the group will participate in a role-playing situation in order to better understand a particular problem or challenge faced by the organization. Looking at the problem or challenge from a different point of view may add new understanding or ideas to the group. Explain that the role-playing discussion will be a preliminary activity to a more extensive discussion about this issue.
2. Introduce the issue to be discussed and answer any questions about the issue and/or the role-playing activity
3. Divide the group into teams of six to 12 people. It is acceptable to have more than one role in a particular group. An ideal group could have two persons assigned to each role, for a total of 12 participants. Assign each team a series of roles to play, such as:

CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

Makes quick decisions. Includes the perspective of the effectiveness of the entire organization. Listens to other opinions but is decisive and strong-willed about their individual opinion. Willing to take some risks, but wants to carefully analyze the benefits of any potential solution.

CFO (Chief Financial Officer)

Most concerned about the finances of the organization. Asks probing questions about the costs associated with any new initiative. Likes to understand the costs and benefits associated with change. Cares less about the impact on individuals. Primarily concerned with the bottom line—finances of the organization.

CVO (Chief Visionary Officer)

This is the daydreamer of the organization. Has an ideal goal of what the organization would look like as a successful organization. Is overly optimistic that all things will work out over time. Is less concerned about detail and more concerned with achieving the overall vision of the organization.

CPO (Chief People Officer)

This individual is very concerned about any change, which would affect the people within the organization. Asks questions about the impact on individual relationships, social interaction and emotional well being. Generally very conservative, and wishes to avoid changes which will impact on people's lives. Values the people over the organization.

CIO (Chief Information Officer)

Is concerned about information required to maintain effectiveness within the organization. Focuses on the information demands that would have to be put in place to implement a specific change. Is concerned about protecting the integrity of information. Is generally not trusting of decentralization of information and desires to maintain control and security over the organization's vital information.

CRO (Chief Regulatory Officer)

Is concerned primarily with maintaining the status quo and compliance with regulations. Is generally very conservative. Frequently asks questions about the impact of the change on organization's compliance with regulation standard practice and law. Is most concerned with the legal and regulatory impact of any change.

4. Conduct role-playing activity for a predetermined amount of time.
5. Facilitate a discussion using questions such as: What new perspectives have you gained about this issue? How has each perspective changed the way you think about this issue, if at all? Will you consider more alternatives in seeking a solution to this issue? Why or why not?
6. Discuss the issue from the perspectives of the participants.

Create 6

AFFINITY DIAGRAM

Purpose

The Affinity Diagram enhances brainstorming as a strategy for developing new ideas or solutions to a problem. It organizes large sets of ideas generated during a brainstorming session into smaller sets of related items. An Affinity Diagram is especially useful in clarifying a complex problem or a situation that appears to be overwhelming. The process of constructing an affinity diagram helps identify and make connections between all issues before the team moves toward consensus solutions.

Preparation

Clearly define the problem that needs a solution.

Assemble the following materials

- sticky notes or index cards (various colors)
- flip chart pad and easel
- color coding labels (3/ 4" round)

Procedure

Time

45-60 minutes

1. State the problem or issue.
2. Review the rules of brainstorming:
 - Write each idea on a separate sticky note or card.
 - Keep ideas short. (less that 6 words)
 - Never criticize or judge ideas.
 - Work quickly and silently.
 - Feel free to add new note cards anytime during the process.
3. Instruct team members to individually brainstorm as many ideas/ comments/solutions as possible. Have them write each idea on a separate sticky note or card. After approximately five minutes, ask each member to read their comments aloud.
4. Post each sticky note or card on a wall or board for all members to see.

5. Work as a group to quickly group related ideas. These similar comments are said to have an “affinity” to each other. During this grouping process, note cards may be moved any number of times and new groupings may be created. Teams should avoid having more than eight to 10 cards per grouping, and should look at creating a new category if cards exceed this recommended number. If team members disagree about the placement of a particular idea, make copies of the contested idea and place in more than one group. Allot approximately ten minutes for this activity.
6. Read all the cards and have team members identify an appropriate name or label for each grouping. The goal of the discussion is to label each group of ideas or comments as quickly as possible. The facilitator writes a header card for each group. The team may label a group “Miscellaneous,” if necessary.
7. Tape the sticky notes or cards onto flip chart paper with the heading card at the top of the column. This is the final product—the Affinity Diagram.
8. Discuss each grouping and how the ideas relate to solve the problem. Card authors may expand or elaborate on their ideas. Encourage participants to avoid criticizing or judging the ideas.
9. Prioritize the groupings. Have each team member place two stickers on the header/headers of his/her choice. The grouping/groupings with the most stickers are weighted with the greatest priority. Attention can be directed at improving these “weighted” areas.
10. The “weighted’ or “ranked’ Affinity Diagram is used as a guide for the team to write an Action Plan. This plan should list the priority groupings as tasks to be completed first or in the shortest timeframe.

Build 1**BUMPER CLUMPER****✓ Purpose**

This is an effective group brainstorming and sharing technique that can be used to pinpoint popular opinions of a group. For the leader or facilitator, it is a creative way to discover the opinions of a large group.

✓ Preparation

This activity requires 3x5 index cards (three per person). The meeting room needs to be large enough for group members to move around. The facilitator should create a series of example sentence starters to be used during the activity. Each example should be written on a separate index card.

✓ Procedure**Time**

15-20 minutes

This can be done at any time during a meeting, or as an effective icebreaker at the beginning of a workshop.

1. Pass out three index cards to each person.
2. Explain that participants will jot down opinions to complete a particular sentence-starter on each card. (Example: “The three most important skills a student should learn are ...”).
3. Collect the cards.
4. Shuffle, and add in example sentence starters. To make the procedure work more smoothly, as well as to enrich it, prepare additional cards ahead of time.)
5. Redistribute three cards to each person.
6. Instruct group members to rank the cards in order of their perceived importance.
7. Ask group members to exchange cards with other group members to try and collect three cards that best represents their own thinking. Each person must always have a total of three cards. It may be useful to give a time allotment for this portion of the activity.

8. Instruct individuals to form coalitions of like-minded people. Say, “Searching for the cards that best expressed your ideas should have helped you learn what others value with regard to the topic. Now find kindred souls who can agree on a total of three cards, discarding all others.” It may be useful to give a time allotment for this portion of the activity.
9. Invite coalition groups to share their findings with the large group. It may be necessary for each coalition group to choose a speaker. Discussion or reactions may follow.

Build 2**IMAGES OF SCHOOL****✓ Purpose**

The very nature of school requires goals—for teachers, parents, and students. Without a clear vision, it is difficult to understand how to do what is best to help students meet and/or exceed expectations. Used at the beginning of a school year, this activity stimulates a discussion regarding expectations for learning. It also enables teachers, parents, and students to share what is important to them about the coming school year.

✓ Preparation

- This activity often involves parents when their children are not present. Prior to meeting with parents, ask the students of these parents to make a list of their academic goals.
- The facilitator for this activity should create his or her own list of expectations for the coming school year. It will be shared as part of the activity.

✓ Procedure

1. Ask students, “What are your goals for this year in school? What would like to learn? What would make this a successful school year?” After a few minutes, allow time for students to share their answers. Write their responses on the classroom board or on poster board. Answers may include:

Typical Elementary Responses

- Learn to read
- Learn to work with numbers
- Draw pictures
- Play nicely in groups
- Have other children like me
- Write better
- Make new friends
- Learn what I do well
- Follow directions
- Have fun

Typical Secondary Responses

- Learn more about _____
 - Get a good grade
 - Improve my writing or speaking
 - Learn about career options
 - Explore my interests
 - Prepare for test
 - Learn about real world applications
 - Work on interesting projects
2. Ask the parents, “What goals do you have for your student in school this year? What would like him or her to learn? What would make this a successful school year for your student?” After a few minutes, allow parents time to share their answers. List responses on the classroom board or on poster board.
 3. Reveal the list of responses developed by students prior to the meeting with parents. Allow time for parents to read and compare the responses.
 4. Show parents a similar list that you have prepared prior to the meeting that reflects your own expectations for the year. This list should include school priorities such as achievement on state tests, exceeding state or national standards, and development of character skills.
 5. Discuss the similarities and differences between the three lists of expectations. Explain that the similarities show the common ground and the differences show where increased communication is necessary. Say, “Good school experiences come from teachers, parents and students sharing congruent expectations. While we assume we all have similar expectations, this exercise points out how there are three dimensions to expectations. They are all valid, but they might not all be the same.”

Build 3**DELPHI SURVEY****✓ Purpose**

The Delphi survey technique was made popular by the Rand Corporation and based on future forecasting done by ancient Greeks. The survey is structured around a list of possible future alternatives, usually identified through brainstorming sessions or trend analysis. Surveys are sent to a group of experts, constituent groups, or internal staff (depending on purpose). The survey asks the individuals their opinions about the likelihood that each event will occur, and its impact on the organization. Because surveys are done anonymously, it is easier to get a group to move toward a closer consensus than in a face-to-face meeting. The process considers all opinions, and the fact that consensus builds over the repeated survey allows people's opinions to change without public posturing or perceived disagreements with elected leaders.

✓ Preparation

- Develop (through brainstorming or focus groups) the set of events or external forces the group will be reacting to in the Delphi Survey.
- Identify participants and solicit their involvement in the survey and subsequent discussion.
- Explain the survey process and plans to review the results of the survey. Design survey forms and make plans for how the survey data will be summarized.
- Develop a timeline for administration and tabulation of the three surveys.

✓ Procedure**Time**

Survey is conducted over several weeks. Meeting lasts 30-40 minutes.

1. Participants are asked to respond to a survey. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale.
2. Results are tabulated.
3. A second survey is developed similar to the first. Participants are asked to respond to the survey again considering the average rating of other experts. Also, in the second survey, participants are asked to give a rationale where their responses differ markedly from the average.

This is usually not done at a meeting but through individual responses to a series of mailings over several weeks. Groups meet to discuss the analysis of information.

4. Results are tabulated.
5. A third survey is also conducted presenting the second round averages and responses. Results of the third round represent a consensus of most likely futures or influences.
6. Discuss the results with participants.

Build 4

JIGSAW DISCUSSION GROUPS

Purpose

Jigsaw discussion groups allow multiple topics and perspectives to be reviewed. Like a jigsaw puzzle, it involves many different pieces. However, the “pieces” for this activity are actually different perspectives or aspects of a particular topic. A jigsaw group is made up of individuals assigned to look at a particular topic from various viewpoints. This technique is an excellent cooperative learning strategy in the classroom. It can also be used in the conversations among professionals around issues such as rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Procedure

Time

30–90 minutes
depending on topics

1. Select a major problem or issues and identify 4-8 topics that relate to that issue. For example, topics related to relationships might be:
 - Structural positive forces
 - Structural obstacles
 - Positive teacher behaviors
 - Negative teacher behaviors
 - Good practices and procedures
 - Poor practices and procedure
2. Divide participants into groups that contain the same number of people as aspects for the topic to be discussed. The exact number of groups will depend upon the size of the group. The groups should be diverse in terms of age, background, and subject area. This group is referred to as a “jigsaw group.”
3. Assign each participant within each group one part of the issue that is to be discussed (there may or may not be an article that relates to this topic.) It is expected that the individual will become an “expert” on this aspect of the topic. For example, if the main topic is relationships, one aspect may examine school structures that encourage relationship building, another aspect may look at structural barriers to relationships, a third explores positive teacher behaviors, and a fourth considers negative teacher behaviors. Each person in the group is assigned one aspect.

4. Allow time for participants to discuss the broad topic within their jigsaw group.
5. Break up jigsaw groups into “expert groups.” Have all participants assigned to the same aspect of the topic move to common groups.
6. Explain that in their expert groups, participants should discuss their assigned aspect in detail. Participants may raise any questions they have, highlight key findings in their topic, brainstorm solutions, and/or discuss what they will share when they return to their original jigsaw groups.
7. Have participants return to their jigsaw groups. Each group should choose a facilitator and a timekeeper.
8. Ask the facilitator to encourage each participant to share his/her expertise with the group, allowing time for clarifying questions. Participants should take notes on each presentation. The timekeeper should ensure that a representative from each group has appropriate time to speak.
9. Allow time for groups to make appropriate recommendations or solutions relating to the main topic of the activity.

Build 5

RAISING THE LEVEL OF RIGOR AND RELEVANCE

Purpose

Raising the level of rigor and relevance is neither easy nor quick. Clearly making the journey to rigor and relevance starts begins by looking at the societal changes influencing education and helping teachers understand how to apply the Rigor/Relevance Framework. However, just creating a sense of urgency and giving teachers the techniques of raising rigor and relevance will not make it happen. There are several ongoing strategies that must be in place to raise the level of rigor and relevance.

Those strategies are:

Rubrics — assessments including scoring guides, and checklists used to measure learning in student performance

Reading — the fundamental skill that is a pre-requisite for nearly all learning

Reflective Thought — behavior of students causes them to pause, think, question, and reflect as part of the learning process

Revision — improvement of teaching and learning through experimentation, reflection, and sharing best practices

Research — analytical evaluation of innovative practices

Resilience — the students' character trait that causes them to try again, struggle to achieve, and bounce back from poor performance in the education process

Relationships — the positive connection between students and their peers, parents and teachers, that supports them to achieve at high levels

Reschedule — revisions to master schedules of teachers and students to better meet student needs

Rejuvenation — professional development that ignites passion in the classroom and energizes teaching with new ideas and strategies

Rewards — recognition and awards provided to students and staff for accomplishing higher levels of achievement

Procedure

It is essential to use and maintain some or all of the strategies mentioned in this manual. Use the following checklist as a personal scorecard to evaluate the progress you are making toward rigor and relevance. Also, use this with teacher teams to have them reflect on the practices that the school is doing well and where there is need for improvement.

			Signposts on the Road to Rigor and Relevance Checklist
Yes	Partial	No	Rubrics
☐	☐	☐	Common rubrics are used throughout the school for typical performances such as student writing and presentations.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers are proficient in creating and adapting rubrics to their instruction.
☐	☐	☐	Students are informed of evaluation criteria in advance of completing their work.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers share rubrics among other teachers.
☐	☐	☐	Teacher use rubrics beyond those required for reporting grades.
Yes	Partial	No	Reading
☐	☐	☐	All teachers use reading in the content strategies as part of instruction.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers have access to data on the reading level of each of their students.
☐	☐	☐	Reading level of students is measured frequently to determine progress.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers know the reading level of materials used in the classroom.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers differentiate instruction to accommodate different reading levels of students.
Yes	Partial	No	Reflective Thought
☐	☐	☐	Teachers often create student work that requires students to develop an answer rather than recall an answer.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers give students time to think in classroom instruction.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers help students relate learning to student background and personal experience.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers frequently use the inquiry method to encourage students to pose questions.
☐	☐	☐	Students have opportunities to reflect on the quality of their work and summarize what they have learned.
Yes	Partial	No	Revision
☐	☐	☐	Teachers share innovative lessons with other teachers.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers have opportunities to observe other classrooms demonstrating best instructional practices.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers have access to adequate technology for integration of technology in instruction.
☐	☐	☐	There is a common structure to lesson plan development across subjects or grades.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers collaborate in development of interdisciplinary lessons.
Yes	Partial	No	Research
☐	☐	☐	Teachers collect data to evaluate effectiveness of innovative practices.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers select innovations and instructional programs based on research data.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers visit other classrooms and schools to identify best practices.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers analyze data on students to identify strengths, weaknesses, and interests to differentiate instruction.
☐	☐	☐	Teachers stay current in the profession by reading journals and participating in professional organizations.
Yes	Partial	No	Resilience
☐	☐	☐	Teachers know individual student's strengths and give them daily opportunities to use their strengths.
☐	☐	☐	There are ample opportunities for students to explore interests through in-class and other school activities.
☐	☐	☐	The school uses a variety of recognitions to "catch" students succeeding.
☐	☐	☐	School provides a safe and secure atmosphere where students are comfortable and willing to take risks.
☐	☐	☐	Students who fail or act out and are removed from schools have ample opportunity to re-enter the system.

Signposts on the Road to Rigor and Relevance Checklist, continued

Yes	Partial	No	Relationships Students actively support each other while attaining higher levels of achievement. Teachers work with students frequently outside of classroom instruction. Parents and community members are frequent participants in school activities. Teachers consistently exhibit behaviors that show they care about and respect students. Each student has an adult advocate that knows the student well and meets regularly to identify needs, problems, and accomplishments.
Yes	Partial	No	Reschedule The length of instructional periods allows for students to complete projects and problems consistent with high rigor/high relevance Teacher teams have the flexibility to modify schedule to meet student needs. The master schedule is designed around the needs of students. The schedule provides planning time for teachers to discuss student needs and plan interdisciplinary projects. Teachers are skilled in maximizing all of instructional time.
Yes	Partial	No	Rejuvenation Teachers are encouraged to participate in self-directed professional learning. Teachers collaborate frequently by sharing ideas and strategies. Coaches are available to work with teachers individually on professional development priorities. New teachers are provided with mentors and time to meet with them. School or district professional development is personalized to teacher needs.
Yes	Partial	No	Rewards Students are recognized in a wide variety of events and activities. Students and staff celebrate schoolwide academic achievement. Students get frequent feedback from teachers about the quality of their work. Incentives are provided to teachers that take on extra work or make outstanding contributions. Both parents and the community provide rewards and recognition to students.

Build 6

ESTABLISHING TEAM ROLES

Purpose

In most schools, the administration sets up teams/groups as a form of shared leadership and decision-making. These teams may address a variety of issues, concerns, initiatives, visions, and goals of the school. Team membership varies with the team's purpose; however, most teams consist of representation from all stakeholder groups relevant to the focus of the team's responsibility. All teams need support from the school's leadership.

Procedure

Time
Varies

Teams establish shared values and procedures for working together. These norms guide and sustain the collaborative efforts of the team. One significant area about which teams/groups usually establish a norm is team roles. Roles need to be defined clearly to ensure the team functions effectively and accomplishes the team's task.

Team roles need to be established during the team's inception and included in the team's norms that are reflected upon at the end of each meeting.

Sample Meeting Ground Rules

- Be on time
- Listen with interest
- Participate in discussions
- Be willing to compromise
- Keep the best interest of the students in mind
- Treat everyone in a dignified manner
- Keep side conversations to a minimum
- Be honest and open to the ideas of others
- Make a contribution; everyone is responsible for team success
- Focus on issues and content, not personalities and people
- Be creative when appropriate and fact/logic-driven when needed
- Follow through on agreements and action items
- Encourage the expression of different points of view
- Asking questions for clarification when you don't understand
- Review the effectiveness of each meeting during the meeting
- Check for consensus before finalizing decisions
- Support decisions made by consensus

1. Discuss the following team roles with team members at the initiation of the team. Provide an opportunity for team members to modify the roles and responsibilities.

Team Roles

To keep the team focused on accomplishing the work of the team, all members have the role of active participant and the responsibility of active engagement. In addition, a few individuals need to assume specific functions related directly to the team's success. These "lead" roles may be elected or volunteer; some roles could be rotated with each meeting.

Facilitator. The facilitator, or team leader, manages the team. This person is key to the consistency and long-term continuity of the team, its ongoing work, and accomplishments. Thus, this role usually is not rotated.

- Ensures the meeting purposes are clear
- Prepares an agenda planned in advance
- Keeps the team on task on the agenda items
- Ensures the group's adherence to established norms
- Creates opportunities for all members to participate
- Helps members actualize their potential
- Provides team reflection time

Timekeeper. This individual keeps the team on schedule.

- Attempts to make sure agenda items keep to time allotted
- Reminds group of limited time left to address agenda item
- Suggests time changes on an item during the meeting or revising the agenda

Recorder. The recorder keeps an accurate, objective record of the meeting.

- Records actions agreed to by the team
- Prepares the meeting minutes for distribution to team members
- Communicates with others outside the team (optional)

Process Consultant. An “observer” of how the team functions by evaluating how well the group follows group norms.

- Observes patterns of communication and behavior
 - Provides reflective feedback at the end of the meeting on the team’s effectiveness and achievements
2. Ensure that members carry out the duties of their roles.
 3. Have teams use the following form—the Team Problem-Solving Form—to identify one problem on which the team will focus in a regular team meeting. List the data used to define the problem. Then brainstorm actions to take and the data that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken.

Identified Problem	
Data to Identify Need	
Actions to be Taken	
Data to Measure Results	

Build 7

PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

Purpose

To ensure productivity during meetings, ground rules and group norms must be adhered to. Time needs to be allotted for staff to hold meetings, and additional time should be set aside for reflection on the group's ability to keep to established roles, procedures, and values. Depending on the group and its work, district and/or building leadership provides support.

Preparation

Prepare group/team functioning tools to be used when a group is established or as needed with an existing group. The following tools are provided:

- Team Problem-solving Form
- Effective Decision-making Checklist
- Effective Meetings Checklist
- Meeting Roadmap
- Sample Meeting Ground Rules
- Minutes of Meeting Sample Format

Procedure

Provide the team/group members with tools to assist them in carrying out their roles and responsibilities and to ensure a process that will lead to productive results.

Time
varies

Team Problem-solving Form

Identify one problem on which the team will focus in a regular team meeting. List the data used to define the problem. Then brainstorm actions to take and the data that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken.

Identified Problem

Data to Identify Need

Actions to Be Taken

Data to Measure Results

Effective Decision-making Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your decisions.

Yes	No	
☐	☐	Everyone was familiar with the decision method being followed, e.g., consensus, majority vote.
☐	☐	Enough time was devoted to the item.
☐	☐	The facilitator was objective and open-minded in facilitating discussion of the item.
☐	☐	The item voted on was clearly stated and understood.
☐	☐	The item voted on related to a measurable goal.
☐	☐	All ideas were considered and modified as appropriate.
☐	☐	More than one solution was explored before a decision was made.
☐	☐	Everyone had an opportunity to raise questions, give their opinions, express their agreement/disagreement.
☐	☐	Members with disagreeing opinions were given time to express their concerns, hesitations, and dissenting thoughts.
☐	☐	If consensus agreement was used, all team members were supportive of the decision.

Effective Meetings Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your meetings.

Yes	No	
☐	☐	An agenda was prepared and distributed before the meeting.
☐	☐	Members arrived on time for the meeting and stayed until the meeting's closure.
☐	☐	The meeting started and ended on time.
☐	☐	The facilitator was prepared and managed the team's processes.
☐	☐	The team focused on the topics under discussion.
☐	☐	The team's work was clearly defined, had purpose, and related to overall goals.
☐	☐	Team members' discussion focused on ideas and their implementation rather than logistics, housekeeping details, and other minutia.
☐	☐	The members adhered to the team's norms.
☐	☐	The members came to the meeting with work completed that they agreed to do and were willing to accept work assignments.
☐	☐	Action plans were developed to follow through on team's decisions (e.g., Who will do the work? What will be done? When?) Timeline was identified.
☐	☐	Evaluation feedback was provided by the members at the close of the meeting.
☐	☐	Individuals with specific responsibilities (e.g., timekeeper, facilitator, recorder, process observer) added to the effectiveness of the team.

Meeting Roadmap

[Team Name-Date]

What	Results	How	Time
Agenda Items	Expected result during this meeting related to this item	Process (e.g., discussion, presentation, observation, resource person, question and answer, reporting)	Time allocated to this item

What	Results	How	Time
<i>Example</i> 1. Get Organized	Agreement on agenda	Discussion	5 minutes
2.			
3.			
4.			
Feedback	+ / Δ	Go Around	5 minutes

+ = strengths: what was good

Δ = what should be changed for next time

Sample Meeting Ground Rules

- Respect others; be on time; listen with interest
- Interact with others
- Participate in discussions
- Be willing to compromise
- Keep the best interest of the students in mind
- Treat everyone in a dignified manner
- Keep side conversations to a minimum
- Support decisions made by consensus
- Be honest and open to the ideas of others
- Make a contribution; everyone is responsible for team success
- Learn from the past, let go of it and move forward
- Focus on issues and content, not personalities and people
- Be creative when appropriate and fact/logic-driven when needed
- Follow through on agreements and action items
- Encouraging the expression of different points of view
- Asking questions for clarification when you don't understand
- Review the effectiveness of each meeting during the meeting
- Check for consensus before finalizing decisions

Minutes of Meeting Sample Format

Name of Team

Date /Location of Meeting

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Timekeeper:

Process Observer:

Members Present:

Members Absent:

Agenda Item:

Discussion:

Action: **Yes** **No**

What?

By Whom?

When?

Announcements:

Next Meeting Date:

Assigned Roles for Next Meeting:

Facilitator

Recorder

Timekeeper

Process Observer

Build 8

TAKING ACTION

Purpose

This is a simple, yet powerful requirement to have teams of teachers focus on taking action. The attached form can be used or modified as a simple template for teams to conclude their meeting with specific actions they plan to take.

Preparation

Make copies of the Taking Action Follow-up Form

Procedure

Explain that meetings are most successful when a clear plan of action is made. Distribute the Taking Action Follow-up Form to teams and require that all meetings conclude with a specific plan of action. This form reminds participants to focus on an objective, identify an action to be taken, and decide who has responsibility. There is also a portion on data to remind teachers that they should always be looking for data to measure results and make their decisions more objective. This form might be used as an accountability measure to determine what useful decisions are being made by grade level teams or other teams.

Time
15 minutes

Taking Action Follow-Up Form

Identify the objective of what you intend to do as a follow-up action. Then brainstorm and identify actions to be taken, who will take responsibility, and the date by which it will be accomplished. Finally, identify the data or measures that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken.

Identified Objective: <i>What do you plan to accomplish?</i>

<i>Actions to be Taken: What do you plan do?</i>	<i>Who will do this?</i>	<i>By when?</i>

Data to Measure Effectiveness: <i>What will be different and how will you know?</i>

Build 9

MORNING MEETING

 Purpose

The purpose of the morning meeting is to provide an opportunity for students to get to know one another and develop positive relationships. Morning meetings have proven to be effective in many elementary schools to help create a more comfortable learning environment for students and build a sense of community. Additionally, these meetings can reinforce academic and social skills, and give students daily practice in respectful communication. While typically thought of as an elementary strategy, several schools have used morning meetings at middle school and high school levels.

 Preparation

In order to create successful morning meetings, there needs to be detailed planning and an agreed upon structure and routine for the meeting. A morning meeting is a planned and organized time—in contrast to a homeroom that functions primarily to take attendance and give announcements. In this case, the student is a passive observer to the “attendance taker” and the broadcast announcement that applies to some. The morning meeting is structured in a manner to make the students active participants and part of the activity. The morning meeting may be used for attendance and announcements, but these are clearly additional activities and not the primary purpose. This time should be designed around the group of students you want to create a community around. At the elementary school level, morning meetings can be created for a self-contained class or an entire school. Large schools may have difficulty in finding a convenient place for all students to meet. Space must be a consideration in deciding which groups to organize into meetings.

 Procedure**Time**

20-30 minutes,
typically at beginning
of school day

1. Schedule the time for the morning meeting.
2. Determine the basic structure of the meeting and what types of activities will be conducted in the morning meeting.
3. Assign responsibilities. If several staff is included, this is a good opportunity to share and rotate morning meetings.

Morning Meeting consists of the following four components:

Greeting: Students greet each other by name. There are many different greeting activities that can be used throughout the year, including handshaking, singing, clapping, and greeting in different languages.

Sharing: Each day, two or three students share information about an event in their lives. Listeners take turns offering empathic comments or asking clarifying questions.

Group activity: All participate in a brief, engaging activity such as singing, chanting, playing a game, reciting a poem, dancing, etc.

News and announcements: Children read the news and announcements chart that their teacher has written. Sometimes they read silently as a group; sometimes they read aloud; sometimes they follow along as the teacher or a fellow student reads. The news and announcements chart usually includes an activity that reinforces academic skills.

An important use for this time is to provide recognition of staff and students, introduce guests, and welcome new students.

At the high school level, most would not find singing and clapping appropriate activities; however, at this level students can take more responsibility for planning and conducting the morning meeting. Older students may use the time to discuss local issues affecting teens, plan community service projects, and share information on key dates such as college entrance tests.

High School Example

A small high school of 350 students begins their school day each morning with this type of meeting. All students are assigned seats and the doors are closed at the starting time. Students have assigned seats and attendance is quickly taken by staff. Students conduct the full meeting and all activities that are used to help students get to know each other, celebrate achievements, plan community events, and make decisions as a school. In this high school, the morning meeting feels like a New England Town Hall meeting, and each student feels a part of the community. Upper level students set the culture for younger students to follow and participate.

A book that offers more in depth discussion of morning meetings is:

Kriete, Roxann. *The Morning Meeting Book*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. 2002.
ISBN: 1-892989-09-3.

Build 10

BOOK STUDY GROUP

Purpose

Book study groups are an effective form of professional development that can be used by educators at all levels. Reading a common education-related book gives a starting point for conversation and avoids slipping back into discussions about past or current practice. The book study group is a way to build a consensus around innovative practices that might be considered in your school. The book study group can be facilitated by any member of the staff and often rotated.

Procedure

Following are five steps explaining the process of book study groups, from forming a group to implementing the discussion and follow-up strategies:

Step 1. Form a Book Study Group

Book study groups work best when they include less than 15 people. Small groups of less than five may not provide sufficient interaction or variety; larger groups make it difficult to allow all members to participate actively. If you have a large staff, divide the group into smaller study groups. It is helpful if the group is composed of individuals with similar interests or working with common groups of students, although varying viewpoints are important because they provide diversity of opinion and discussion.

The group should determine a schedule for reading and discussion. The schedule should permit time for group members to complete the reading assignments. However, the schedule should not be so extended that participants forget what they have read and discussed between meetings. Most groups settle on weekly or bi-weekly meetings. Usually book clubs meet face-to-face, but some clubs are successful using asynchronous online conversations.

Consider the meeting length. One hour usually works well for a schedule of four to eight meetings. Focus on the book study during the meetings, rather than being distracted by other school issues. Refreshments are always a good idea. Keep the meetings friendly, yet purposeful.

Step 2. Choose a Book and an Objective

Choose a book on a topic that interests everyone in the group but is sufficiently open-ended to encourage new learning through reading and discussion. It should be thought-provoking and with enough depth to stimulate debate. Give group members an opportunity to choose and recommend books.

Questions to consider while choosing a book include: “Why read this book? What does the group want to learn? ” The study group should clearly determine one or more learning objectives before completing reading.

The book’s length also needs to fit within a reasonable schedule. Longer books will mean either heavy reading assignments or an extended schedule.

Step 3. Decide How to Read the Book

Some books should be read by all group members. For example, a first assignment might be to read chapters one through four, followed by discussion, and then carry on in similar fashion. In other cases, it makes sense for members to read different parts of a book and then report back to the group during scheduled meetings. For example, this procedure works well with collections of essays. Whichever approach is chosen, it is a good idea to develop a series of discussion starters—questions or challenging statements that stimulate discussion. These starters can be framed for before reading, during reading, and after reading.

Step 4. Read and Discuss the Book

Follow the schedule. Some groups find it beneficial to choose a discussion leader to get the ball rolling, and a recorder who will summarize the discussion. Make connections between the text and real-life examples. Consider questions such as: “How are the ideas in this book important to my professional life? How can I use what I learn?”

Step 5. Evaluate the Book and Plan for Future Book Study

At the conclusion of the book study, take time to consider questions such as: “Did the book stimulate thought and discussion? Did the group study meet the learning objectives? How might the group study experience be improved?” Taking such evaluation into account will allow the group to bring in new members, re-form, or simply continue on, developing a new “cycle” of study.

Recommended Reading on Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

- Cushman, K. (2005). *Sent to the Principal: Students Talk about Making High Schools Better*, Providence, RI: Next Generation Press
- Deiro, J. A. (2003). Do Your Students Know You Care? *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 60 Number 6 (March 2003).
- Delpit, L. (1996). *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Gambone, M., Klem, A., & Connell, J. (2002). *Finding Out What Matters For Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development*. Philadelphia, Pa: Youth Development Strategies, Inc. and Institute for Research and Reform in Education.
- Gardner, H. (2000). *The Disciplined Mind: Beyond Facts and Standardized Tests, the K-12 Education that Every Child Deserves*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Gladwell, M. (2000). *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Harris, S. (2005). *BRAVO! Teacher: Building Relationship with Actions that Value Others*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.
- Howard, G. R. (1999). *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Littkey, D. (2004). *The Big Picture: Education is Everyone's Business*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Lundin, S. C., Christensen, J., & Paul, H. (2002). *Fish! Tales*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Pink, D. H. (2005). *A Whole New Mind*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.
- Tatum, B. D. (2003). *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* New York: Basic Books.

Build 11

IMPROVING STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT LEARNING

Purpose

This activity focuses on teacher behaviors that support student learning. It raises awareness about the need to make a conscious effort to reach out to students and encourage students' engagement and learning. The behaviors that teachers exhibit toward students can build students' self-esteem and foster learning.

Procedure

Before initiating this activity, discuss examples of adult behaviors that may positively or negatively affect students' participation and performance.

Ask teachers to choose one student with whom they think they can improve their relationship. Over the course of two weeks, encourage the teacher to make a concerted effort to strengthen their relationship with that student. At the end of two weeks, ask teachers to reflect on their behavior and the students' responses.

Teacher Summary:

What did I do to improve the relationship?

How did the student respond to my actions?

What student changes were noticed?

• Improved test scores	Yes	No
• Improved participation	Yes	No
• Improved attendance	Yes	No
• Improved relationships with peers	Yes	No
• Higher level of engagement	Yes	No
• Comes to class with materials	Yes	No
• Completes assignments on time	Yes	No

After the two weeks, teachers continue their efforts with these students and select another student to focus on during the next two week block of time. The process continues throughout the school year.

Build 12

CELEBRATING VALUABLE QUALITIES IN OTHERS

Purpose

Everyone appreciates being recognized for achievements and behaviors that are admirable and contribute to the success of the school community. This activity engages staff in reflective thought on those characteristics and qualities that they recognize and admire in others. Developing a greater awareness of these attributes and validating them encourages practice of these qualities while enhancing a positive school culture and adding to the self-esteem of others.

Procedure

Time

45 minutes

1. Have staff identify:
 - Another educator they admire
 - A “model” student
 - A non-teaching staff member who contributes positively to the school community
2. Ask staff to list the characteristics and qualities that they admire in these individuals.
3. Have staff review the list and asterisk those characteristics that they have told these individuals they have. What has actually been stated to these individuals?
4. Tally the number of characteristics that have been made known to others. Review the lists, and reflect upon and discuss whether or not an effort should be made to validate the qualities/characteristics admired in others.
5. Have staff brainstorm suggestions on how recognition of others can be increased in both formal and informal ways.

Build 13**CONSIDERING SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES****✓ Purpose**

Creating small learning communities within a school is a big undertaking. A structural change in a school is usually a considerable initiative. Successful changes occur only at the “right time” and if the need for change is obvious and significant. Thus, it is important to be sure that small learning communities are appropriate for your school community and will improve teaching and learning. Knowing whether or not your school has the characteristics that match the need for small learning communities is a factor to consider when considering the creation of small learning communities.

✓ Procedure**Time**

45-60 minutes

Have staff complete the following questionnaire. Tally and examine the results and then discuss your findings with staff.

Need for Small Learning Communities Checklist

Small learning communities offer several advantages in creating successful schools. The following checklist identifies several challenges that could be addressed by creating a small learning community. If you check “yes” to the majority of these items, one or more small learning communities may be an option worth considering at your school.

Yes No

☐	☐	You tried to implement such initiatives as shared decision-making or a student advisor program but with little success.
☐	☐	Your high school has more than 1,600 students (800 students for middle schools).
☐	☐	You have an annual dropout rate of more than 2%.
☐	☐	You have a daily attendance rate of less than 95%.
☐	☐	You have had several years of substandard student performance on state tests.

- ☐ ☐ A frequent complaint from teachers is that students lack motivation.
- ☐ ☐ Many students seem to “fall through the cracks” and never take advantage of the all the courses and programs that the school has to offer.
- ☐ ☐ You have a high number of students failing and repeating courses.
- ☐ ☐ You have an unsatisfactory number of discipline incidents.
- ☐ ☐ The faculty is fragmented, with several cliques and few examples of collaboration in instruction.
- ☐ ☐ Curriculum initiatives have been unsuccessful because not all teachers have fully implemented the concepts.
- ☐ ☐ Few parents are involved or take an interest in the school program.

Build 14

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Purpose

The research is clear on the value of parent involvement and partnerships with schools. Parent involvement is especially important when attempting to raise rigor and relevance and improve relationships. Involving parents, particularly those of high school students, is not an easy task. Yet, a plethora of studies has found that parent involvement is a key factor in supporting and promoting student academic success. If schools truly want parents involved, they will find that parents respond best to “hands-on” leaders who are actively involved in the lives of students.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework provides a common denominator for educators to think about and discuss levels of instruction. The Framework is also an effective tool for communicating with non-educators, especially parents. The Framework can enhance efforts to make parents more active partners in their children’s education.

Procedure

Following are various strategies to highlight rigor, relevance, and relationships while communicating with parents:

- ◆ As part of parents’ night, spend a few minutes explaining the Rigor/Relevance Framework, or better yet, have the principal explain it as a school-wide initiative.
- ◆ Instead of listing topics to be covered during the year or showing a content outline in various subjects, give parents a list of student objectives and student work, with the work labeled as to its quadrant on the Rigor/Relevance Framework. This will help parents understand what their children will be doing, which work is more challenging, and which is application.
- ◆ When planning activities such as field trips and class projects, mention the Rigor/Relevance Framework level of the activity. This will remind parents that all activities have a connection to learning objectives and that special events serve to extend student learning into the application and assimilation quadrants.

- ◆ Provide parents with suggested reading, and community and online activities that they can do with their children to extend learning into other quadrants. For example, you might suggest ways they can review math facts while walking through a store. Explain to parents that they are not teaching math (which they might think is your job) but rather showing their children ways to apply their knowledge.
- ◆ Explain the relationship framework to parents. Brainstorm the behaviors and techniques that they use and teachers should use to move up the relationship scale. Discuss aspects of their children's behavior that act as positive or negative influences on their peers in building relationships.
- ◆ Ask for specific feedback from parents when they feel that the school is not moving toward higher levels of rigor, relevance, and relationships.
- ◆ Select a developmental skill area, such as multiplication, where students might be in Quadrant A at their current level. Give examples of how their skills will be extended during the year into one or more of the other quadrants.

Tips for School Leaders

**Adapted from Reinventing 9th Grade—Academics Through Personalization, published by the International Center for Leadership in Education*

- ◆ Get to know parents on a first-name basis and encourage them to address you by your first name.
- ◆ Sacrifice the administrative business suit occasionally for more informal dress if it is consistent with the parents you serve.
- ◆ Work hard to demonstrate to parents that they are equal to you as human beings; you just have different roles.
- ◆ Liberal use of humor breaks down barriers. Accept good-natured teasing from parents and enjoy a good laugh together.
- ◆ Demonstrate active listening. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

- ◆ Be aware of your nonverbal behavior and realize that this is stronger communication than the actual words you speak.
- ◆ Practice truth-telling with parents. Be candid about the school's challenges and adopt this philosophy: "In this school, we tell the truth."
- ◆ Our problems are opportunities. What makes us different is that by recognizing these "probletunities" we have the chance to improve conditions for our children.
- ◆ If you practice authenticity with parents, you will be able to anticipate and prepare for the types of questions and concerns that parents will present.
- ◆ One of the most important personal attributes for any school leader is visibility. When parents perceive that you are everywhere—at sporting events, concerts, performances—they make a judgment that this visibility means you care about their children. Yes, this type of visibility takes a great deal of time, but the dividends pay capital gains.
- ◆ When parents sense you care, they will open up and ask questions. In addition, the authentic leader is available to work with parents on a one-to-one basis.
- ◆ In engaging parents in partnerships, the focus should always be on the children and never on the attributes or behaviors of the parents.
- ◆ Experience has taught many successful administrators that when parents trust you and realize you care about their children, their behavior changes unobtrusively.
- ◆ Recognize that in order to develop trust among parents, you must exhibit trustworthiness. Always be true to your word.
- ◆ Always remember that you and your staff work for the parents; they pay the taxes and elect the school board members who employ you.

Ways to communicate with parents include:

- through daily updates from students
- person-to-person at school events and community gatherings
- offer incentives to students to bring their parents to school programs
- through the media, including cable television and radio
- in churches and other community organizations
- electronically via e-mail and school web pages
- through classroom parent networks
- on the telephone
- through “key communicators” (trusted community leaders) who are encouraged to communicate with school leaders about issues or concerns that come to their attention
- through formal parent leadership organizations, such as PTA, parent councils, and parent advisory organizations
- via newsletters, both all-school and one specifically intended for groups of parents
- in newspaper articles, pictures, and letters to the editor

Invite parents to examine a school’s practices and policies. Sometimes called the five Ps of invitational education — People, Programs, Places, Policies, and Processes — many successful schools conduct an audit related to them. How do we answer the telephone? How are parents greeted when they visit our school? Are our policies user-friendly and easily understood? How is the appearance of the outside of our school? Are our classrooms inviting places in which students truly want to learn? Is the school clean, are washrooms safe, and is graffiti removed immediately? In general, do we have a philosophy that our school should be the most inviting place in town?

Strategies for Reaching the Hardest-to-Involve Parents

From *Reaching the Hardest-to-Involve Parents: Powerful Partnerships Under NCLB*, published by the International Center for Leadership in Education

Inviting

- In person
- Note home
- By telephone
- School newsletter
- Telephone tree
- Doorknob hanger
- Student invitation
- Personal letter from the principal/teacher

Building Trust

- Talk with parents outside of school.
- Find common ground, such as the weather, children, sports, and so forth. Share personal stories before discussing school.
- Offer assistance: trade coupons, share information about the community.
- Start a “welcome wagon” activity.
- Make positive telephone calls.

Removing Barriers

- Ask the PTA/PTO to start a “get a ride” service to school events.
- Use school buses or taxis to pick up families.
- Have translators available for non-English speakers and the deaf.
- Schedule meetings at several different times and locations
- Feed them, and they will come!
- Offer on-site daycare at school functions.
- Provide classes for staff about how to work with parents.
- Give parents information about the school, rules, and policies.

Building Skills

- Provide opportunities for meaningful involvement—beyond bake sales.
- Offer information on where parents can take adult education classes.
- Begin involving parents from where they are and scaffold them to higher levels of involvement.
- Provide training to parents and staff on effective strategies for working in teams.
- Provide information to parents through workshops offered at convenient times for them.

Develop 1

REFLECTION ON LEARNING

Purpose

Effective instructional leaders can encourage teachers and others to change their practices through self-reflection. Good communication skills are instrumental in guiding and stimulating such reflection. A well-timed, thoughtful question can be the most effective way to stimulate a person's thinking about his or her own practices. The leader who is able to ask the right questions at the right times is well on the way to being not only an active observer, but also one who is able to influence change thoughtfully without resorting to mandates or forced practice.

Preparation

Prepared list of thought-provoking questions on chart paper or index cards for easy access. Instructional leaders and teachers may want to keep written journals to record reflections or key points made during the discussion process.

Individual reflection conversations should follow classroom observations in order for both parties to have a common experience to discuss. Reflection can also be done in a group setting. A group should be comprised of 6-8 teachers. Create a series of reflection questions that can easily be accessed by teachers and instructional leaders. Questions may include:

- What did you do well? Why do you feel this way?
- What do you need to improve upon? Why do you feel this way?
- How will you go about making changes or additions to your practice?

Procedure

Time

30 minutes for individual meetings, 45-60 minutes for group reflection

The most important timing consideration is to reflect on practices regularly.

1. Give teachers reflection questions.
2. Ask teachers to identify a lesson and reflect on the answers to each question.
3. Allow time for teachers to share their lessons.
4. Allow time for teachers to reflect on their practices with thought-provoking questions. Reflections may take place orally or in written journals.

Effective reflection depends not only upon the questions themselves, but also on the ways in which the questioner is able to set the tone in order to encourage thoughtful response. There are a few simple guidelines which will help foster real reflection.

Using Wait Time

Deliberately waiting for five to 10 seconds after a question is asked allows for deeper thought on the question. Practice waiting once you have delivered a provoking, open-ended question intended to stimulate reflection.

Listening

Show respect and interest by maintaining eye contact, refraining from interrupting, and paraphrasing the response to ensure that you have understood what was being said.

Framing the Question

It is often beneficial to frame a question with one or two brief statements on the topic, contributing to a more natural conversation. While it is a good idea to prepare for a reflective session by listing questions in advance, don't stick rigidly to a script.

Monitoring the Difficulty of Questions

Questions that are either too simple or too complex can destroy the opportunity for reflection. Be conscientious in monitoring body language to be sure you are finding the appropriate level of difficulty.

Suggested Questions

The following questions can be useful in making the most of classroom observations. Leaders may also want to encourage teachers, in brief interviews, to use these questions to reflect upon the learning process and their own practice.

- How do you get students to be more engaged, more thoughtful, and more expressive?
- What is it that you want student to know and be able to do?
- What are students expected to accomplish?
- How do you assess degree of student engagement and understanding?

- Why are students meeting (or not meeting) your expectations for achievement?
- How would you use more time or resources to improve learning?

Effective use of thought-provoking, open-ended questions does not need to be a dramatic redesign of an instructional leader's observation and conversation techniques. Begin simply. The next time you sit down for a conversation with a teacher, do the following: In your notepad, write the words "Student Work" at the top of the page. This phrase will remind you that the conversation should be less about what the adults in your school are or are not doing, but how teachers, staff, and administration can work together to create the ideal conditions necessary for students to learn and achieve. Next, write the five open-ended question stems in the left margin of your notepad. "How do you...?" "What is...?" "Why...?" "What if...?" "How would you...?" Use these stems to help you form provocative questions about teaching and learning. Then let the conversation evolve naturally.

Develop 2**THIS AND THAT** **Purpose**

This activity engages groups to think about the constant work needed to implement changes. Participants focus on improving the characteristics of the new skills or concept learned and reducing the behaviors or characteristics of the old paradigm. This works well as a follow-up activity after groups have had initial professional development and some experience implementing a change.

 Preparation

Prepare a visual with the question or statement about change on which you want the group to work. The question/statement should reflect the objectives of a staff development activity. For example, if teachers have participated in a workshop on performance assessment, a follow-up might be: “The use of performance assessment is not an instant transformation of all student assessment but rather a gradual, continual process that involves using more of THIS and less of THAT. What are the examples of THIS and THAT?” Participants can then respond by summarizing in the THIS column the “old” assessment practices they wish to reduce or eliminate and in the THAT column the new practices they have learned that they wish to begin to use (see form provided for an example). This can be done as an individual reflection. It can also be done in grade level or department teams, with the goal being to reach consensus. Organize a large group into small groups of 6-8 people.

Materials

chart paper or another means for teams to record suggestions.

 Procedure**Time**

15-20 minutes

1. Display the visual with the question or change you want the group to address.
2. Allow the group time to think about the statement.
3. Explain that “THIS” is the positive characteristic needed for full implementation, and “THAT” is the old behaviors the organization is moving toward.

4. Ask each person to work independently to brainstorm characteristics for “this” and “that.” (4-5 minutes)
5. Divide participants into small groups.
6. Allow time for group members to discuss individual ideas.
7. Have each small group report on the characteristics they identified. Discuss those that are most important and may require additional follow-up development activities.
8. Post the best ideas for groups to be used as future reference.

This and That

Rigor and Relevant Learning Is the Goal for My Students

Making a change requires a vision of what is possible. Consistent steps over time work toward that vision. For progress to continue, you need to do some new things and stop doing some things you currently do.

I need to do a little more of THIS...	I need to do a little less of THAT...
My education team needs to do a little more of THIS...	My education team needs to do a little less of THAT...

Develop 3

UNDERSTANDING LEARNING STYLES

 Purpose

A factor to consider in selecting instructional strategies is student learning styles. Certain strategies are more effective with a particular learning style. When matched to students' learning styles, these strategies can help students achieve at higher levels. Understanding different learning styles provides a better understanding of students' and fellow professionals' behavior, likes and dislikes, and preferred approaches to tasks, work, and learning.

 Procedure

1. Introduce the four broad categories of learning/working styles:

Concrete-Sequential (practical and well-organized): These learners respond well to organized instruction that requires them to recall and construct correct responses. These workers also respond well to organization. They like to plan their work tasks and work best in a structured setting.

Abstract-Sequential (logical): These learners respond to more collaborative instruction that requires them to analyze information and explain answers. They are analytical; they like order and focus on ideas.

Concrete-Random (practical and desire options): These learners respond to opportunities to be creative and design products and individual responses. These workers are intuitive, creative, and learn by trial and error.

Abstract-Random (people and feelings matter): These learners respond to creative learning activities. They prefer group harmony and activities; they focus on more than one thing at a time and like unrestrictive environments.

2. Administer a learning style assessment to staff. Encourage them to use one with their students. A simplified version of a learning style assessment appears below. Individuals select one side of each of the first two visuals that best represents their preferences.

Time

Which do you prefer?

Activity

Using Outlines

Observing Others
in role playing

Picture/Graphics

Working w/ Hands

C

OR

Discussion

Using Narratives

Participating in
role playing

Description/Words

Working w/ Head

A

Which do you prefer?

Following
Directions

Following
Others

Precision

Logical

Lists

S

OR

Working
Independently

Creating your own
path

Approximation

Creative

Graphic
Organizers

R

Learning Styles

CS Concrete Sequential

AS Abstract Sequential

CR Concrete Random

AR Abstract Random

3. Divide staff members into groups according to learning style.
4. Assign each group a problem to address; e.g., “How would you bring nanotechnology into your school?” Allow time for group members to discuss and create a response.
5. Have groups report their solutions. After each group has presented its answers, point out the differences in each group’s approach to the situation.
6. Discuss how learning styles might affect student learning and their teaching styles.
7. Share the chart on the following page that relates instructional strategies to the four learning styles.

Instructional Strategies and Learning Styles

Strategy	Concrete-Sequential	Abstract-Sequential	Concrete-Random	Abstract-Random
Brainstorming	★	★★	★★	★★★
Cooperative Learning	★	★★★★	★★	★★
Demonstration	★★★★	★★	★★	★
Guided Practice	★★★★	★★	★★	★
Inquiry	★	★★	★★	★★★★
Instructional Technology	★★	★★	★★★★	★★
Lecture	★★★★	★★	★	★
Memorization	★★★★	★	★★	★
Note-taking/Graphic Organizers	★★	★★	★★	★★
Presentations/Exhibitions	★★	★★	★★	★★★★
Problem-based Learning	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★
Project Design	★★	★	★★★★	★
Research	★★	★★★★	★★	★
Simulation/Role-Playing	★	★	★★	★★★★
Socratic Seminar	★	★★★★	★	★★
Teacher Questions	★★★★	★★	★★	★
Work-based Learning	★★	★	★★★★	★★

Key ★★★ Ideal Strategy ★★ Appropriate Strategy ★ Least Appropriate Strategy

Develop 4

PLANNING RIGOROUS AND RELEVANT INSTRUCTION

Purpose

This activity encourages teachers to reflect on instruction and the degree to which they are using rigorous and relevant instruction. It also reinforces the need for effective instructional planning.

Preparation

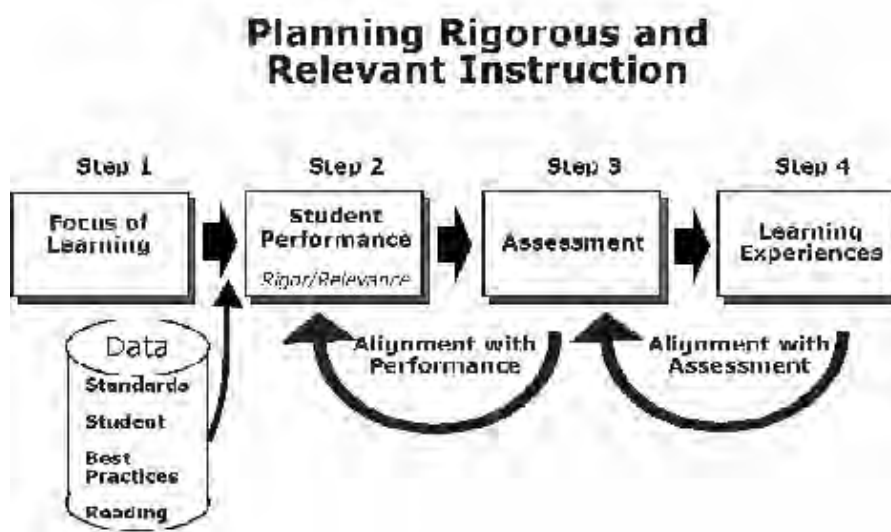
Materials

Make copies of Planning Rigorous and Relevant Instruction, Rigor/Relevance Worksheet, and Rigor/Relevance Lesson Planning Checklist (one of each per teacher)

Procedure

Time
60-90 minutes

1. Provide teachers with copies of Planning Rigorous and Relevant Instruction, Rigor/Relevance Worksheet, and Rigor/Relevance Lesson Planning Checklist.
2. Review the Rigor/Relevance Framework and Rigor/Relevance Planning Model with teachers.
3. Ask teachers to reflect on a particular learning experience using the Rigor/Relevance Worksheet.
4. Ask teachers to review the Rigor/Relevance Lesson Planning Checklist and answer “yes” or “no” to each of the questions.



Step 1 – Focus of Learning

What defines or drives the learning?

- What is the subject, grade level, topic, area, theme, setting, or concept?
- What are the important connections (standards, other disciplines)?

Step 2 – Student Performance

What are students expected to know, do, or be like and at what level of rigor and relevance?

- What student work will be used to facilitate learning?
- What standards are addressed in this learning?

Step 3 – Assessment

How will you assess desired student performance?

Step 4 – Learning Experiences

What activities will enable students to achieve student performance?

- What content will students need to know?
- What are the essential questions?
- What will be the launching activity?
- What strategies will be used?
- What are the learning steps for both the teacher and student?
- How will learning be extended?
- What resources are needed?

Rigor/Relevance Reflection Worksheet

Directions: Identify a unit of instruction that you have recently taught or a learning experience that your students completed.

Name of unit or experience _____

Briefly identify what you expected students to learn in this unit or experience.

Describe the key student work that students did as part of this unit or experience.

At what Rigor/Relevance Framework quadrant did you teach it?

At what Rigor/Relevance Framework quadrant would you teach it again?

What assessment would you use?

Complete the Rigor/Relevance Lesson Planning Checklist
reflecting on the lesson you have just described.

Rigor/Relevance Lesson Planning Checklist

Before Doing the Activity

Yes No

☐	☐	Expected levels of rigor and relevance were decided on early in the planning process.
☐	☐	Student work was clearly identified and designated as to the level of rigor and relevance.
☐	☐	The assessments are consistent with the level of rigor and relevance and the type of student work.
☐	☐	Student performance is linked to appropriate state standards.
☐	☐	Student data on reading levels was considered in setting expected performance.
☐	☐	The knowledge and experience levels of students were considered in setting expected performance.
☐	☐	Only content required to complete the student work is included.
☐	☐	Big ideas and essential questions are clearly identified.
☐	☐	The activities selected are consistent with the levels of rigor and relevance.

After Doing the Activity

Yes No

☐	☐	This lesson included appropriate levels of rigor and relevance.
☐	☐	Students knew the assessment criteria prior to completing the work.
☐	☐	The needs of individual students were accommodated in planning instruction and assessment.
☐	☐	The teacher tried something new to extend his or her instructional skills.

Develop 5

Data-driven Curriculum Reflection

Purpose

This activity introduces the data-driven curriculum checklist and encourages teachers to reflect on instruction and plan improvements.

Preparation

Materials:

Copies of the Data-driven Curriculum Reflection and Data-driven Curriculum Checklist (one per teacher)

Procedure

Time

20 minutes

1. Distribute copies of the Data-driven Curriculum Reflection and Data-driven Curriculum Checklist.
2. Ask teachers to reflect on one learning experience. Have them complete both the Data-driven Curriculum Reflection (except for the section labeled “Data-driven Curriculum Action Steps”) and Data-driven Curriculum Checklist.
3. After completing the Data-driven Checklist, have teachers indicate on the Data-driven Curriculum Reflection (in the section labeled “Data-driven Curriculum Action Steps”) what steps they will take to become more data-driven in re-teaching this particular lesson. If time allows, have teachers share their action steps with colleagues.

Data-driven Curriculum Reflection

Directions: Identify a unit of instruction that you have taught recently or a learning experience that your students completed.

Name of unit or experience _____

Briefly identify what you expected students to learn in this unit or experience.

Describe the key work that students did as part of this unit or experience.

Complete the Data-driven Curriculum Checklist reflecting on the lesson you have just described.

Data-driven Curriculum Action Steps

Reflecting on the characteristics of data-driven curriculum, what steps could you take to make your teaching more driven by data?

Data-driven Curriculum Checklist

This checklist will help teachers to make curriculum decisions based on objective data related to standards, students, best practices, and reading.

Standards

Yes	No	
☐	☐	Instruction is based on state standards.
☐	☐	Instruction is based on high-priority standards using Curriculum Matrix data.
☐	☐	Students and parents are informed at the beginning of the year of the state standards included in your course.
☐	☐	Integration of academic standards into arts or career and technical education is focused on standards that are high priority and highly connected to the curriculum.

Students

Yes	No	
☐	☐	Students' existing knowledge and skills levels have been determined.
☐	☐	Students' learning styles have been determined.
☐	☐	You ask students about their interests and aspirations.
☐	☐	You make home visits to meet parents and understand students' family situations.
☐	☐	Instruction is differentiated to adjust to individual student differences in prior experience and learning style.

Best Practices

Yes	No	
☐	☐	Teaching strategies have been researched and evaluated to determine effectiveness.
☐	☐	You analyze the effectiveness of your practices through action research.
☐	☐	You observe other teachers in your subject or grade.
☐	☐	You observe teaching strategies in different settings, e.g., watching a special education teacher for ideas on classroom management or a technical teacher conducting a problem-based learning activity.

Reading

Yes	No	
☐	☐	Reading levels necessary for competence on state tests have been determined.
☐	☐	Reading levels of students have been determined.
☐	☐	You know the reading levels required for students' career goals.

Develop 6

Lesson Review

Purpose

This activity gives teachers an opportunity to apply the Rigor/Relevance Framework to review instruction and reflect on strategies to achieve rigor and relevance.

Preparation

Materials:
Copies of the Review of Lessons Questions

Procedure

Time
30-40 minutes

1. Obtain videos of typical instruction. One source is the Instructional Study of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which can be obtained from sources listed on the National Center for Education Statistics Web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/timss/FAQVideo.asp>).
2. Examine the Review of Lessons Questions with teachers. Show the videos. Allow time to discuss the observations of teachers and their answers to the questions. These discussions will aid teachers in reflection on their own level of rigor and relevance in instruction.

Review of Lessons Questions

1. What does the teacher expect students to learn? (standards)
2. What is the intended level of rigor and relevance? In which quadrant on the Rigor/Relevance Framework does this lesson fall?
3. What instructional strategies are used?
4. Does the lesson meet the teacher's expectation for student learning? Why or why not?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this lesson?

Develop 7

SELECTING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Purpose

The first criterion to consider in selecting strategies is the level of student performance. When students are expected to demonstrate high levels of complex knowledge, then the instructional strategy used must give students experience with complex knowledge. In contrast, if students are only expected to recall knowledge, then the selected strategy can be simple, straight forward instruction.

The best way to develop a systematic approach to matching instructional strategies to the expected level of student performance is through the Rigor/Relevance Framework. The instructional strategies can be related to a particular quadrant on the framework. Likewise, the expected levels of student performance can be related to the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Select instructional strategies that work best for the quadrant in which your student objectives are located. When used at the right time, these strategies can help students to achieve expected standards.

Preparation

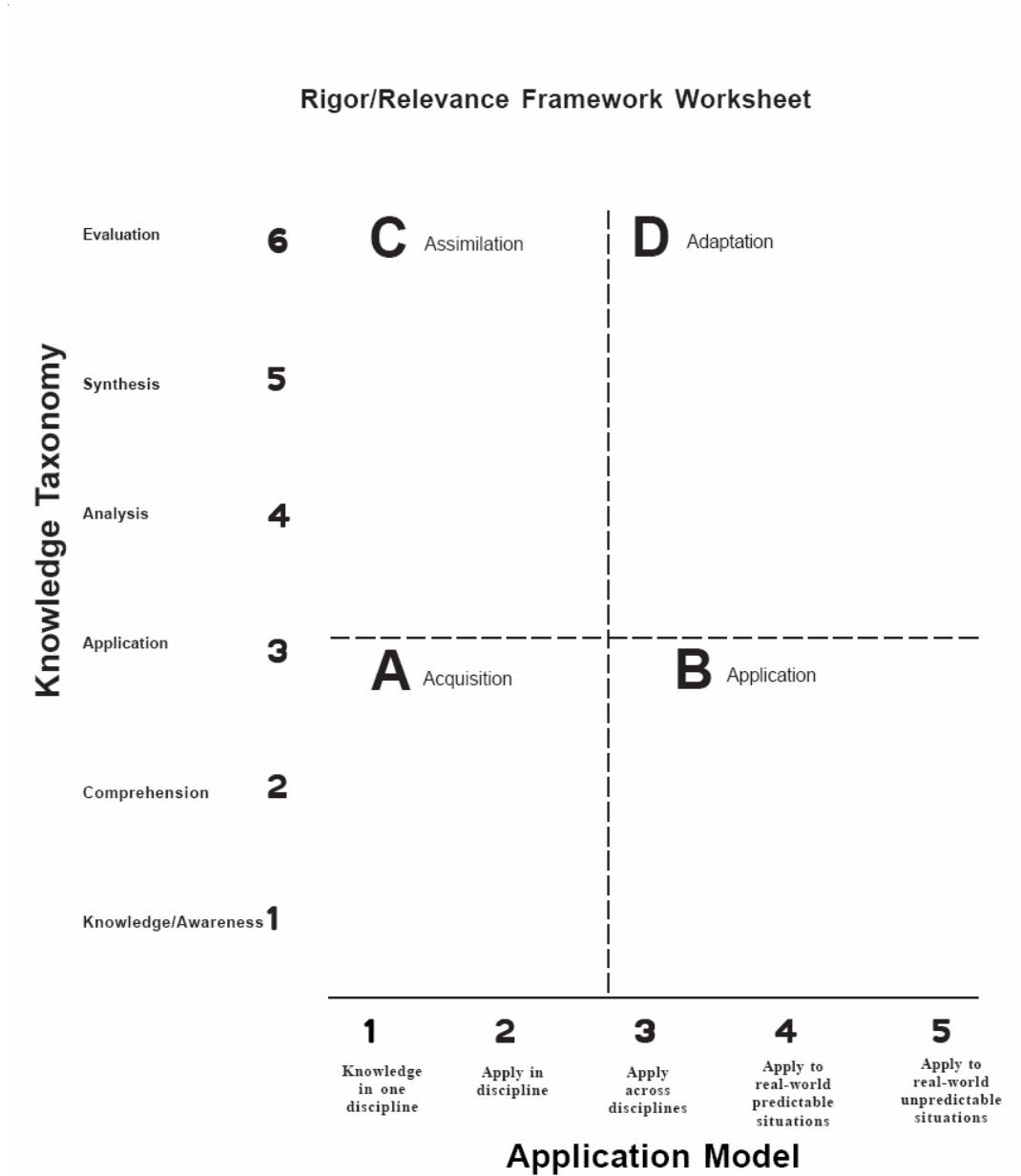
Make photocopies of the Rigor/Relevance Framework worksheet. Have available the chart that correlates instructional strategies to the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Procedure

Time

15 minutes

1. Ask teachers to brainstorm a list of instructional strategies or use the list below.
2. Have teachers match the instructional strategies with the appropriate quadrant of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. The strategies may be recorded on the worksheet provided.
3. Share the chart that correlates the instructional strategies to the Rigor/Relevance Framework. An ideal strategy has three stars, an appropriate strategy has two stars, and a least appropriate strategy has one star.



List of Instructional Strategies

- Brainstorming
- Cooperative Learning
- Demonstration
- Guided Practice
- Inquiry
- Instructional Technology
- Lecture
- Note-taking/Graphic Organizers
- Memorization
- Presentations/Exhibitions
- Research
- Problem-based learning
- Project Design
- Simulation/Role-playing
- Socratic Seminar
- Teacher Questions
- Work-based Learning

Instructional Strategies and the Rigor/Relevance Framework

Strategy	Acquisition Quadrant A	Assimilation Quadrant C	Application Quadrant B	Adaptation Quadrant D
Brainstorming	★★	★★★	★	★★★
Cooperative Learning	★★	★★	★★★	★★★
Demonstration	★	★	★★★	★★
Guided Practice	★★★	★★	★★	★
Inquiry	★	★★★	★★	★★★
Instructional Technology	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Lecture	★★★	★★	★	★
Memorization	★★★	★★	★★	★
Note-taking/Graphic Organizers	★★	★★	★★	★★
Presentations/Exhibitions	★	★★	★★	★★★
Problem-based Learning	★★	★★	★★★	★★★
Project Design	★	★	★★★	★★★
Research	★★	★★★	★	★★★
Simulation/Role-playing	★★	★★	★★★	★★★
Socratic Seminar	★	★★★	★	★★★
Teacher Questions	★★	★★★	★	★★★
Work-based Learning	★★	★★	★★★	★★★

Key ★★★ Ideal Strategy ★★ Appropriate Strategy ★ Least Appropriate Strategy

Develop 8

Leadership for Reading in the Content Areas

Purpose

Reading is critical to achieving high levels of rigor and relevance. At the secondary level, most dedicated reading instruction has disappeared and students are expected to read in order to learn content. Teachers are frequently working around reading issues to allow students to demonstrate mastery of content with little improvement in reading. This may marginally work for low rigor/low relevant instruction, but it is totally insufficient when instruction moves up the scale of rigor and relevance. It is the school leader that must focus staff on literacy goals and also support the development of skills in reading in the content area.

In middle schools and high schools, textbooks and instructional materials are content driven, with no uniform degree of reading difficulty. Teachers select the text that covers the content, not the text that is most readable to most students.

Each subject is likely to have its own specialized vocabulary and concepts presented through a variety of text sources and writing styles. Some courses have hundreds or thousands of new vocabulary words that students are expected to learn, multiplied by 6 different courses students study in any given year.

While content area teachers are often the first to recognize the problem of inadequate reading skills, they also feel unprepared to address the issue. They have little training in the teaching of reading or learning skills. These teachers are concerned that teaching reading will take time away from covering course content.

Time
45-60 minutes

The International Center has three resource kits for developing a comprehensive literacy program and skills for teaching reading in the content areas. These publications are:

Leading with Reading in Grades 7-12 for schools leaders to lay the groundwork for teaching reading in the content areas.

Strategic Reading in the Content Areas — Boosting Achievement in Grades 7-12 has strategies and tips for teachers in all content areas. *Reading Strategies for Career Academies and Career-Technical Education* presents strategies and worksheets especially for career and technical area teachers.

Teachers need to *increase*:

- time for independent reading with leveled text selections matched to the students' reading levels (independent levels, not instructional levels).
- data-driven decisions in selecting instructional materials.
- time spent reading in the content areas.
- fluency of reading proficiency.
- evaluations that focuses on higher-order thinking skills.
- use of writing before and after reading.
- collaborative activities.
- teaching reading as a process.
- teacher modeling.

Teachers need to *decrease*:

- reading assignments and expecting students to figure it out.
- exclusive use of whole class reading.
- teacher selection of all reading materials.
- solitary seatwork.
- selection of a course text without regard to reading difficulties.

Literacy is not someone else's job; it is the responsibility of every teacher. It is the role of the instructional leader to provide commitment, resources, and support to address literacy issues.

Procedure

Use the following checklist individually or with teacher teams to assess the level of attention that reading in the content area is receiving in your school.

Leadership for Reading in the Content Area Checklist

Definitely	Partially	No	
☐	☐	☐	1. Literacy is an important priority throughout the school.
☐	☐	☐	2. There are clear, measurable goals for levels of student reading.
☐	☐	☐	3. A standard measure of reading such as Lexile is used to describe all aspects of reading achievement.
☐	☐	☐	4. Literacy development is addressed in all disciplines.
☐	☐	☐	5. Student literacy levels are measured continuously, and this data is compared to literacy achievement goals.
☐	☐	☐	6. Faculty has convenient access to data on reading levels of their students.
☐	☐	☐	7. Staff knows the reading levels reflected in their textbooks and other instructional materials.
☐	☐	☐	8. Staff makes selections of instructional materials to appropriately challenge students.
☐	☐	☐	9. Students below reading goals are tested frequently.
☐	☐	☐	10. Students are assigned to academic courses based upon reading level data.
☐	☐	☐	11. Teachers use pre-reading, vocabulary, and post-reading strategies to improve reading in the content area.
☐	☐	☐	12. Teachers know the reading level requirements for post school, including college, employment, and personal use.
☐	☐	☐	13. Teachers regularly share reading strategies.
☐	☐	☐	14. Academic intervention services are available to provide additional help to student needing reading assistance.
☐	☐	☐	15. Instructional coaches are available to assist teachers in improving instructional strategies related to reading.
☐	☐	☐	16. Teachers personalize instruction to accommodate different levels of reading in classroom.
☐	☐	☐	17. School media center is aligned with reading level information and is an integral part of literacy program.
☐	☐	☐	18. Students have opportunities to apply reading skills by tutoring younger students.
☐	☐	☐	19. Students are challenged to increase reading fluency as well as comprehension.
☐	☐	☐	20. State assessments in all subjects have been analyzed as to the reading level.

Develop 9

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to help staff to look at technology as a tool and recognize that how technology is integrated influences the level of rigor and relevance.

The degree to which technology is beneficial to learning depends on the way it is applied in the classroom and beyond. When used effectively, it offers great possibilities for expanding learning. Technology should be integrated in a way that increases the rigor and relevance of instruction. Technology offers students a chance to delve deeply into a topic. Greater accessibility to information gives students the opportunity to gather information easily and to analyze and synthesize the information in new ways. Students can manipulate information to identify the portions that are relevant to their needs. They can use information from one subject area in another, and integrate the information to enhance their understanding. This gives them greater control over their learning.

Computers provide teachers with a tool to create their own teaching materials, to go beyond what is in the textbook and use alternate resources, and to organize information in new ways. It can be very helpful to teachers because technology accommodates various learning styles and can enhance instructional strategies in many ways.

The different ways in which technology is used can be linked to the quadrants of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. The figure “Student Role Using Technology” shows four different roles that students take in each of the quadrants. When working in Quadrant A (low rigor /low relevance), the student is a passive consumer of the technology. When working in Quadrant B, the student becomes an active user, using the technology more actively to complete some task or procedure. In Quadrant C, the student is active also, but the technology is not essential to the work. The student may choose to use the technology to complete the work more efficiently, such as doing research or writing. In high rigor/high relevance (Quadrant D), the student is again active, but this time as more of a producer than as a consumer of technology. Here the student creates a product through the use of technology. By examining how students are using technology, it is possible to identify the level of rigor and relevance of learning.

Rigor/Relevance Framework

Student Role Using Technology

R I G O R	<i>High</i>	C Active Consumer	D Active Producer
	<i>Low</i>	A Passive Consumer	B Active User
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
		RELEVANCE	

Rigor/Relevance Framework

Sample Uses of Technology

R I G O R	<i>High</i>	C Writing Analyzing Researching Communicating	D Design Publishing Presentating Composing
	<i>Low</i>	A Drill and Practice Reading Notetaking	B Data Collecting/ Organizing Editing Layout/Formatting
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
		RELEVANCE	

The figure “Sample Uses of Technology” provides examples of the way technology is used in each of the four quadrants of learning.

A continuing debate centers on whether technology is the panacea that will help many students learn at higher levels or an exciting fad that is a temporary distraction from the real process of learning. There is potential for either outcome. Implementation decisions and staff development will determine the positive or negative impact of technology.

When used effectively, technology offers exciting possibilities for expanding learning beyond what schools have taught before. Technology accommodates various learning styles. It puts vast amounts of knowledge at students’ fingertips. Databases on every subject imaginable are made available for study in all curriculum areas. Encyclopedias and complete collections of literary works on the Internet expand the walls of classrooms to encompass the world.

Technology provides teachers with tools to create their own teaching materials, to go beyond what’s in the textbook and use alternate resources, and to reorganize information in new ways. Students can also manipulate and reorder what they learn, giving them greater control over their learning.

Computers link curriculum with real-world experiences both inside and outside the school. Using the Internet, students can work together in cooperative learning situations to help solve real problems, tying their education to real-life situations and giving them invaluable learning experiences. Students can use multimedia software to create presentations. Students can use the Internet and reference software for researching topics.

Preparation

Make copies of Examples of Technology Integration by Rigor/Relevance Framework Quadrant

Procedure

Time

minutes

1. Ask teachers to brainstorm the ways they are integrating technology into their lessons. Answer the question, “How are students using technology in instruction?”
2. Ask the staff to categorize each of the ways students use technology as being primarily learning in Quadrants A, B, C, or D.
3. Distribute the list of examples of technology integration. Ask teachers to revise their list and propose additional ways they could integrate technology into their practices to raise the level of rigor and relevance.

Examples of Technology Integration by Rigor/Relevance Framework Quadrant

Quadrant A

- Use an online game to test knowledge of vocabulary.
- Use drill and practice software to reinforce fundamental skills.
- Tutor students to catch up on content they have not mastered.
- View demonstrations through animation or remote video.
- Use computer visuals to illustrate lectures.
- Use word processing for taking notes.
- Make reference notes available for students on the Internet.
- Use a SmartBoard to record classroom notes and discussion.
- Create graphic organizers and visual displays of information.
- Distribute note-taking templates and assignments to students via networks.

Quadrant B

- Use word processing or desktop publishing to produce newsletters, brochures, and so forth.
- Design Web pages.
- Use email to contact and interview experts.
- Edit video and audio clips.
- Use heart monitors to record exercise impacts.
- Use electronic diagnostic equipment with automobiles.
- Locate technical specification in online databases.
- Create spreadsheets to record and analyze data.
- Use technology to compose and play music.
- Edit writing of others using word processing.

Quadrant C

- Use Internet to research problems or research questions.
- Use computer software for reference of decisions and expert systems.
- Create and display graphic organizer of solutions to complex problems.
- Engage in complex computer simulations to apply decision making skills.
- Keeping track of brainstorm sessions, classroom discussions, and questions.
- Engage in discussion of group projects and problems among students online.

Quadrant D

- Create project designs and model solutions on computers.
- Use calculators and computers for calculating design data.
- Use robots to conduct design tests.
- Use the Internet to collect information on design needs.
- Engage in discussion of real world issues with students of other nations through the Internet.
- Produce visuals as part of student presentations of major projects.
- Design Web pages for actual customers.

Develop 10

Individual Professional Development

Purpose

The most effective professional development is that which directly relates to an individual teacher's situation and needs. One of the best ways to extend teacher learning related to the Rigor/Relevance Framework is to have teachers continue to improve their practice through professional development.

Preparation

Materials:
Copy of Personal Growth Plan for each participant

Procedure

Time
varies

1. Work with teachers individually to plan follow-up professional development for implementation of rigor and relevance. This could be done by teachers alone or in small groups. Use the Personal Growth Plan questionnaire to provide a structure for planning and reporting on individual professional development.
2. Teachers might do projects such as develop high rigor/high relevance lessons, create performance assessments, analyze existing assessments for rigor/relevance, or participate in professional development for instructional strategies that relate to high levels of rigor and relevance.

Personal Growth Plan

The following reflective questions will guide you through the key aspects of developing a personal professional development plan.

Student Achievement

Goals — What will students achieve differently as a result of your professional development?

Documentation — What sources of data will you use to measure student achievement goals?

☐ Student Performance Test ☐ Student Portfolio ☐ State Test ☐ Local Test ☐ AP Test ☐ Student Projects ☐ Student Interview ☐ Job/College Placement ☐ Other _____

Personal Needs Assessment

Source — What sources of information will you use to identify needs to be addressed in this plan?

☐ Personal Observation ☐ Student Performance ☐ Student Achievement Data ☐ Student Feedback
☐ Administrator Observation ☐ Peer Observation ☐ Self-reflection ☐ New Responsibility
☐ Other _____

Type — On what type of knowledge or skill will this plan focus?

☐ Classroom Management ☐ Content Knowledge ☐ Instructional Strategies
☐ Development of Assessments ☐ More Rigor/Relevance ☐ Use of Technology ☐ School Safety
☐ Analyzing Student Data ☐ Standards ☐ Character Education ☐ School to Career
☐ Other _____

Description — What aspects of teaching and learning do you wish to improve?

Professional Development Goals

Goals — What are your goals for professional development? Be specific. Include time line.

Professional Development Activities

Methods — Which methods will you use to achieve professional development?

☐ Workshop ☐ University Course ☐ Distance Learning ☐ Self Study ☐ Study Group ☐ Experimentation
☐ Action Research ☐ Partnership ☐ Immersion ☐ Coaching/Mentoring ☐ Other _____

Activities — What professional development activities will you complete? Include time line.

To Be Completed after Professional Development

Professional Development Reflection

Activities — What did you personally accomplish in your professional development?

Evaluation

What are the positive impacts of this professional development?

What would you do differently?

Follow-Up — What changes will you make in instruction? What are the expected changes in student learning?

Examples of Personal Professional Development Strategies

Self-directed Options

- Training video
- Visiting another school/workplace
- Interviewing colleagues about their work style and practices
- Reflective writing
- Computer training package on CD-ROM
- Piloting a program
- Professional reading
- Learning a new skill from a colleague
- Observing the work of a colleague
- Applying for and holding a new position

Collaborative Options

- Establishing a buddy relationship
- Teaching a skill to a colleague
- Identifying and using the expertise of a colleague
- Giving or seeking feedback
- Working in a team developing programs
- Action research project
- Team teaching
- Teacher exchange
- Informal discussion with colleagues

Training Options

- Attending a short course/training program
- Seminar program
- Giving a presentation to colleagues on an aspect of your work
- Mentoring or shadowing program
- Graduate courses
- Participation in a formal network

Develop 11

POWERFUL DESIGNS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Purpose

As an instructional leader, you plan and implement professional development activities for your staff, to be carried out individually or in groups. *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, from the National Staff Development Council, offers 21 professional development strategies:

1. Accessing student voices
2. Action research
3. Assessment as professional development
4. Case discussions
5. Classroom walk-throughs
6. Critical friends groups
7. Curriculum design
8. Data analysis
9. Immersing teachers in practice
10. Journaling
11. Lesson study
12. Mentoring
13. Peer coaching
14. Portfolios for educators
15. School coaching
16. Shadowing students
17. Standards in practice
18. Study groups
19. Train the trainer
20. Tuning protocols
21. Visual dialogue

Preparation

Photocopy the Powerful Designs Charts (one per teacher)

Procedure

Time
varies

1. To choose the professional development design that will work best for your school, consider these questions:
Who? (Who will be involved?)
What and Why? (What is the purpose?)
When? (How long will the school commit to a design?)
How? (Facilitator? Administrator involved? School in session? Cost?)

2. Ask teachers to identify a professional development activity.
3. Have teachers use the Powerful Design Tools to determine what designs will work best for the activity they chose.

POWERFUL DESIGNS: WHO AND WHEN

NSDC TOOL

POWERFUL DESIGN	Who? In addition to classroom teachers and administrators, who should be involved?					When? (Assumes no less than 1-year commitment)						
	University or college staff	Community, parents, policy makers	Individuals at first, then groups	Pairs	Large groups/ Concurrent small groups	Frequency				Duration		
						3 to 6 times year	At least monthly	At least weekly	Daily	Each session is 3 hours or more	Each session is 1 to 2 hours	Each session is an hour or less
Accessing Student Voices			X			X				X		
Action Research	X		X				X*	X**			X*	X**
Assessment as Professional Development					X	X				X		
Case Discussions					X		X				X	
Classroom Walk-Throughs			X						X			X
Critical Friends Groups	X				X		X				X	
Curriculum Designers	X				X	X				X		
Data Analysis	X	X			X	X				X		
Immersing Teachers in Practice					X		X				X	
Journaling			X						X			X
Lesson Study					X	X				X		
Mentoring	X			X				X			X	
Peer Coaching	X			X				X			X	
Portfolios for Educators			X					X				X
School Coaching	X	X			X		X				X	
Shadowing Students		X	X			X				X		
Standards in Practice					X		X				X	
Study Groups	X	X			X	X				X		
Training the Trainer	X						X				X	
Tuning Protocols	X				X		X				X	
Visual Dialogue					X	X				X		

* = group sharing ** = individual work

SOURCE: *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, by Lois Brown Easton, Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004. All rights reserved. Order through NSDC's Online Bookstore, store.nsd.org.

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

POWERFUL DESIGNS: WHAT AND WHY

NSDC TOOL

POWERFUL DESIGN	Useful for gathering data in a school	Involves gathering information from external sources	Particularly helpful in creating a learning community	Looks at standards, curriculum, assessment	Focuses on pedagogy and teaching	Involves looking at classrooms	Involves looking at whole school/behind
Accessing Student Voices	x						x
Action Research	x	x		x	x	x	x
Assessment as Professional Development		x		x			
Case Discussions		x		x	x		
Classroom Walk-Throughs	x					x	
Critical Friends Groups			x		x		
Curriculum Designers		x		x			x
Data Analysis	x						
Immersing Teachers in Practice				x	x		x
Journaling					x		
Lesson Study		x		x	x	x	x
Mentoring		x	x		x	x	
Peer Coaching		x	x		x	x	
Portfolios for Educators	x				x	x	
School Coaching		x					x
Shadowing Students	x	x			x	x	
Standards in Practice				x			
Study Groups		x		x			x
Training the Trainer							x
Tuning Protocols			x		x	x	
Visual Dialogue	x	x	x	x			x

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POWERFUL DESIGNS: WHAT AND WHY (continued)

POWERFUL DESIGN	Is particularly reflective	Involves looking at student work or students	Good for involving others	Good for problem solving	Results in a concrete product	Is experiential	Involves modeling
Accessing Student Voices		x	x	x			
Action Research		x		x			
Assessment as Professional Development					x		
Case Discussions							
Classroom Walk-Throughs				x		x	
Critical Friends Groups		x		x			
Curriculum Designers					x		
Data Analysis				x			
Immersing Teachers in Practice						x	x
Journaling	x					x	
Lesson Study				x	x	x	x
Mentoring	x	x	x	x		x	x
Peer Coaching	x	x		x		x	x
Portfolios for Educators	x	x		x	x		
School Coaching			x	x			
Shadowing Students		x	x			x	
Standards in Practice		x		x	x	x	x
Study Groups				x			
Training the Trainer	x		x		x	x	
Tuning Protocols		x					
Visual Dialogue			x	x		x	

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Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

POWERFUL DESIGNS: HOW

NSDC TOOL

POWERFUL DESIGN	FACILITATOR NEEDED			ADMINISTRATOR INVOLVEMENT			SCHOOL IN/OUT		COST
	No	At first	Yes	Support	Participation essential	Participation helpful	In	Out	
Accessing Student Voices			x	x		x	x		\$
Action Research	x			x		x	x		\$\$
Assessment as Professional Development			x	x	x		x	x	\$\$\$
Case Discussions			x	x		x		x	\$\$
Classroom Walk-Throughs	x			x	x		x		\$
Critical Friends Groups		x		x		x	x		\$\$
Curriculum Designers			x	x	x			x	\$\$\$
Data Analysis			x	x	x			x	\$\$\$
Immersing Teachers in Practice			x	x		x	x	x	\$\$\$
Journaling	x			x	x		x		\$
Lesson Study			x	x		x	x	x	\$\$
Mentoring	x			x	x		x		\$\$
Peer Coaching	x			x	x		x		\$\$
Portfolios for Educators	x			x	x		x		\$
School Coaching			x	x	x		x		\$\$\$
Shadowing Students			x	x	x		x		\$\$
Standards in Practice			x	x		x	x		\$\$
Study Groups		x		x	x		x		\$\$
Training the Trainer			x	x		x	x	x	\$\$\$
Tuning Protocols		x	x	x		x	x		\$\$
Visual Dialogue			x	x	x		x		\$\$\$

SOURCE: *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, by Lois Brown Easton, Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2004. All rights reserved. Order through NSDC's Online Bookstore, store.nsd.org.

Develop 12**DAILY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING** **Purpose**

A frequent point of debate within professional learning is whether it should focus on generic strategies or be driven by content. The research shows that each of these approaches can be effective in increasing student achievement. In practice, both aspects must be addressed in professional learning.

It is essential for professional learning to be frequent, ongoing, collaborative, and directly related to the real work of teaching and learning. To be effective, professional development must provide teachers with a way to apply what they learn directly to their practice. Research shows that professional development leads to better instruction and improved student learning when it connects to the curriculum materials that teachers use, the district and state academic standards that guide their work, and the assessment and accountability measures that evaluate their success.

Collective participation tends to create more active learning. This involves professional learning designed for groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level. Examples of collective participation include observing and being observed while teaching, planning for classroom use of what was learned, reviewing student work, and giving presentations, leading discussions, and producing written work.

What matters most is what teachers learn. Professional learning should improve teachers' knowledge of the subject matter, as well as enhance their understanding of student thinking in that subject matter. Aligning substantive training with the curriculum and teachers' actual work experiences also is vital. The time teachers spend in professional learning makes a difference, but only when the activities focus on high-quality, subject-related content. Opportunities for staff to work collaboratively to better understand student learning, curriculum materials and instruction, and subject-matter content can boost the performance of both teachers and students.

Five Keys to Frequent and Meaningful Professional Learning:

1. **Expectations.** Set an expectation for continuous collaborative learning.
2. **Context.** Make sure that professional learning focuses on the subject matter teachers will be teaching.
3. **Real work.** Align teachers' learning opportunities with their real work experiences, using actual curriculum materials and assessments.
4. **Opportunity.** Provide adequate time and resources for professional learning and ensure that the extended opportunities to learn emphasize observing and analyzing students' understanding of the subject matter.
5. **Measure results.** Regularly evaluate the impact of professional learning on teachers' practices and student learning.

Preparation

- Make copies of the Climate for Daily Professional Learning Checklist

Procedure

Time

1. Create opportunities for teachers to talk about the climate for daily professional learning.
2. Distribute the survey checklist for teachers to reflect on current practice.
3. Discuss the items that teacher feel are strengths and weaknesses.
4. Have staff review the suggestions for daily professional learning.
5. Develop and action plan to increase the climate for professional learning and expanding daily professional learning opportunities.

Climate for Daily Professional Learning Checklist

☐	☐	☐	1. Has staff worked together to articulate a shared educational vision focused on learning?
☐	☐	☐	2. Do leaders protect the vision and make it visible to others?
☐	☐	☐	3. Are learning goals clear, understood, and accepted?
☐	☐	☐	4. Do we take collective responsibility for school practices and outcomes?
☐	☐	☐	5. Do leaders in our school emphasize power through people rather than power over people?
☐	☐	☐	6. Do school leaders facilitate, guide, and encourage the adoption of practices that advance student performance and learning relationships?
☐	☐	☐	7. Do leaders communicate their passion for learning by challenging ineffective practices?
☐	☐	☐	8. Do leaders create a culture that supports risk-taking and encourages innovation?
☐	☐	☐	9. Are discussion and inquiry common and accepted practices in our school?
☐	☐	☐	10. Do we share information and make decisions together?
☐	☐	☐	11. Are we open to multiple approaches and solutions rather than reliance on single answers and past practices?
☐	☐	☐	12. Do leaders accept conflict as “good” and use it as a stimulus for change, or is it “bad” and something simply to be controlled?
☐	☐	☐	13. Do we engage students as active learners and co-constructors of knowledge?
☐	☐	☐	14. Is there time and support for professional learning that improves curriculum, instruction, and student learning?
☐	☐	☐	15. Do leaders model life-long learning for others by sharing new ideas, successes, and failures?
☐	☐	☐	16. Do teachers have considerable autonomy and discretion to plan curriculum and organize instruction within an overall framework?
☐	☐	☐	17. Do we use teams to plan and implement school improvement?
☐	☐	☐	18. Are there opportunities for dialogue and planning across teams, grades, and subjects?
☐	☐	☐	19. Is communication in our school open and fluid, or is it regulated by traditional chains of command?
☐	☐	☐	20. Do we create small, “communal” arrangements that personalize learning and maximize student-teacher and student-student interaction?

Ideas for Daily Professional Learning

Here are 50 ideas for professional learning that will engage staff in moving toward a goal of daily professional learning:

1. Conduct action research projects
2. Have regular meetings of teams to discuss lessons
3. Utilize in-house trainers
4. Plan lessons with teams of teaching colleagues
5. Examine student achievement data
6. Make classroom observations
7. Publish a Web site of shared teaching ideas by department or grade level
8. Set up an Internet blog on teaching and learning
9. Lead a book study
10. Visit a model school
11. Link tips of the day on the Internet to school Web site
12. Survey parents
13. Have teachers volunteer to write state assessments
14. Set up a study or support group that meets weekly
15. Review education software/Web sites
16. Establish demonstration classrooms where peers can observe model strategies
17. Do a classroom walk-through
18. Have teachers share research on the Internet on strategies once each month
19. Lead a school-wide committee or project
20. Develop displays or bulletin boards
21. Have teachers shadow students
22. Team teach a lesson
23. Coach a colleague
24. Operate a mentor program
25. Have teachers take an online course as a team or department
26. Encourage teachers to join a professional network
27. Set up peer review of lessons and student work
28. Encourage staff to write an article about their work
29. Share recent reading from journals, periodicals, books, etc.
30. Set up regular meetings of critical friends
31. Set up student focus groups
32. Set up lending library of professional resources
33. Do a self-assessment
34. Design an interdisciplinary lesson
35. Shadow another teacher or professional in the field
36. Have teachers keep a reflective log or journal
37. Analyze and publish the expectations of statewide assessments
38. Invite in guest subject experts
39. View educational videos
40. Have teachers maintain a professional portfolio
41. Study state content standards
42. Have staff observe other teachers teaching
43. Listen to video/audio recordings
44. Participate in a videoconference or conference calls with experts
45. Develop curriculum
46. Do school improvement planning
47. Examine new technological resources to supplement lessons
48. Get observed and receive feedback from another teacher or principal
49. Participate in lesson study
50. Work on a strategic planning team

Develop 13

★ Rigor/Relevance

★ Relationships

HIGH QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Purpose

Measuring educational outcomes from professional development usually focuses on the teacher, the organization, and the student. To determine the effect the professional development has had on the participant, the following should be measured: progress in knowledge, behaviors and practices; attitudes; beliefs; and perceptions. Organizational progress can be correlated with increased shared decision-making and expanded roles for participants. Students' results are twofold — cognitive (performance) and affective (behavioral).

Some suggestions for evaluation of professional development include:

- Evaluation should be ongoing.
- Evaluation expectations and procedures should be explicit and public.
- Evaluation should be informed by multiple sources of data.
- Evaluation should use both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Evaluation should be considerate of participants' time and energy.
- Evaluation results should be presented in formats that can be understood by all participants.

Greater success in professional development is facilitated through well-planned, ongoing professional growth leading to improved professional practice.

Procedure

The following tools are provided to measure the effectiveness of professional development in a school district:

- The Professional Development Rubric is an analytic guide that provides criteria for looking at professional development in six categories: Goal Setting, Needs Analysis, Program Creation, Implementation, Climate/Culture, and Evaluation.
- The Holistic Checklist for Professional Development is a more complete tool for examining the important characteristics of professional development.

Time
varies

Professional Development Rubric

	Goal Setting	Needs Analysis	Program Creation	Implementation	Climate/ Culture	Evaluation
Exemplary	Clear goals and expected results for schools/teachers are directly tied to attainment of student results. Goals understood by all.	Meaningful participation of all stakeholders in identifying needs and developing long-range professional development plans.	Uses a variety of strategies, delivery systems, models, and techniques to meet the needs of staff over a period of time. Includes content and best practices based on research.	Continuous follow-up and opportunities for staff to practice skills. Ongoing coaching and strong evidence of administrative support to continue with follow-up activities.	Administrators are instructional leaders. Mutual respect and collaboration at all levels. Professional development recognized as an essential part of change.	Ongoing data collection and analysis linked to student results. Outcomes consistent with plan. Data results drive ongoing planning cycle.
Effective	Goals exist but are either broad or diverse. Generally related to student achievement. Limited understanding of goals among staff.	Some participation by stakeholders. Plan is developed but not tied to goals. Needs are assumed but not individually identified by staff.	Limited but generally effective programs. Based on research and school needs but not linked to student results or individual needs.	Follow-up activities are encouraged, primarily at the group level, with some administrative involvement.	Professional development is valued as a powerful change agent but top-level leadership is not apparent.	Student outcomes are evaluated but not in relation to interventions provided through a professional development plan.
Wishful Thinking	Goals identified but not shared or not based on student achievement needs.	Process owned and controlled by a few people. Research or regulation driven with no relation to school or individual needs.	Menu approach to selection of programs. Many programs offered out of tradition.	Occasional informal follow-up. Administrative support may occur but without systematic structure.	Professional development tolerated, but not consistently available to staff. Individual initiative and risk-taking discouraged.	Any evaluations based solely on participants' reactions to session (happiness scales).
Inadequate	No obvious relationship to district needs or school improvement.	Superficial or no plan developed, no input from stakeholders on topics selected.	Single presentation workshop, often to fill an available time slot. One-shot program.	No follow-up provided. Very limited opportunity to monitor and refine skills. Any follow-up is self-driven.	Professional development not encouraged. Mandatory participation of an unwilling audience.	No evaluation conducted.

Holistic Checklist for Professional Development

Use the following checklist to reflect on the quality of professional development at your school.

Professional development

- _____ is aligned with the school and district strategic plans.
- _____ is based on a careful analysis of disaggregated student achievement data.
- _____ is part of a long-term plan of three to five years.
- _____ is based on the school as the primary unit of change, not the district.
- _____ is adequately funded.
- _____ provides knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding organization development and systems thinking.
- _____ uses content that has proven value in increasing student learning and development.
- _____ requires an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, and focuses on all levels of the organization.
- _____ uses a variety of staff development approaches to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and student success.
- _____ includes the follow-up and support necessary to ensure improvement.
- _____ increases administrators' and teachers' understanding of how to provide school environments and instruction that are responsive to the developmental needs of students.
- _____ prepares educators to have high expectations for all student learning.
- _____ facilitates staff collaboration with families to support improved student performance.
- _____ provides adequate time during the work day for staff members to learn and work together to accomplish the school's mission and goals.
- _____ uses strategies that emphasize adult learning principles, including learning by doing as an important component.

Adapted from the Professional Development Standards, National Staff Development Council.

Develop 14

★ Rigor/Relevance

RAISING THE LEVEL OF RIGOR/ RELEVANCE THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTRUCTION

Purpose

One of the ways to make student work more rigorous and relevant is to make it more interdisciplinary. This activity is designed for a group of educators to brainstorm ways to integrate additional disciplines into a project. By working through this activity, teachers will understand the process of adding rigor and relevance through interdisciplinary instruction. Participants will also recognize the value of group discussion in planning

Preparation

Make photocopies of the worksheet Raising the Level of Rigor and Relevance —Interdisciplinary (one per teacher).

Procedure

1. Organize participants in groups of 4 to 8 people.
2. Introduce this activity by brainstorming and discussing ways that existing student work can be made more rigorous and relevant by including learning from other disciplines. Point out that teachers can modify either the student work procedures or what is assessed to direct students to include work from other disciplines. For example, writing a conclusive summary for a science experiment adds rigor by including writing and analysis skills. If students are required to relate this experiment to a local pollution issue, economics is included. If accuracy in calculations is included in the assessment, mathematics is included.
3. Distribute copies of the Raising the Level of Rigor and Relevance—Interdisciplinary worksheet.
4. Ask each group to read the project and discuss ways the project could be modified to raise the level of rigor and relevance through interdisciplinary connections. Encourage group members to include any and all subjects. Write additional steps in the procedures and add new criteria to the assessment rubric, if necessary.
5. Allow each group time to report on their modifications.

Time
30-40 minutes

To extend this activity, have groups of teachers take an existing lesson that has been used previously and modify it through a group discussion process.

Raising the Level of Rigor and Relevance — Interdisciplinary

Directions: Read the description of this student project. In small groups, modify this project by adding or changing procedure steps and assessment rubric to include multiple disciplines.

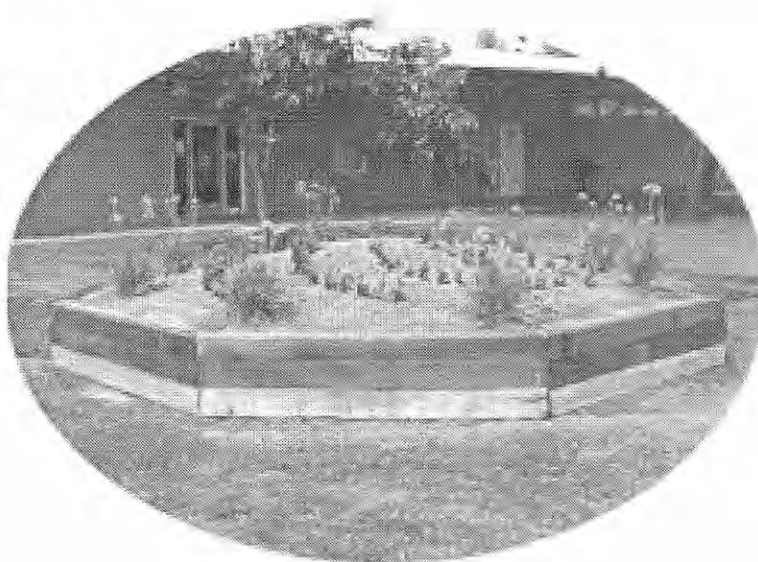
Landscape Planter Project

Introduction

Through planning a landscaping project, students will apply construction and academic skills. By completing the assignments and activities in this lesson plan, students will design, plan, and construct a multisided planter that includes a watering system and annual plants.

Procedures

1. Sketch desired shape for planter.
2. Determine materials required.
3. Determine location, shape, and center point of planter.
4. Prepare planter area.
5. Cut materials and construct planter.
6. Install pipe and sprinkler system.
7. Fill the planter with soil.
8. Plant bedding flowers.



Landscape Planter Project Rubric

	Beginning 1 point	Developing 2 points	Accomplished 3 points	Exemplary 4 points
Sketch	Incomplete sketch with very little details	Messy sketch, but has main requirements	Sketch is neat and has main requirements	Very neat and includes extra information on sketch.
Building Materials	Incomplete supply list and very few prices for the supplies	Incomplete supply list, but has all of calculated the prices	Fairly complete supply list with all prices calculated	Gives extra information about supplies
Construction	Construction incomplete	Poorly done and not likely to stay together	Good construction but some wasted materials or unsightly portions	Neat, complete, and attractive, with no wasted materials
Plantings	No plantings	Plantings are not likely to survive	Plantings completed but poor spacing or incorrect depth	Plantings are appropriately spaced and planted

Possible Modifications to the Landscape Planter Project

- Compare costs and reliability of different construction materials
- Analyze different plants for growth characteristics
- Write letters to businesses for donations and support
- Study historical perspective regarding what would have been planted in different eras
- Calculate volume of soil materials needed
- Set up a maintenance schedule of who will take care of planting
- Brainstorm justification to administration for planter
- Write up proposal justifying planter to administration
- Prepare scale drawings
- Track the path of movement of the sun's rays during different seasons
- Compare designs, including cost of materials for each design
- Calculate water needs and flow rates
- Analyze soil types, pH, and ways to improve soil
- Research types of irrigation systems and rates of transpiration
- Research types of adhesives
- Develop a plan for seasonal plantings
- Determine angles of cut for different shape planters

Develop 15

★ Relationships

ACTION STEPS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

Purpose

The following action steps for staff development are suggested in order to develop character-centered teaching and incorporate the guiding principles into the school culture. Before initiating any of these activities, discuss the value of character education and the guiding principles. Share examples of what the guiding principles might look like in practice during the everyday activities of the school.

Focus your discussion on the following guiding principles, taken from Character-Centered Teaching, the International Center for Leadership in Education's character education approach:

adaptability
compassion
contemplation
courage
honesty
initiative
loyalty
optimism
perseverance
respect
responsibility
trustworthiness

Procedure

Time
varies

1. Share information and reflect on the character education initiative the school is implementing at school meetings.
2. Develop brief monthly character education seminars to develop a greater understanding of guiding principles, means for integrating them into the curriculum, and ways to promote them naturally in everyday interactions with students.
3. Provide time for teachers to share successful strategies and practices for character education with colleagues.

4. Develop an action plan for the year to provide a variety of strategies for staff development in character education. Be sure to include the entire staff.
5. Create a guiding-principle-of-the-month program, with one guiding principle emphasized each month by the entire school community.
 - a. Use a morning announcement format, with closed circuit television, a public address system, or simple paper announcements.
 - b. Emphasize how the guiding principle applies in a different role each week (individual, student, friend, family member, worker, community member).
6. Encourage faculty to post the guiding principles in their classrooms and make the guiding principles part of the language of daily interactions.
7. Devote a section of the school newspaper to guiding principles, for example, “The Character Corner.”
 - a. Have students write articles about individuals who display solid character.
 - b. Ask faculty to write articles highlighting how character relates to school life and academics.

Support 1

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

Purpose

ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is a process in which teachers examine their own practice systematically. It is a process or approach for solving problems. By carefully using research techniques, the teacher collects data and makes objective observations on the implementation of a particular strategy to determine if it is working. Action is a good term to describe this process because these are active steps that a teacher takes to raise student achievement. Action researchers seek systematic answers to education problems or issues.

Action research is a powerful improvement technique, since teachers work best on problems they have identified for themselves. Teachers become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently.

For example, a teacher might use action research to evaluate two algebra classes. The students in one class had instruction supplemented with computer-based instruction. The other class did not. Were there differences in achievement or in areas of strengths and weaknesses? Another example would be to measure whether students working in groups who have greater choice in research topics prepare better reports than groups with assigned topics.

This type of research leads to the continuous improvement of instruction. Teachers look for innovations they can introduce and systematically collect data to determine whether one technique works better than another. Teachers should continually pose questions about their innovations and apply action research techniques to reflect on which innovations led to greater improvement.

Collaborative action research involves teams of teachers inquiring into teaching responsibilities that they share. Often this might involve use of outside experts, such as university professors. Action research can also be schoolwide; the entire staff undertakes a problem and collects data for a course of action.

Action research begins with a question—with wanting to know whether a strategy does or does not improve learning. By continually asking questions about their own instruction and collecting data, teachers can become researchers.

It is important that the educational practice being studied is one to which the participants are committed. This is often difficult to accomplish, which is why action research is usually done by individual teachers. If teams or the entire staff engages in a research question, it should be a question that directly affects all of them.

Once the question is identified, decide how to collect data. Student test scores are an important source, but often there are not test scores to measure the question being addressed. In this case, other forms of data will work fine. Written materials such as interviews, observations, logs, journals, and other reports all provide data that can be used for comparison and reflection. Data might also be in visual form, such as a videotape. When collecting data through interviews or observations, try to have a specific set of questions to guide the data collection. By carefully thinking through the questions in advance, the information collected will be more precise.

Action research is more extensive than teachers simply thinking about their teaching and how it can be improved. Action research is systematic and involves collecting evidence on which to base rigorous reflection. It is not just problem solving. Action research involves questioning. It does not start from a problem but is undertaken by a desire to improve and understand teaching and learning.

Action research is the examination of one's own work to help that person improve his or her practice. It treats people as autonomous, responsible agents who participate actively in making their own histories by knowing what they are doing.

Benefits of Action Research

- increased sharing and collaboration across departments, disciplines, and grade levels
- increased dialogue about instructional issues and student learning
- enhanced communication among teachers and students
- improved student performance
- revision of practice based on new knowledge about teaching and learning
- increased teacher motivation
- teacher designed and initiated staff development
- development of priorities for schoolwide planning and assessment efforts
- contributions to the profession's body of knowledge about teaching and learning.

Stages in Action Research

1. Posing research questions around student learning
2. Collecting research data systemically
3. Taking action to make changes based upon data
4. Evaluating results by collecting more data

Procedure

Time
varies with type
of research

Steps in Action Research: A Guide for Classroom Teachers

1. Develop research questions based on your own curiosity about teaching and learning in your classroom.
2. Collect data from and with your students systematically.
3. Share and discuss your data and research methodology with fellow teacher researchers.
4. Analyze and interpret your data with the support of your colleagues.
5. Write about your research.

Source: Fairfax County
Public Schools, Office
of Research and Policy
Analysis

6. Share your findings with students, colleagues, and members of the education community.
7. Discuss with colleagues the relationships between practice, theory, and research.
8. Assume responsibility for your own professional growth.

Action research is about more than hypothesis testing or about using data to come to conclusions. It is concerned with changing situations, not just interpreting them. A researcher makes passive observations. The teacher as researcher may make observations but is also interested in making changes based on those observations. Action research involves changing both the researcher and the situation in which he or she works.

Support 2

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

RSVP

Purpose

This activity is designed to elicit multiple solutions to various problems in a group with expertise. This activity generates hundreds of ideas in a few minutes.

Preparation

Materials

- Standard #10 business envelopes (one per participant)
- 3 x 5 scratch pads or 3 x 5 index cards (10-15 per participant)

Procedure

Time

30 minutes

1. Explain that this activity will allow each participant the opportunity to pose a problem and get ideas for solutions to this problem.
2. Divide participants into groups of three or four.
3. Pass out a blank envelope and five index cards to each person.
4. Ask each person to make a personal mark on the back of the envelope (e.g., a letter or squiggle) for later identification.
5. Say: "On the front of the envelope, write a question or pose a problem for which you want an answer or solution."
6. Collect the envelopes, shuffle, and redistribute a new envelope to each person.
7. Say: "Read the question or problem on the front of the envelope, and write an answer or solution on an index card. Insert the card in the envelope." Allow them 60 to 90 seconds, in order to keep the process moving.

8. Instruct participants to pass envelopes (with their card inside) to the person to their right and, without looking at the card in the new envelope, repeat Step 7.
9. Continue the process for about 10 turns.
10. Instruct participants to place the envelopes face down in the center of the table and retrieve their own.
11. Ask them to take turns sharing favorite responses, adding new thoughts, and posing additional questions.

Support 3

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

PEER TEACHING OBSERVATION

Purpose

Consult Support 4 - Peer Review of Lessons for additional information on peer observations.

No matter what the format of a peer review, the objective is always the same — to help teachers improve instruction. For every type of review, it is important to have a clearly defined process that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the reviewer(s) and the teacher whose practice/work is being reviewed. Equally important is a set of criteria for the review. This guides the teacher's work and provides the reviewer with a focus for commenting on that work.

Procedure

Peer observations in education involve using one's peers to examine aspects of teaching and learning. It is an opportunity for staff to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and to work together for improvement. The overall goal is to establish a culture of self-study that stimulates continuous inquiry, reflection, information sharing, and improvement. Through a peer observation process, teachers can periodically examine and reflect on where they stand in relation to their goals for improving teaching and learning.

Time
2 hours

Education groups universally endorse the value of peer observations. However, it is difficult to find the time to do it. To make the peer observation truly valuable, the full process of conferencing is essential.

- discussions about teaching prior to delivery of instruction
- classroom observations
- discussions about teaching after delivery of instruction

Having a peer in the classroom to judge performance can initially be threatening to many teachers. Both the teacher being observed and the reviewer will be more comfortable if there is a well-defined focus. Therefore, it is best to perform peer observations around a specific purpose rather than judging overall instruction. For example, the observation might focus on the effective use of group learning or the integration of technology.

A Peer Teaching Observation Form is provided.

Teaching Behaviors Appropriate for Peer Teaching Observation

Here are some specific purposes that might be the focus of data gathering during a peer observation. Choose no more than two for each observation.

- examples of real-world applications
- patterns of calling on students
- balance of negative and positive feedback
- clarity of directions
- using open-ended questions
- body language that supports building learning relationships
- wait time for student response to teacher questions
- balance of teacher and student talk
- correlation of objectives and activities
- effective use of cooperative learning groups
- strategies for helping individual students
- recognizing different learning styles
- strategies for encouraging students who choose not to participate
- reducing interruptions
- “kid watching” to give feedback on certain students’ behavior
- collecting data for action research projects
- coaching skills

Support 4

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

PEER REVIEW OF LESSONS

Purpose

The objective of peers reviewing lessons is to help teachers improve instruction. This activity offers a clearly defined process that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the reviewers and the teacher whose practice/work is being reviewed. Criteria for the review are included as well.

Preparation

Prior to the observation:

- Give teachers several weeks advance notice of the opportunity to participate in the review. Provide them with a copy of the Peer Review Lesson Submission Form to fill out, as well as the Criteria for Lesson Review.
- Identify 6 to 8 reviewers who teach the same grade or subject as the teacher whose work will be reviewed.

For the day of the review:

- Make copies of the Criteria for Lesson Review and the completed Peer Review Lesson Submission Form from the teacher (one of each per reviewer).

Procedure

Time
60 minutes
or more

Review of Lesson Presentation

1. **Introduction.** The facilitator gives an overview of the format, asks for a recorder, and distributes the Criteria for Lesson Review to each reviewer. (5 minutes)
2. **Teacher Presentation.** The teacher outlines the learning experience, providing information on the context in which the work was done, targeted learning standard(s), and performance indicators. The teacher may suggest a focus question for the review. (10 minutes)
3. **Quiet Time.** All reviewers read the Peer Review Lesson Submission Form, examine all corresponding materials, and take notes on the Criteria for Lesson Review. (10 minutes)

4. **Reviewers' Feedback.** Reviewers provide warm feedback (supportive and empathetic responses that emphasize the promise of the learning experience) and cool feedback (critical and comparative responses that emphasize the ways in which the learning experience could be enriched). The teacher listens and takes notes. (10 minutes)
5. **Teacher Response.** The teacher responds to the peer reviewers' comments. Reviewers become the active listeners. (10 minutes)
6. **Full Group Conversation.** Both teacher and reviewers engage in open conversation about the learning experience. (10 minutes)
7. **Summary.** The recorder summarizes the session, reviews references made to the criteria, and offers a general overall impression. (5 minutes)
8. **Consultation.** The facilitator, recorder, and teacher confer and complete a written report so that the teacher has immediate feedback on the learning experiences.

Peer Review Lesson Submission Form

Please write up the lesson to be reviewed, addressing each of the categories.

Lesson Title _____ **Your Name** _____

Learning Context

What is the purpose, objective, or focus of the learning experience, including the learning standard(s) and the specific performance indicators being assessed? Where does this experience fit in the school or course curriculum? What do students need to know and/or be able to do to succeed with this learning experience?

Outline and Timetable

Outline the major aspects of the lesson and state the amount of time needed to prepare and implement (length of class period(s) and number of days to complete the lesson).

Procedure

In narrative form, describe your actions and the actions of students. Include how the learning experience supports student progress toward attainment of the learning standards, reflects current scholarship in your field and “best” classroom practice, and incorporates technology (if applicable).

Reflection

Why was this lesson developed? What did you learn from implementing it? Was it effective?

Resources

List unique resources (human or material) needed to complete this experience successfully, both for the student and for you.

Instructional/Environmental Modification

Describe the procedures used to accommodate the range of abilities in the classroom, including students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, or bilingual students.

Student Work

What products will students produce? Attach examples or photographs of student work reflecting different levels of student performance.

Assessment Plan

Describe the manner in which student work will be evaluated and the ways students will reflect on their work. Submit any assessment tools used to document student progress (e.g., scoring guides, rating scales, checklists).

Criteria for Lesson Review

I. RELATION TO LEARNING STANDARDS

This learning experience clearly links to performance indicators/topics/benchmarks for the specified learning standard(s). It requires students to understand and use ideas, perspectives, tools, and/or methods that are central to the learning standards.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

II. RIGOROUS

The learning experience is appropriately challenging in academic rigor, allowing students to think independently and extend their knowledge.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

III. REAL-WORLD RELEVANCY

The learning experience relates to a problem or situation connected to the world beyond school and allows students to focus on a real audience for a real purpose.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

IV. STUDENT WORK

The student work is clearly identified, it relates to the learning standards, examples are presented, and it is clear how the work will be assessed.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

V. ENGAGEMENT

The learning experience allows students to become actively engaged in tasks that lead directly toward the learning objectives.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

VI. ASSESSMENT PLAN

The learning experience incorporates elements of good assessment: clear criteria to guide work, feedback on work in progress, and reflection on work completed.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

VII. ADAPTABILITY

The learning experience is adaptable to other classrooms and other students. It does not require a narrow student population, undue expenses, or extraordinary circumstances.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

VIII. TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

The technology, if used, assists students in achieving the learning standard addressed in the assessment plan.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

IX. PRESENTATION

The learning experience is clearly written and fully developed so that other teachers have a real understanding of what is happening in the classroom and can relate to it.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

Support 5

★ Rigor/Relevance

★ Relationships

CONSIDER INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Purpose

The use of instructional coaching as an effective on-site, job-embedded professional development practice is based on current research and effective instructional practice. It creates a collaborative professional learning community and provides sustained support for individual teachers and school improvement efforts. An instructional coach teaches teachers about strategies and classroom routines that have been validated through research. The coach assists the teacher in a specific content area while integrating the goals of the school and district, focusing on and improving instructional practice, and improving student achievement. Teachers, students, instructional leadership, and district and building leadership can all benefit from an instructional coaching program.

Described following are two activities that will help your school assess whether or not instructional coaching would be appropriate and to raise awareness about this professional development strategy.

Procedure

Activity A

To determine whether or not instructional coaching would be appropriate for your school community, hold focus groups to determine interest, readiness, design, and support.

Focus groups may consist of teachers, building and district administrators, and board members. Everyone should be encouraged to participate openly in discussion. In some cases, an outside facilitator and recorder should be considered to ensure full participation in the discussion. Potential questions to consider are:

1. Why consider coaching?
2. Are district/building goals tied to coaching outcomes?
3. Has the school developed content-focused guidelines?
4. Is there a belief in the value of embedded, on-site professional development?
5. Is there time allotted for teachers to meet and discuss their practice?
6. Will the coaching program respond to needs suggested by data analysis?

Time
varies

7. Will coaching reach all teachers as a means of sustaining changes and growth in instructional practice?
8. How is differentiation of instruction possible under a coaching system that centers on universal best practices?
9. How important is it to share generic teaching practices versus content-based teaching ideas within each subject?
10. Is there adequate school and central office support?
11. Where will the coaches come from? What criteria will be used to select coaches? Will there be any monetary compensation for coaches?
12. What indicators will be used to measure the success of the coaching program? The effectiveness of the coaches?

Activity B

This activity will help to raise awareness about instructional coaching, its value, and the role and responsibilities of a coach.

1. Divide staff into small groups.
2. Ask each group to brainstorm the characteristics of an athletic coach and the value that the coach brings to individual team players, the team as a whole, and the organization the team represents. Encourage participants to refer to examples from their own lives or that of their children and/or students who have been influenced by a coach.
3. Invite a respected coach to address the group and share his or her perceptions of his or her role, responsibilities, and contributions.
4. Invite a successful student athlete to address the group and share how a coach influenced him or her. What was learned from the coach? What value was the coach to the individual player?
5. As a large group, compare the findings from the group discussion and the presentations by the coach and athlete with the function of an instructional coach. What might be similar? What might be different? Is there a parallel in value to individuals and the organization?

Support 6

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Purpose

Instructional coaching provides support to improve teaching practice and increase student achievement. A well designed coaching system contains various components. Effective coaching programs require planning and a great deal of support, follow-through, and evaluation to modify when needed.

Procedure

Use the following questions to determine the effectiveness of your coaching program.

How Effective Is Your Instructional Coaching Program?

As you begin to design and implement your coaching program, reflect on these questions:

1. Why are you considering a coaching program?
2. What discipline areas will be coached?
3. Who will need to understand the concept of coaching? How will you engage these individuals in “buying” the concept?
4. How will coaching address collaboration and collective professional development capacity in your school?
5. Who is committed to the initiative and willing to support it?
6. Have you defined the role of the coaches? A selection process? How will you continue to support the learning needs of your coaches?
7. How will coaches be evaluated? By whom?
8. What are the district expectations for the coaching program?
9. Is there central office support for the program?
10. What will be the data indicators of success for this program?
11. What specific benchmarks will guide the coaches’ work throughout the school year?
12. Is instructional coaching an appropriate strategy to accomplish teaching and learning improvement goals in your school? Why or why not?

Time
varies

Support 7

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

CHECKING FOR RIGOR AND RELEVANCE

Purpose

Analyzing the levels of rigor and relevance in a school provides a springboard to raise the levels of expectations and instruction. Reflecting on the teaching design, the classroom, the teacher, and the students in relation to rigor and relevance will provide valuable data on the need to encourage higher levels of learning and validate the presence of rigor and relevance in your school.

Preparation

Make copies of the Rigorous and Relevant Teaching and Learning Checklist.

Procedure

Complete the following Rigorous and Relevant Teaching and Learning Checklist.

Time
60 minutes

Rigorous and Relevant Teaching and Learning Checklist

The teaching design...

YES	NO	
☐	☐	is based on data about students and curriculum.
☐	☐	is clearly linked to priority state standards.
☐	☐	has an expectation for levels of rigor and relevance.
☐	☐	uses appropriate assessments aligned with the rigor and relevance of expectations.
☐	☐	is clearly guided by big ideas and essential questions.
☐	☐	uses strategies that are aligned with the rigor and relevance of expectations.
☐	☐	includes the knowledge and skills necessary for expected student performance.
☐	☐	uses authentic performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate their understanding and apply knowledge and skills.
☐	☐	uses clear evaluation criteria and performance standards evaluations of student products and performances.
☐	☐	uses a variety of resources - the textbook is only one resource among many.

The classroom...

YES	NO	
☐	☐	has student work and essential questions as central to classroom activities.
☐	☐	has high expectations and incentives for all students to achieve the expected performance.
☐	☐	has a culture that treats students and their ideas with dignity and respect.
☐	☐	displays evaluation criteria or scoring guides.
☐	☐	has samples of high-quality student work on display.

The teacher...

YES	NO	
☐	☐	informs students of the expected performance, essential questions, performance requirements, and assessment criteria at the beginning of the lesson or unit.
☐	☐	engages students' interest when introducing a lesson.
☐	☐	uses a variety of strategies that match the expected level of rigor and relevance and learning styles of students.
☐	☐	facilitates students' active construction of meaning (rather than simply telling).
☐	☐	uses questioning, coaching, and feedback effectively to stimulate student reflection.
☐	☐	facilitates student acquisition of basic knowledge and skills necessary for student performance.
☐	☐	differentiates instruction to meet individual student needs.
☐	☐	adjusts instruction according to reflection and feedback from students.
☐	☐	uses information from ongoing assessments to check for student learning and misconceptions along the way.
☐	☐	uses a variety of resources to promote understanding.

The students...

YES	NO	
☐	☐	can describe the goals (student performance) of the lesson or unit.
☐	☐	can explain what they are doing and why (i.e., how today's work relates to the larger unit or course goals).
☐	☐	are engaged throughout the lesson or unit.
☐	☐	can describe the criteria by which their work will be evaluated.
☐	☐	are engaged in activities that help them to apply what they have learned.
☐	☐	demonstrate that they are learning the background knowledge and skills that support their performance and essential questions.
☐	☐	have opportunities to generate relevant questions.
☐	☐	are able to explain and justify their work and their answers.
☐	☐	use the criteria or scoring guides to revise their work.

Support 8

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

PLUS DELTA REFLECTION

Purpose

It is important to receive feedback from participants on any workshop or team meeting activity. This is a simple form and process which allows open-ended responses from participants to suggest the most valuable portions of an activity or workshop, as well as what should be changed. It keeps feedback positive to avoid negative criticism. This activity helps to transfer any negative perceptions into positive suggestions of what could be improved. This feedback is useful for planning future activities and also provides an honest response for leaders in assessing the effectiveness of a particular activity.

Preparation

Make a copy of the Plus/Delta Feedback Form for each participant.

Procedure

Time

5-10 minutes at
end of workshop/
activity

1. Explain the value of obtaining feedback on the workshop or activity.
2. Ask each participant to complete the Plus/Delta Feedback Form. Explain that the plus column is used to identify the most valuable features of the workshop or activity. The delta column is a place to write suggestions on what could be improved with that workshop or activity.
3. Collect the completed forms.
4. After summarizing all of the changes, distribute the results of the feedback to the entire group of participants.

Plus/Delta Feedback Form

+

Δ

Support 9

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Purpose

Supervision of learning is about follow-up and support. An instructional leader needs to not only set the vision and develop staff around teaching priorities, but he or she also needs to follow up. This supervision of learning takes many forms—formal teacher observations, classroom walk-throughs, conversations with students, and individual conversations with teachers. In any of these supervisory situations, good questions are essential.

Procedure

As you engage in conversations, both formal and informal, prepare yourself with a great set of questions to learn about what is happening in teaching and learning in each classroom and also to encourage teacher reflection. Asking the Right Questions to Improve Learning, which follows, is a great place to begin.

Asking the Right Questions to Improve Learning

Change in teaching practice will not come from policy or mandate, but from thoughtful questions and reflection.

Principals who perceive themselves as instructional leaders seem to know all the right things to do. They venture out of their offices to interact with staff, students, and parents; they actively observe teaching; they listen to staff and parent feedback; and they “get in touch” with the needs of students. All of these “doing” activities make principals more knowledgeable about the teaching and learning that is taking place in their schools. But does all this knowledge actually promote change? The answer depends on the communication skills of the leader.

The changes needed to improve learning must ultimately come from teachers. If principals are to use their extensive knowledge to influence the quality of learning, they must learn to communicate in ways that influence teaching and learning. Often this means asking the right questions.

Questions are the hidden key to good communication. Questions engage people in active conversations, they stimulate thought, and they control the direction of communication. Good questioning techniques are vital to a principal’s efforts to effectively communicate what they know about teaching and learning in their school. This is particularly so in the case of classroom observations, one of the most common responsibilities of instructional leaders.

Principals frequently communicate what they have learned from classroom observations through traditional tools such as the policy memo, faculty “sermon,” or an individual coaching session. Like most educators, principals typically apply their own teaching experiences to their evaluation of classroom practices, and in so doing, they often attempt to influence others’ ideas about the right way to teach. Sometimes this works. Often it fails. It fails because of limited, misinterpreted observations or unconvincing arguments made to an unwilling listener. But it is precisely this ability to convince others that leads to changes in instruction, thus improving learning.

Effective instructional leaders can encourage teachers or others to change practice through self-reflection. Good communication skills are instrumental in guiding and stimulating such reflection. A well-timed, thoughtful question can be the most effective way to stimulate a person’s thinking about his or her own practices. The principal who is able to ask the right questions at the right times is well on the way to being not only an active observer, but

also one who is able to thoughtfully influence change without resorting to mandates or forced practice. Change that is imposed is often opposed, but change that is nurtured is frequently embraced.

Types of Questions

In order to use the appropriate questions at the right times, it is important to understand the different types of questions and the kinds of information that they elicit. Questions can be grouped into two major types:

1. **Close-ended** questions are requests for specific information, with a narrow range of response. These include such questions as “Is this the right road to Dover?” and “What is the square of 8?” Close-ended questions act as a precise probe for particular information and a prompt response.
2. **Open-ended** questions serve as stimulants for broad response, encompassing a wide range of information. Often there are multiple appropriate responses to such a question, or there may be no obvious “answer” at all. Examples of open-ended questions are “What was the intended purpose of that lesson?” and “Why are visual aids important to learning?” This type of question requires deeper thought and reflection in its response.

In the context of evaluating teaching and learning practices, it is open-ended questions that possess the most potential for rich reflection. By using such questions, the educational leader can stimulate thoughtful conversations about current and innovative practices and possibly influence change.

Effective Use of Open-Ended Questions

There are several types of open-ended questions that principals can use to stimulate teacher reflection. It is important when attempting to facilitate thoughtful reflection to be sure that the questions cannot be answered with a one-word answer or simple response. Ambiguity is fine, but the questions

should be precise enough to be understandable and should relate clearly to teaching and learning.

Following are five general types of open-ended questions which can be used as guidelines when thinking of good questions to enhance reflection.

Explanation Questions: How do you...?

Explanation questions encourage teachers to think about their teaching, while compelling them to analyze the learning process and the ways in which their students learn. By describing the learning process in their own terms, teachers must confront their own beliefs about the practice of teaching and the essence of learning.

Examples of Explanation Questions:

- How do you develop the assessments you use in your classroom?
- How do you get all students to participate?
- How do you explain the purpose of this lesson?
- How do you get students to ask more questions?
- How do you help students to develop writing and speaking skills?

Discovery Questions: What is...?

Discovery questions require teachers to devise solutions and examine learning from different perspectives. These questions should present interesting problems that do not have simple or obvious explanations. At the same time, they should challenge teachers to make connections with previous or new information.

Examples of Discovery Questions:

- What is the connection between this lesson and the State standards?
- What is an aspect of your students' work that you are most proud of?
- What is your most difficult problem in teaching?

- What is something that other staff or I might help you with?
- What is the most difficult part of your curriculum to assess?

Causation Questions: Why...?

Causation questions invite teachers to think about the possible causes of certain occurrences and encourage them to think about the practices that contribute to high achievement. This type of question is ideal for making direct connections between teacher behavior and student learning, as well as for reinforcing good practices and identifying problems.

Examples of Causation Questions:

- Why do your students maintain a high interest level in your classroom?
- Why do your students work well by themselves?
- Why do your students work well in groups?
- Why do students show pride in their work?
- Why do you think some students are not paying attention?

Hypothetical Questions: What if...?

Hypothetical questions confront teachers with new situations and require them to look at instruction in different ways. In order to answer such a question, the teacher is obligated to think beyond the components of a specific lesson or the events of a particular class and to draw upon and make connections to other experiences.

Examples of Hypothetical Questions:

- What if a student arrives late to class?
- What if the demonstration did not work as you planned?
- What if you reversed the numbers in this math equation?
- What if you gave each student a different project?
- What if you had a longer instructional period?

Creative Questions: How would you...?

Creative questions challenge teachers to devise new instructional strategies. Drawing from their past experiences, teachers apply what they know about a given problem to design a more effective or appropriate instructional technique.

Examples of Creative Questions:

- How would you assess students in a more authentic manner?
- How would you challenge students who are ready for more complex material?
- How would you give individual attention to students who need more help?
- How would you build connections to language arts skills into your lessons?
- How would you add more relevancy and real world application to your instruction?

Tips and Techniques

Effective questioning depends not only upon the questions themselves, but also on the ways in which the questioner is able to set the tone in order to encourage thoughtful response. There are a few simple guidelines that will help questioners foster real reflection.

Using Wait Time

Wait time refers to the length of time between a question and the time it takes someone to respond. Deliberately waiting for five to ten seconds after a question is asked allows for deeper thought on the question. Often the questioner will wait only a brief moment before prompting a response or, worse, moving on to follow-up questions. This simultaneously puts pressure on a person to respond quickly, while relieving him or her of the responsibility of giving a thoughtful answer. Practice being more deliberate and consciously waiting once you have delivered a provoking, open-ended question intended to stimulate reflection.

Listening

Questioning is only one part of the communication process. For this to be an effective process, it is crucial that communication flows in both directions. Show respect and interest by maintaining eye contact, refraining from interrupting, and paraphrasing the response to ensure that you have understood what was being said. If you become frustrated by a response which seems long or unfocused, do not interrupt the person, but before asking the next question, encourage him to be more concise in his or her response, and to think through his or her response more thoroughly before answering.

Framing the Question

A good question should generally be brief and to the point. This makes it clear what kind of information the questioner is soliciting. However, it is often beneficial to frame a question with one or two brief statements on the topic, contributing to a more natural conversation. A questioning session which feels like an inquisition will make a person nervous and defensive, rather than thoughtful and open. By making a couple of positive statements before posing the question, the questioner is able to create real dialogue without the sense of an inquest. For example, you might preface a question on the objectives of a particular lesson by stating a few of the things you observed students doing in the classroom. While it is a good idea to prepare for a reflective session by listing questions in advance, do not stick rigidly to a script. Remember to maintain a natural conversation in which you pose questions that stimulate thought and reflection.

Monitoring the Difficulty of Questions

It is important to think about the level of difficulty in the questions being asked. Questions which are either too simple or too complex can destroy the opportunity for reflection. Try to know as much as possible about the person you are interviewing, and be conscientious in monitoring body language to be sure you are finding the appropriate level of difficulty.

Suggested Questions

The following questions can be useful in making the most of classroom observations. Principals may also want to encourage teachers, in brief interviews, to use these questions to reflect upon the learning process and their own practice.

- How do you get students more engaged, more thoughtful, and more expressive?
- What is it that you want students to know and be able to do?
- What is the work that students are expected to do?
- What is the evidence you rely on to indicate the degree of student engagement and understanding?
- Why are students meeting (or not meeting) your expectations for achievement?
- How would you use more time or resources to improve learning?

Effective Observation

Observation should not be limited to the classroom—effective observation involves every member of the school community in every school setting. There are a number of ways in which a principal can expand the range of observations taking place.

- *Follow a Student.* Principals can learn a lot by following one student for an entire day, followed by an interview about what happened during that day. In addition to observing the student, the principal will have the opportunity to observe six or seven teachers.
- *Walk Around.* The concept of being involved in the life of the school is good at any time. Visit a few classrooms during the day, and do not forget art, technology, physical education, library, and family and consumer science classes.
- *Observe Other Events.* There are many other ways and times to make observation reports. Principals may want to write about the special

efforts being made during a play rehearsal, band concert, math convention, career day, or parent night. Use any meaningful situation to observe, record, reinforce, and give feedback.

In post-observation conversations with teachers, it is vital that the atmosphere remain positive. The lines of communication should always be kept open. Principals should encourage teachers to invite them into the classroom for interesting lessons or special events. When they receive such invitations, principals need to make it a point to be there.

Observation can be one of the more pleasant aspects of the principal's role. It allows him or her to spend more time with students—a priority in any principals' work—and to have positive, constructive contact with teachers. Regular observation can also stimulate improved classroom activity and instruction.

Where to Begin

Effective use of thought-provoking, open-ended questions does not need to be a dramatic redesign of an instructional leader's observation and conversation techniques. Begin simply. The next time you sit down for a conversation with a teacher, do the following. On your notepad, write the words "Student Work" to remind you that the conversation should be less about what the adults in your school are or are not doing, but how teachers, staff, and administration can work together to create the ideal conditions necessary for students to learn and achieve. Next, write the five open-ended question stems in the left margin of your notepad: "How do you...?" "What is...?" "Why...?" "What if...?" "How would you...?" Use these stems to help you form provocative questions about teaching and learning, and then let the conversation evolve naturally.

Good Reflective Questions

What do you want students to learn?

What are the levels of rigor and relevance?

How could you make this more rigorous?

How could you make this more relevant?

How do you know students are learning?

Are you meeting the needs of all students?

What data are you using to determine you are meeting the standards?

What can I do as instructional leader to support your efforts?

What was the most successful part of the learning experience and why?

If you teach this lesson again, how would you change it?

How do you know learning has occurred?

What strategies do you use to address individual learning styles?

Support 10

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

RECOGNIZING GOOD CHARACTER

Purpose

Recognizing behavior characterized by good character validates the action and encourages its practice. When guiding principles are practiced by students, feedback and recognition are important so that students will recognize these principles in practice. Feedback will enrich their self-esteem. Everyone likes being recognized for effective work, activities, and thoughts. Public valuing of the guiding principles sends a message to everyone that these are significant and worthy of practice.

Procedure

On occasions when a student shows good character and demonstrates one or more of the guiding principles, have teachers complete the recognition slip “You Were Caught Showing Your Good Character.” A template for this form is found on the following page.

Time

15 minutes

You Were Caught Showing Your Good Character!

Student _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ Grade _____ Given by _____

Guiding Principle(s) Observed

- ☐ adaptability
- ☐ compassion
- ☐ contemplation
- ☐ courage
- ☐ honesty
- ☐ initiative
- ☐ loyalty
- ☐ optimism
- ☐ perseverance
- ☐ respect
- ☐ responsibility
- ☐ trustworthiness

How the Student Displayed Good Character:

Support 11

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

THE INTERVIEW

✓ Purpose

Going to the source and interviewing stakeholders is an excellent way to help a team focus and develop creative solutions. Using an interview to help charge the team or reinvent a solution is a great way to fine-tune the work and keep a strong focus on the desired results. Reflective learning is a key to adult processing; adults reflect better when given the opportunity to ask questions and analyze a topic of data deeply. This process supports social learning and gives adults access to new ideas or an opportunity to see ideas from the viewpoints of others.

This procedure works best when a team is stuck or has a long “to do” list or when a team needs a creative boost to solve a problem. It can also be used to re-orient the group to the purpose of the work at hand or as a celebration of success.

✓ Preparation

Depending on the size of the venue, microphones may be necessary — one for interviewee and one to pass around to team members. For small groups, only seating furnishings are needed.

Create a list of questions that will be relevant for the interview. Choose a facilitator. Identify the individuals you want to invite to the interview.

✓ Procedure

Time
15-25 minutes

1. Identify a major roadblock or a fork in the road with your plan for improvement.
2. Invite one to three stakeholders to the interview: those who will benefit from, receive, or need to contribute to the work.
3. Orient the interviewee(s) to the work being done ahead of the interview. Also give them a few starting points or questions to answer.
4. Have the facilitator start the interview with a prompt from the questions or points given to the interviewee ahead of time and allow time for the interviewee(s) to respond. (5 to 10 minutes)

5. Invite the rest of the team members to ask the interviewee follow-up questions. (10 to 15 minutes)
6. After the interviewee leaves, process what you have learned. Use any conversation starter that allows individual reflection first and then group processing. Decide how what you learned will influence the next steps of your work.

Examples and Uses

- A team manages to boost math scores. Invite three students who were successful to participate. The students may be at various performance levels; however, all should have shown growth. Ask students what strategies had the greatest payoff and what they are the most proud of with their math gains. The interview is a great way to celebrate and move the team to next steps in the work.
- A high school team is restructuring the 9th grade year. Several students are interviewed—some who dropped out, some who went through tough times but stayed in school, and some who met with success. This interview will help the team know where to start and how to prioritize steps that help students succeed when they reach a fork in the road.
- An elementary team is trying to increase parent involvement. Several parents are brought in or home visits are conducted using the same questions. This will help the team choose the best solutions that make parents feel welcome and involved.
- Interview new teachers at the end of the year to determine what supports worked and what was lacking. This will help a district or school structure new teacher support for maximum success or even differentiate the support by need or experience. This may also help a team plan for second and third year follow-up support.

Sample Interview Questions

Students

1. What were your biggest successes, and what were your challenges?
2. What could we do differently to help you be more successful?
3. When you reached the point where you had to change your behaviors and experiences, what happened at school or home that helped you the most?
4. What are your favorite strategies that work for you in _____ (list content area or skill)?
5. What do you want us to know as we plan for _____ (list initiative)?
6. What could we do differently to support our students?
7. What really helped you learn _____ (English, math, etc.)?

Parents

1. How could we make our school and staff more welcoming?
2. What do you need to know about our students to help you help your child?
3. How can we support you and your family?
4. What would make your experience with our school better or more positive?
5. What is something we could have done differently for you or your student? Why? What should we have done?
6. How is our communication with you and your family? What method works best for you (notes, e-mail, Web site, telephone, etc.)?
7. What aspects of our school are the most confusing? What processes are the clearest?

Other Staff Members

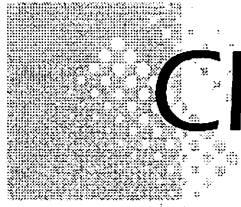
1. What support do you need with _____ (list initiative)?
2. What is the greatest need you have? What kind of support do you suggest?
3. Which populations of students are the most challenging? Why? What would help you better meet the needs of these students?
4. How difficult is it to communicate with the parents of your students? What would help you?
5. Do you know how decisions get made at this school/district? Do you participate? What would make this process work better?
6. What kind of training format works best for you (workshop, coaching, video, book studies, student work analysis, lesson study, data review, cooperative planning, etc.)?
7. As an expert in your content area or grade level, what is the best advice you can give us for improving student achievement (meeting diverse student needs, choosing the strategies to teach new teachers, sharing the practices that have the highest payoff for students, etc.)?
8. What could we do to help you feel more involved as a valued member of our team, school, or district? Do you need to be better informed? More supported? Do you have access to the right resources to do your work?

Interview Follow-up Ideas

1. What surprised you? Tell a partner, and then share with the whole group.
2. What did you learn that should guide our work? List two examples.
3. Did anything you learn change your mind about our priorities, the direction we are heading, or the solutions we have chosen?
4. What else do you need to know to help move our work forward? Who else do we need to hear from?
5. What was the most powerful thing an interviewee said today? How will this influence your thinking and beliefs about our work?

Adapted from Kuzmich, Lin. (2005). Adult Learning Framework for Coaches, Mentors and Staff Leaders. Paper presented at NSDC, Philadelphia.





Chapter 8

School Success Stories

Introduction

Rigor, relevance, and relationships are not new to some schools. Many schools have made significant progress in creating academic environments that challenge students at high levels of rigor and relevance along with a climate of strong, positive, supportive relationships. Following are examples of a variety of schools that have achieved high levels of rigor, relevance, and relationships

Two elementary and two middle schools are described. The elementary schools are Walter Matthys Elementary School, South Houston, Texas, and A. B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School, Raleigh, North Carolina. The middle schools are Awtrey Middle School in Kennesaw, Georgia, and Will Rogers Middle School in Fair Oaks, California.

Six high schools are also described. Brockton High School is a comprehensive high school in a small school district. Kenwood Academy High School is an urban high school. A. J. Moore Academy is a magnet school that serves a very diverse and economically disadvantaged student body. Granger High School is an example of a small, rural school serving minorities. Kennesaw Mountain High School is a suburban high school, and Excelsior Education Center is a charter school.

Matthys Elementary School

South Houston,
Texas

Overview

Walter Matthys Elementary School, part of the 46,000-student Pasadena Independent School District, is located in urban South Houston, Texas. The student population is 92 percent Hispanic, 3 percent white, 3 percent African-American, and 1 percent Asian. Of the 936 students enrolled at Matthys, 82 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch, and 55 percent are English language learners.

The student body is comprised of a high-poverty, minority-majority, and ESL-heavy population. However, Matthys has received numerous awards including National Title I Distinguished School of Excellence (2002); TBEC/

Just4Kids Honor Roll School (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004); National Center for Educational Accountability, Academic Excellence Award in Math, Reading, and Writing (1999–2003); Exemplary rating by the state of Texas (1999–2003); Texas Monthly 5-Star School, Top 10 (2001); and U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence (1999).

The mission at Matthys is to take each student to the highest possible academic and social level, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty that has affected so many. Matthys strives to instill a passion for learning in all students by ensuring that every child experiences success. The school celebrates student achievement in many ways. Daily announcements recognize students' successes. Throughout the hallways, displays of student work are always prominent. Bulletin boards acknowledge student progress in memorizing math facts and achieving Accelerated Reader points. Students who have achieved excellence in writing are featured on the special writing wall.

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ The Pasadena Independent School District, of which Matthys is a part, has developed “Pasadena Plus,” a strong, vertically aligned curriculum. It encompasses pre-K through 12th grade and was written by teachers using Texas-mandated curriculum. It includes the objectives that are to be taught each week, a variety of materials and activities that can be used to teach these objectives, weekly spiraling assessments, and enrichment and acceleration resources. In addition, the district provides nine-week assessments for each grade and subject to evaluate student progress. This curriculum is revisited each summer by teachers and instructional specialists to further develop and analyze best practices across the district.
- ◆ Mathematics, science, reading, and writing curriculum teams meet monthly to evaluate progress and improve the curriculum. Members

from each grade level are represented in these teams, and they brainstorm curriculum challenges, develop shared vocabulary across the school, and assist in creating an awareness of each grade level's importance in the curriculum. After each meeting, they report discussions and decisions that were made to their grade-level teams.

- ◆ The “Challenge Program” is a program in which lower grade teachers adopt upper grade students who take part in high-stakes testing and are at risk of failing. The lower grade teachers learn the strategies needed for success and feel the stress of these tests. This also helps them realize the importance of student mastery on the objectives they are charged with teaching at their own grade levels.
- ◆ Core subjects are taught in Spanish from pre-K to 3rd grade. This develops strong academic abilities in students before their transition to English. Matthys believes that maintenance of two languages is the key to the future success of these students.
- ◆ Small group instruction in reading and mathematics allows teachers to constantly monitor students and know immediately who is learning and who needs additional time on an objective. While teachers are working in small groups, students rotate through seat work, collaborative group work, and computer stations where work is individualized for each student. Success Maker software in English and Spanish from Pearson Digital Learning keeps students working at their optimum level and provides student progress reports for each teacher.
- ◆ Monthly intervention meetings are held with individual teachers to discuss students that are continuing to struggle academically. This team includes the administrator in charge of that grade level, peer facilitator, intervention/dyslexia specialist, resource teacher, classroom teacher, nurse, counselor, and parent. The progress of each struggling child is discussed and then a plan of action is decided. Recommended

interventions might include classroom accommodations, behavior management plans, daily instruction from the intervention specialist or the peer facilitator, sessions with the counselor, after school tutoring, or, if necessary, testing for speech or the resource program. The results of these practices have resulted in focused, purposeful instruction and teams that truly build on each other's strengths.

- ◆ The administration works hard to include campus leaders in the improvement process. The principal meets with the chairs of the vertical curriculum teams (mathematics, science, reading, writing, technology, and bilingual) to “cast vision and direction.” These curriculum teams then meet to analyze the current plan and to propose changes. The chairs of each of these committees bring the revisions and suggestions to their grade levels and then to the Campus Improvement Team. Once staff comes to a consensus, these changes are written to become part of the plan and are immediately implemented. The instructional leaders of the campus, assistant principals, and principal are all involved throughout the process—in curriculum committees, at grade level meetings, and as members of the Campus Improvement Team. Improving the quality of instruction and creating an environment that celebrates achievement are emphasized in each of these meetings.
- ◆ Many of the staff members have gained leadership experience by helping host visits and presentations by campuses and organizations from throughout Texas. Additionally, a research group from the state of Washington visited Matthys for two years to examine the methodologies staff uses with second language learners. Both the University of Texas and Texas A&M have conducted research projects focusing on successful special education and bilingual educators. Matthys is featured on the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) Web site as a model for most of their featured standards for successful schools. As staff members have become

able to articulate best practices, their own commitment to these practices increases.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ First grade teachers keep the same set of students for 2nd grade, and 3rd grade teachers keep the same set of students for 4th grade. Looping strengthens the rapport the teacher develops with both the students and parents. Because of the familiarity teachers acquire with their students, a higher level of academic growth occurs in the second year. Looping also assists with the transition from Spanish to English and decreases retention.
- ◆ Common grade level planning time allows teachers to work as teams on analyzing data, planning lessons, brainstorming interventions, and building camaraderie. Administrators meet with teams weekly during this planning time.
- ◆ There are partnerships with community members and parents to assist with student achievement. For example, a church across the street holds banquets at the school, and the community center has provided gifts for students at Christmas. The church and the community center provide mentors for struggling students.
- ◆ The Matthys Helping One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) program allows community members and parents to assist students academically. Partners in this program include the Houston Aeros (the local professional hockey team) and the South Houston Chamber of Commerce.
- ◆ There are 10 parents or community members who volunteer full-time at the school. Two of these volunteers have received recognition for their work. The state of Texas honored one of the volunteers as one of 15 Heroes for Children. Another volunteer received a \$500

award from the Houston Area Accountants Organization as Volunteer of the Year.

- ♦ Matthys has a unique partnership with the Memorial Health Care System through a private grant, the Wellness Achieved through Education (WAVE) Clinic. The WAVE Clinic provides a nurse practitioner, nurse, social worker, pharmacy, and dental van, all housed at the school. All students receive free immunizations, and students who do not have health insurance receive free health care, including yearly checkups, pharmaceuticals, and dental care. This health care partnership has been used as a model throughout the community.

Overview

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS), the second largest in North Carolina, has 134 schools with a total enrollment of 114,092 students. A. B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School, an urban school in the capital city of Raleigh, North Carolina, is tucked into a diverse neighborhood between North Carolina State University and Research Triangle Park. The past six years have brought tremendous change. Student enrollment has increased by 24 percent and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch has increased from 22 percent to 40 percent. Equally dramatic has been the increase in the English as a Second Language (ESL) population, which has grown by 38 percent.

There are 796 students from 58 countries, speaking 28 different languages at Combs. This school is one of the few public schools offering instruction for the deaf and hard of hearing (DHH), and has the largest elementary international population in the district. The diverse community gives the school a wonderful forum within which to learn about the greater world beyond the school doors.

A. B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School

Raleigh,
North Carolina

Seven years ago, A. B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School was faced with the mandate to reinvent itself or cease and desist. Dwindling magnet enrollment and mediocre test scores threatened the loss of the school's magnet status. Today, Combs is considered a national leader in the creation of a new learning-centered paradigm that focuses on leadership development in young children. The school has developed an innovative model that integrates Dr. Stephen Covey's philosophy of leadership development and the Baldrige National Quality Program's Principles of Performance Excellence, based on the works of Malcolm Baldrige, former Secretary of Commerce. In his latest book, *The Eighth Habit*, Dr. Covey cites Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School as a "model that should be replicated around the world."

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ Staff and students developed criteria for excellence and then designed and adopted rubrics that resulted in significant increases in the caliber and quality of students' project-based work.
- ◆ At the beginning of each nine-week period, children, in collaboration with their parents and teacher, set their own personal and academic goals. Progress toward these goals is charted daily in their data notebooks, which serve as the basis for quarterly student-led parent-teacher conferences.
- ◆ According to the standards of the state of North Carolina, schools with more than 90% of end-of-grade test scores at or above grade level are designated as Schools of Excellence by the State Board of Education. The school has earned this distinction for the past three years. The remarkable and sustained increase in test scores is credited to the implementation of time-sensitive procedures that review student assessment results, allowing teachers to make "just-in-time" adjustments in curriculum and instruction. This process, labeled *empowerment*, involves students and teachers in cultivating an

environment where people are committed to doing their best. The process develops student ownership, honors individual talents, and fosters a sense of personal responsibility.

- ◆ Evidence making a difference in the lives of these children can be found not only in their grades and standardized tests, but also and even more fundamentally in their perspective of what is possible in their lives.
- ◆ Even at the elementary school level, students are aware of the value of a lifetime of learning. One Combs ESL teacher remarked, “This is the first time I have ever heard the children express an awareness of college, let alone a desire to attend.”
- ◆ Students who are deaf or hard of hearing add a wonderfully rich dimension to the school program. The majority are afforded the same opportunities as regular education students because they are mainstreamed into the regular classroom. As a result of this exposure, all of the DHH students showed tremendous growth on statewide tests. Twice per month, sign language classes are offered to the total school population. Each year, more and more students, staff, and parents learn sign language so that they can communicate with non-hearing students.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ The Combs community is the embodiment of the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child.” A dynamic PTA and members of the community organize and host annual events such as the Fall Festival, Inaugural Ball, Science Fair, Art Show, International Festival, and Book Fair. Combs has grown partnerships with area universities that afford students and staff the unprecedented opportunity to learn with the area’s leading scientists and educators. Staff is currently coauthoring a book on leadership with faculty at Peace College.

- ◆ Various community partnerships exist, including the Aventura United Methodist Church, Western Boulevard Presbyterian Church, Food Bank of NC, Hispanic Family Services, Wake Circles of Hispanic Family Services, Wake Circles of Hispanic Ministry, and the Interfaith Food Shuttle.
- ◆ In the quest to find alternative ways to enhance learning, Combs has forged a unique collaboration with a network of neighborhood churches to expand their tutor-mentoring program to include Combs as a partner. Funded in part via a \$50,000 grant from the State Library of North Carolina, Combs is now able to level the playing field for more than 40 at-risk children by providing one-on-one and small group tutoring two afternoons per week. Parents, high school and college students, and university faculty have made this volunteer-based program a success story. In turn, Combs provides tutor training and program expertise to two other sites, which serve more than 60 students from four other schools in the area.
- ◆ The mentoring program exemplifies the motto “responsibility by all,” which is designed to meet the various needs of all students, socially, emotionally, and academically. During the second quarter of the school year, teachers in grades K-5 recommend students in their classrooms that they feel need additional support in academic, social, or emotional areas. These students are then partnered with a staff member or community volunteer, who meets with them in a mentor capacity at least two to three times per week to work on the specific area of concern. This strategy has ensured that by the end of the year, students have their needs met, their abilities reinforced, and their self-esteem taken to new levels.
- ◆ Each grade level team of students adopts a community service project, such as collecting toys for needy children, conducting a winter coat drive, or raising funds for the Duke University Cancer Ward. Students also give back through schoolwide efforts such as collecting canned

goods for the North Carolina Food Bank. This year marks the 13th year in a row that Combs has collected more food than any other school in eastern North Carolina. However, students' generosity is most evident in their "gestures of the heart" such as raising more than \$1,400 to help a classmate's fight against leukemia, collecting a mountain of donations for an immigrant family that unexpectedly lost their father, raising more than \$9,000 in the "Nickels for New York" campaign for the victims of the September 11th tragedy, and raising money for the tsunami victims.

- ◆ Staff listens to stakeholders through quarterly Coffee Talks with parents and community members and monthly Children's Chats. Twice per year, surveys are sent home by each classroom teacher, administrator, and specialist to collect feedback from parents. In addition, a Leadership Advisory Council made up of parents and community leaders provides feedback on leadership initiatives.

Overview

Awtrey Middle School in Kennesaw, Georgia, is one of 22 middle schools in the Cobb County School District in suburban Atlanta. Cobb County School District is the second largest district in Georgia and one of the 30 largest school districts in the nation. Awtrey serves a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse student body of approximately 850 students.

Although Awtrey is a well-established middle school, the community it serves has changed significantly over the past decade. Student enrollment has fluctuated dramatically due to construction of new homes in the area and, in recent years, to the opening of two new middle schools built to relieve Awtrey's growth and overcrowding. Furthermore, increased demographic diversity and lower socioeconomic status have increased transience.

**Awtrey
Middle
School**

Kennesaw,
Georgia

Awtrey Middle School serves a wide range of student needs, including students with special needs, gifted students, Advanced Placement math students, students requiring IEL (intensive English language), and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). The student population is ethnically diverse, with approximately 56 percent Caucasian, 27 percent African-American, 8 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, and 5 percent multiracial students. Students from government-subsidized homes, apartments, trailers, and single-dwelling homes attend Awtrey and make up an economically and socially diverse student body. Food and Nutrition Services reports that 24 percent of Awtrey students receive free or reduced-price lunch. This is an increase from previous school years.

Awtrey Middle School has had numerous recent accomplishments. An important example is the increase in the number of students scoring in the “on target or exceeds target” range on the Georgia Writing Assessment. In 2000, 80 percent of 8th grade students met or exceeded target score. In 2005, 90 percent of 8th grade students met or exceeded target score. The Awtrey faculty believes that integrating expository writing in all content areas significantly impacts student achievement.

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ♦ The instructional program also includes foreign language and reading in 8th grade, as well as gifted instruction and advanced mathematics courses at all three grade levels. Students have the opportunity to earn high school credit for the foreign language and advanced mathematics courses. A variety of options is provided for nonacademic subjects such as art, yearbook, business, general music, instrumental and vocal music, and physical and health education. Students with special needs are served by the special education department’s utilization of a variety of models including consultation, inclusion, small group, and self-contained.

- ◆ Each grade level designs an interdisciplinary culminating project. For example, 7th graders have presented the global effects of diseases in Africa to a mock Public World Health Organization. In this presentation, they were seeking to obtain grant funds to conduct research for a cure for the diseases they studied.
- ◆ Teachers work together to identify technology tools that enhance rigor and relevance in their classrooms. The school has a Career Learning Lab with Internet-connected workstations, stand-alone word-processing workstations, and an ActivBoard interactive whiteboard. Teachers increased integration of technology for students to demonstrate mastery of learning. For example, music classes use Garage Band to produce their own music tracks, and students take classroom assessments using the Beyond Question interactive remote system.
- ◆ The administrative team performs regular classroom walk-throughs to look for evidence of student learning, higher-order thinking skills, best practices, and technology integration. All teachers gather quarterly writing samples to measure growth in writing skills and to monitor demonstrated mastery of learning content standards. Performance assessment instrument and evaluation conferences are focused on evidence of student mastery and meeting professional and instructional goals. A wall of data is posted in our front lobby to highlight progress and growth, as well as keep all stakeholders informed of school improvement planning initiatives.
- ◆ Teachers, counselors, administrators, and lead teachers meet monthly to discuss students who are at risk academically and behaviorally. Staff identifies specific problems students are having and develops a plan to help those students become more successful. At-risk students receive additional instruction and assistance in an after-school tutoring program to help them reach mastery of grade level skills and standards.
- ◆ At the beginning of the year, all students take a learning style inventory to learn more about their own individual learning profile. Students are

able to link their learning styles with strategies that are effective for them, and teachers design differentiated assignments and assessments based on these learning profiles and preferences. Additionally, all students participate in classroom guidance lessons to examine their own standardized test scores and identify strengths and weaknesses. Students also set yearly goals and plans for improvement for themselves to target areas of weaknesses. During the year, students write reflections at the end of each grading period concerning progress toward goal attainment.

- ◆ Teachers teach vocabulary and instruct students in the use of pre-, during-, and after-reading skills in all content areas. Staff members utilize Thinking Maps and other graphic organizers in all classes and encourage students to use self-selected strategies to organize information for writing (CRISS strategies, Thinking Maps, and other graphic organizers).

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ Beginning at Open House, parents are introduced to the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Staff utilizes blogs and podcasts to increase home-school communication. Every staff member has his or her own blog linked to the school's Web page to highlight important class details, upcoming events, and assessments. Additionally, teachers are able to post assignments and class resources for students to access at home. Also, the PTSA uses a blog as their primary method of communication for newsletters and announcements.
- ◆ Every faculty member serves on a committee. Committees consist of the Technology, Community Outreach, Student and Staff Recognition, and Hospitality Committees. Additionally, the School Improvement Planning Team has meetings that are open to any staff member.

- ◆ Staff recognition awards include Blogger of the Month, Quadrant D Teacher of the Month, Staff Member of the Month, and Teacher of the Month. Partners donate local restaurant gift cards to honor these faculty and staff members for their dedication and hard work.
- ◆ All faculty meetings are for celebrations and events. Any school business and announcements are taken care of via e-mail communication and team leaders working with their team to accomplish tasks and duties. The Hospitality Committee has arranged faculty outings and events such as movie nights; dinner outings; holiday parties; trips to museums; attendance at Hawks, Braves, and Thrashers games; and a Relay for Life Team.
- ◆ At the beginning of the year, a plastic apple candy dish filled with treats is passed on to a teacher who made someone's day. This teacher then refills the treats and passes on the apple the next day to someone who made their day.
- ◆ Vertical and horizontal collaborative teams of teachers meet at designated times to discuss student achievement and best practices. Collaborative teams include special education teachers, connections teachers, ESOL and IEL teachers, instructional lead teacher, guidance counselors, media specialists, and administration. These collaborative teams provide a network of support and serve as building experts and resources for the staff on many issues.
- ◆ In collaborative teams, teachers meet regularly to analyze data, unpack curriculum standards, and use the Backwards Design model to develop unit lessons. Along with the Rigor/Relevance Framework, teachers discuss and integrate best practices such as the strategies in the *Instructional Strategies Handbook* and Marzano's *Strategies That Work*, CRIS strategies, and Thinking Maps. They collaborate to develop common assessments and establish acceptable evidence of student mastery of curriculum. Moreover, teachers discuss results

from common assessments to monitor student progress and provide students with ongoing feedback.

- ◆ Every month, each faculty and staff member has the opportunity to nominate a student who exemplifies Awtrey Attitudes. These students receive an Awtrey Attitude shirt, a breakfast, and an opportunity to attend a presentation by a guest speaker who commends their good character and attitudes.
- ◆ Students are provided a quality instructional program that reflects the middle school philosophy of a “school within a school.” Students are divided among teacher teams for academic classes.
- ◆ Each grading period, students are recognized with a breakfast or afternoon reward party for making the honor roll. For the last three grading periods, students who show improvement and are “on-a-roll” are also recognized for their success along with the honor roll students. The front lobby has the Wall of Honor with lists of honorees’ names for all to see.

Will Rogers Middle School

Fair Oaks,
California

Overview

Located in Fair Oaks, a suburb of Sacramento, California, Will Rogers Middle School is part of the San Juan Unified School District, a district in constant change due to budget woes, changing demographics, and declining enrollment. Its current student population is 832, and there is a student mobility rate of 25 percent. Fifty-six percent of students receive free or reduced lunch, 41 percent are minority, and 32 percent are English language learners (ELL), which brings more than 20 different languages to the campus. A Title I school, on average 69 percent of incoming 7th graders are below standard in English language arts, and 64 percent are below standard in mathematics—a huge hurdle to climb before the school year even begins.

Over the years, there has been a distinct change in the ELL population at Will Rogers Middle School. In 1991, only 43 ELL students attended Will Rogers, and the primary languages were Russian and Ukrainian. Today, the school has been designated as an ELL center with an English language learner population that fluctuates between 230 and 280 students, the primary languages being Spanish, Russian, and Ukrainian, with 17 additional languages.

In 2001, Will Rogers Middle School was identified as a “program improvement school,” which meant something had to change, and the change needed to come from within. In true problem-solving fashion, the administration and staff at Will Rogers began to look critically at the school community. Test scores, attendance, apathy, low expectations, lack of parent involvement, and a growing gang population were major obstacles.

The restructuring process began in the 2001–02 school year with the implementation of a character education program, school uniforms, and two sections of an AVID elective. Today, Will Rogers is not only a school of character, but also a school of academic culture and a model for other schools in program improvement status. The school has received numerous honors, most recently becoming an AVID National Demonstration School in 2005. A student-centered and positive school culture has resulted in continuous improvement in student achievement.

Based on concepts presented in *Caught in the Middle* and *Turning Points*, Will Rogers has used interdisciplinary teams, called “houses,” and has banked instructional minutes to facilitate a collaborative planning day each week since 1989. To meet the students’ diverse needs, the school is divided into six interdisciplinary houses: two 7th grade houses, two 8th grade houses, one 7-8th grade combined house of ELL students, and one 7-8th grade combined “open structure” house based on parent choice and participation. Each house has from 120 to 160 students. The ELL house provides sheltered, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) for English language learners, and the open structure house has a high achiever section in both 7th and 8th grades.

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ All curricula taught at Will Rogers Middle School are closely aligned with the California state content standards, and teachers regularly use standards and assessment to monitor student progress.
- ◆ Quarterly benchmarks in all content areas, including PE and electives, are in place, as well as district interim assessments in language arts and math. The district's Accountability and Organizational Evaluation (AOE) Department regularly disaggregates data on interim assessments by teacher, subgroup, and item analysis for the school to monitor student achievement.
- ◆ Teachers meet weekly on Thursdays, alternating between subject area departments and houses, for one hour to compare student work, analyze data, and collaborate on lesson plans and student achievement concerns.
- ◆ All subject areas—even PE and electives—regularly use common writing assessments to reinforce writing across the curriculum. Student work is then examined for error analysis by a common core of teachers in each subject area or house with the goal of consistency in assessment, leading to continuous improvement in student achievement.
- ◆ Accelerated Reader is used extensively throughout the school. The Accelerated Reader books are read outside class at least 20 to 30 minutes per night, and students take the accompanying test for the book in the library computer lab. The library is open before school, at lunch, and after school for student access to Accelerated Reader books and tests. As motivation, students who read and complete four books and tests per quarter are allowed a non-uniform dress day the first day of the new quarter and rewarded with schoolwide barbecues.

- ◆ Two periods of language arts give teachers the time needed to emphasize both writing conventions and reading comprehension.
- ◆ In fall 2005, a two-period pre-algebra block was implemented for all English language learners, most 7th grade students, and selected 8th grade students to address the issue of standards-based mathematics instruction for all students. It must be emphasized that the two-period math class is not meant for more lecture, “drill and kill,” or extra homework time, but rather for conceptual development and reinforcement of abstract concepts through the use of projects, group collaboration, class presentations, assessment, and immediate feedback.
- ◆ The AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program has become a cornerstone program for Will Rogers, infusing an academic culture schoolwide. Three sections of AVID are dedicated to ELL students to help address an area of need in traditionally low-performing students. With 26 teachers trained at an AVID summer institute and 20 teachers currently on the AVID Site Team, the academic college preparatory culture of AVID can be seen in all parts of the school. AVID classes on campus are taught at a rigorous level, and grades for AVID students are closely monitored. Students in all classes take Cornell notes daily on paper color coded by subject. Socratic seminars, philosophical chairs, and learning logs have become the norm in many classes.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ Relationships play a major role in daily education. Although students have been grouped into interdisciplinary teams since 1989, the implementation of the AVID program has fostered the strongest relationships between students and teachers. Students in AVID are clustered together in a small learning community within their house

configuration, and their AVID elective teacher stays with each group of students for two years. As a result, strong family-like relationships are built within the student group, as well as with the core of AVID teachers, fostering academic success and support.

- ◆ Every adult at Will Rogers plays an integral part in developing relationships at the school. The principal hires staff who are willing to be assigned extra duty as coaches, club leaders, tutors in after school programs, and mentors for students in need.
- ◆ Parents and community members are invited to participate in all school events. Because many of our students are from immigrant or single-parent working families, parent involvement has been difficult to maintain in traditional activities such as Parent Club, Parent Information Night, and Back-to-School Night. Staff has had to think creatively to make sure communication lines are open between parents and school. All important communications are mailed home (and translated into Spanish, Russian, and Ukrainian as needed), administrators and staff members make home visits, and Open House has become a family barbeque and activity night welcoming families to the whole school. Interpreters in Spanish, Russian, and Ukrainian are on staff the majority of the school day to facilitate for non-English-speaking parents. Finally, English language classes for adults are held at the school on weekends and evenings for parents of our students.
- ◆ Several student leadership groups exist, allowing students to have opportunities to develop their leadership skills.
- ◆ The Will Rogers physical education program has played a large role in changing the school culture. The traditional program has changed to a choice program, allowing students to participate in the game, sport, or activity they want. All activities are selected according to the California State Standards for Physical Education. Because the choice program empowers students by letting them choose their

activity, the discipline referrals from physical education teachers have been cut by 90%.

- ◆ A media program and a character education program is in place to reinforce six pillars of character: responsibility; respect; justice and fairness; trustworthiness; citizenship; and caring. The character education committee at first consisted of just staff, who organized activities such as chalk art representing the pillars; Mustang Moments, for students who were “caught” doing something positive; dress-up days to represent historical “pillars” in society; and end-of-the-year barbecues. Now the committee has expanded to include both staff and students from each house so that student voices can be heard and students can be visible leaders on campus. These students act as ambassadors to visitors on campus, organize student-centered activities, promote the pillars through morning announcements, and sometimes act as conflict managers. Those students are given character education T-shirts, which highlight their commitment and distinguish them from the rest of the student body who follow the uniform dress code.
- ◆ Mustang Media, an integral part of every day, features *Wake Up Will Rogers*, a live, 10-minute morning news show planned, staffed, and anchored by students and broadcast on a closed-circuit network to all classrooms. You can hear students repeating the message or following the example provided in the commercial, proving that the creative voices of the students are being heard clearly by their classmates.

Overview

Brockton High School is a comprehensive grade 9-12 school located in an urban center 30 miles south of Boston. The school’s 4,358 students represent a range in diversity and socioeconomic levels. Minority students comprise 66 percent of the student population; 52 percent are on free/reduced lunch;

**Brockton
High School**

Brockton,
Massachusetts

11 percent have disabilities; and 9 percent are English language learners. The education program follows a six-day block schedule that offers core and elective courses in academic, vocational, fine arts, and performing arts programs. High expectations and high standards help motivate students enrolled in each of four levels: advanced placement, advanced, college preparatory, and academic preparatory.

The school began a restructuring process in 1995 to increase student achievement and provide a more personalized educational experience for all students. The literacy initiative to improve student skills by having all teachers assume responsibility for literacy instruction within their classes has improved student performance to the point that the school was recognized as a Commonwealth Compass School by the State of Massachusetts. As part of the initiative to establish smaller learning communities, students are assigned to one of four houses. The school's mission states: "Brockton High School seeks to teach our students in a safe, supportive environment the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors necessary to become responsible and productive members of a diverse society."

The school has a long history and tradition of success in sports and the performing arts. Extracurricular activities are numerous, and more than 3,500 students participated in one or more of these activities during the past year. The school makes consistent use of data to evaluate programs and to pinpoint areas in need of new or revised programming. Administrators operate in a collaborative and supportive fashion, involving faculty in decision-making and ownership of key school initiatives.

The school culture is student-focused and positive, which has resulted in success in improving academic performance of students while maintaining the tradition of achievement in performing arts and sports. The school is dedicated to continuous improvement with a diverse population and an experienced faculty, many of who grew up in the city where they now teach.

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ Brockton's "think tank" is a 32-member committee representing faculty in all disciplines and the administration. This group meets regularly to advance the school's mission. Meetings are held on Saturdays and after school; these are funded locally in the school's Superintendent's Challenge for Change initiative.
- ◆ The Restructuring Committee challenges teachers to increase their expectations for student achievement. Each department employs a steering committee to review and revise curriculum, programs, and definitions of quality student work. The Restructuring Committee represents a vehicle that highlights and reviews issues related to the school's efforts to achieve its overarching goals: to increase achievement levels and to personalize education for all students. Some areas under review are raising expectations for all students, improving school and classroom culture, examining the senior year, and advancing technology.
- ◆ Literacy is integrated into all lessons across the grades and subjects. This approach has generated positive results in improving state assessment scores and has led to the school's selection as a Commonwealth Compass School in honor of its restructuring and improvements. All teachers in all disciplines are teachers of reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning. Professional development literacy workshops have been provided to all teachers to incorporate these skills into their classes.
- ◆ Approximately 100 at-risk freshmen are identified for academic deficiencies. These students are blocked together for three of the five blocks to include English, Algebra, and return for the last period of the day for a tutorial with the same teachers/senior mentors. The focus is on academic remediation.

- ◆ A tutorial center is open during the school day and after school. Tutorial assistance is provided by teachers and students. Teachers are assigned to the center as part of their “duty period.”
- ◆ Each student establishes an educational plan outlining high school courses, extracurricular activities, and community services that will assist them in reaching their goals.
- ◆ Brockton participates in the Virtual High School—a collaboration of high schools that share online teaching and learning opportunities globally. During the 2005-06 school year, five courses from the International Baccalaureate Program were offered through the Virtual High School Program in economics, Spanish, chemistry, calculus, and pre-AP language. When the program is fully implemented, Brockton will have access to 25 AP courses.
- ◆ The School Training and Education Preparation Program (STEP) assists students interested in attending college who will be the first in their family to do so. The program provides guidance, academic support, and SAT and essay writing training, as well as visits to local postsecondary institutions.
- ◆ The College Tech Prep Program focuses on meaningful education and career preparation for the majority of high school students. It is a sequence of study beginning in high school and continuing through at least two years of postsecondary technical education. The curriculum runs parallel to the college prep curriculum, presenting a broad range of knowledge through integrated academics in mathematics, science, communications, and technology.
- ◆ Interdisciplinary staff discussion groups have focused on ways to raise the level of mathematics achievement of all students. Discussion teams focus on grade distributions and ways to improve success rates using the following set of questions: What would you identify

as the primary reason(s) why students fail? Do you feel the reasons for failure differed by academic level? If yes, how? What techniques and strategies have you used that have been helpful for 9th and 10th grade students in terms of their academic success and their behavior? What do you see as major obstacles our students face with reaching proficiency levels on statewide tests? What would you suggest to overcome these obstacles?

- ◆ During their four years, students select courses in one of four levels according to their abilities and interests: Advanced Placement is for students wishing to take college-level courses; advanced is designed for motivated college-bound students; college preparatory is intended for students who are college-bound but need a sound preparation acceptable to postsecondary institutions; and academic preparatory is designed for those needing remedial skill building. Each of the four curriculum strands has a strong foundation of skills based on Massachusetts standards, a high degree of rigor defined by quality student work, and a relevance to student career aspirations. The faculty now works more on the “how” of instruction since the “what” of curriculum is well established through state standards and assessments.
- ◆ The Freshmen Academy targets academically at-risk students for early intervention and provides an Adult Advisory Program designed for students experiencing problems, Freshmen Assemblies (Road to Success) that provide information about the school and its policies and a Freshmen Unit on Introduction to Inferential Thinking.
- ◆ Four instructional resource specialists work with new teachers in literacy instruction, lesson development, and classroom management issues. One of the areas that these individuals work with is the new teachers group. The specialists provide new teachers with lesson demonstrations, comments after observations, and curriculum materials. Their work is supportive, not evaluative.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ A high percentage of teachers at the high school attended Brockton and continue to live in the city. The faculty is experienced and supportive of one another.
- ◆ An array of resources is available in support of the major goals of the school. District support is present in terms of both financial resources and talents. District funds support community liaison personnel, adult advisement counselors, and a nursery program.
- ◆ A video presentation to orient visitors to the high school links the success of the high school to district and city support.
- ◆ A cornerstone of the successful school improvement effort is the creation of positive relationships among administrators, faculty, and students, built on trust, vision, and consistency. Brockton places a heavy emphasis on the value of these positive relationships. Open channels of communication ensure that voices are heard and appropriate action is taken after deliberation and thoughtful analysis.
- ◆ When a group of students expresses an interest in forming a club, activity, or service, the school makes every effort to locate an advisor and to provide support for legitimate requests. There are 45 clubs and student activities listed in the Student Handbook. Teachers consistently seek out students who are not active in extracurricular activities and encourage their participation in the “life of the school outside the classroom.”
- ◆ As a result of the house system, groups of 20 to 25 students stay with teachers who are then better able to know them; one guidance counselor is assigned to each student for four years.

- ◆ The athletic program is composed of both competitive and non-competitive teams. In May 2005, *Sports Illustrated* recognized Brockton High School as one of the “Best High School Athletic Program in the United States.”
- ◆ The school places a heavy emphasis on encouraging and supporting the development of student interests, aptitudes, and learning styles. The extensive extracurricular, after-school, and during-school support programs and the variety of instructional strategies used in the classrooms are evidence of the commitment to personalize education for all students.
- ◆ The staff operates several additional programs designed to provide a more personalized education based on relationships. These initiatives include Adult Advisor, senior privileges, Virtual High School, Boxer Club, freshmen assemblies, Inferential Thinking curriculum, and Freshmen Academy. These initiatives join an extensive list of pre-existing programs: My Turn Inc., Access Center, computer centers, mediation process, guidance services, instructional resource specialists, and mentor teachers.

Overview

With more than 1,700 students, Kenwood Academy High School is an exemplary model of an inner-city high school that has established a culture of high expectations supported by strong positive relationships among all members of the school family. At Kenwood, students care about each other, and “learning is cool.” Empowering students is a top priority for all staff members. Kenwood’s 9-12 enrollment of more than 1,700 students is 90 percent African-American, 4 percent Caucasian, almost 3 percent Hispanic, and 2.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. About 12 percent are students with disabilities. Ninety percent of the students live in the attendance area, and 55 percent of the students are from low-income families. Despite

**Kenwood
Academy
High School**

Chicago,
Illinois

the poverty level of many students, they succeed. More than 80 percent of the Class of 2003 continued on to a four-year college, and 5 percent enrolled in a two-year college program.

Kenwood devotes enormous resources to the 9th grade year. A foundation for the school's success is a structure of small learning communities that personalize the high school experience for incoming freshmen. Programs are created to assist students in succeeding both academically and emotionally. The culture of Kenwood is one of high expectations and no excuses with strong, planned supportive relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and counselors. All of these efforts contribute to a unique environment in which everyone cares about everyone else and desires to help all to do well.

The school features a robust climate that is safe, civil, warm, inviting, and student-friendly. In many ways, the guidance department and the support offered to students and staff is the heart of Kenwood. A homeroom or advisory-type period, called "division," occurs daily. Once per week, students have "long division" in which they deal with more substantive issues. A key organizational piece is that academic teachers in each discipline have a common preparation period. When staff members were asked if they as a faculty could replicate their successes at Kenwood with a similar disadvantaged student body at another school, the answer was overwhelmingly "Yes." The only conditions would be comparable class size and school resources.

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ The culture of Kenwood is one of no excuses. Despite the fact that many students, possibly the majority, could be considered disadvantaged, students and staff makes no excuses for not learning. Faculty empowers students, and students empower each other.

- ◆ The Architecture Scholars Program provides students in grades 9-12 with an honors curriculum that has an education-to-careers component. Students take four years of architecture-related courses along with skill-level appropriate math, physics, and history classes—including the history of architecture.
- ◆ The World Language Program provides students with the opportunity to study four years of German, Italian, Latin, Japanese, Greek, French, or Spanish.
- ◆ Kenwood students who commit to rigorous academic work in at least one core subject have the opportunity to take college courses at the University of Chicago during their junior and senior years.
- ◆ Kenwood Academy Accelerated Magnet Program, in partnership with the University of Chicago, was established to provide top students with greater opportunities for more advanced academic options at the university. The students' goal in this program is to enroll in at least one university class by their senior year.
- ◆ There are multiple curricular options for students at Kenwood with variety in content, delivery, and degree of academic difficulty. Kenwood offers more than 110 courses, including 15 AP courses and 32 electives.
- ◆ Qualified students participate in off-site education programs, some of which provide college credit. College Bridge is a cooperative venture between the Chicago Public Schools and four-year postsecondary institutions in the area. The College Excel Program is a special link between the Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago. This program gives juniors and seniors the opportunity to receive dual credit while attending high school and participate in technical training programs and college coursework. Students may also participate in Gallery 37, an off-campus art program for juniors and seniors.

- ◆ Kenwood's faculty is a dedicated corps that works assiduously to ensure students are mastering the concepts and skills aligned to Illinois State Standards.
- ◆ Frequent diagnostic tests administered by every teacher every five weeks provide significant data. Designed by the teachers and departments, students taking the same class all take the same test. These five-week tests are used to drive instruction. Ample use of the ACT battery of standardized tests also occurs. Teachers also use multimodal means of assessing students. These take the form of interviews, presentations, demonstrations, projects, portfolios, and exhibits.
- ◆ Members of the higher education community are frequently invited to share their time and talents with the Kenwood students and staff. It is common for professors to conduct in-service sessions for faculty. College students are available as mentors to students needing assistance. Seminars for students and staff are conducted on the university campus.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ From the principal and staff, to the students, Kenwood is an exemplary model of a school that believes in high expectations supported by strong positive relationships among all members of the school family. This is the foundation for this effective school. Repeatedly, students say that what makes Kenwood so special is how committed the staff is to each and every student. Teachers arrive early and stay late. When necessary, adults accept the responsibility to serve as "surrogate parents" as well as role models.

- ◆ The guidance department is in many ways the heart and soul of the school. The counselors run advisories, train students in leadership skills, and generally nurture the students while shepherding academic initiatives, especially with 9th graders.
- ◆ The resources dedicated toward the freshmen transition year are considerable. Student mentors are assigned, student leadership training is offered, and an extensive freshman orientation during the summer months by upper-class students help illustrate the intense effort to program 9th graders for high school success.
- ◆ Leadership development is part of the Kenwood experience. Students are empowered to identify, cultivate, and share their leadership abilities with their peers as class officers, student council representatives, and student mentors. Every class has an executive council of class officers that represent the members of their class; each division has representation.
- ◆ Kenwood has an active parent body that works with the teachers to support academic and emotional growth. A special council gives parents and community members the power to shape school policy. Through parent groups such as Friends of Kenwood, Freshmen Parents, Senior Parents, Concert Choir Parents, and Band Parents, the school receives additional support for extracurricular and academic opportunities.
- ◆ Kenwood enjoys partnerships with local and national organizations that support the student body and faculty. The University of Chicago is the largest partner.
- ◆ Students, faculty, parents, and community stakeholders create a robust school climate that is warm, welcoming, and student-friendly. Annual rituals such as holiday concerts, class elections, student performances,

alumni college talks, and aware assemblies are traditions that allow Kenwood to celebrate and encourage student accomplishments.

- ◆ Kenwood's vision statement summarizes the supportive relationships present in the school: "Kenwood Academy is a community of students, parents, teachers, and community members committed to creating a positive learning environment in which all students can achieve their fullest potential as intelligent, creative, and socially responsible global citizens with a lifelong passion for learning."
- ◆ Student Centered Opportunities for Personalized Education (SCOPE) is designed for freshmen who enter Kenwood needing the most assistance based on tests scores. In SCOPE, students work closely with a faculty advisor to identify their individual strengths and interests and to develop a four-year plan of study.
- ◆ A vibrant, dynamic extracurricular and cocurricular activities program is very important at Kenwood. Because of partnership opportunities with the University of Chicago and other college and community organizations, the choices students have available go beyond the normal clubs and sports. An example of this is a voluntary, noncredit program for juniors and seniors consisting of a six-week experience of readings, discussions, and Internet studies led by university professors. Student interests drive the activities that are available. An example is a new offering called "Hip-Hop University," a vocal music club. Kenwood also has a comprehensive interscholastic sports program.
- ◆ Although not labeled as such, character education is evident throughout the school in how people treat each other and in the expectations set by the faculty. A key aspect of this character education is a program in which upper class students are assigned to each of the 9th grade divisions (homeroom or advisory periods in other schools) as school mentors.

- ◆ Staff has 13.5 days during the school year that are devoted to professional development. Departments share common planning time, greatly enhancing opportunities to collaborate.

Overview

A. J. Moore Academy is a magnet school in the Waco Independent School District. It is one of three high schools in the district. All Waco Independent School District high school students are eligible to attend as entering 9th graders. As a magnet school, there are no attendance zones or extra costs, but students must apply for admission. It has 700 students in grades 9-12. Students closely reflect the diversity of the community with 39 percent African-American, 41 percent Hispanic, and 20 percent white students. Approximately 22 percent are students with disabilities, and 78 percent are from families designated as economically disadvantaged.

Under the Texas Education Agency (TEA) School Report Card, A.J. Moore meets “Academically Acceptable” status. In 2002, under the previous testing system, it was an “Exemplary” school. It has continued to make excellent progress in academic achievement that is consistent across all sub-populations and is impressive considering the poverty level of 78 percent of the students. The dropout rate has been below 1 percent, and the attendance rate is over 95 percent. Thirty-two percent of the students received advanced credit for college either through Advance Placement (AP) courses, dual credit, articulated credit, or transcript credit.

A. J. Moore is a school of choice in that any student from across the district can attend. A strong special emphasis is placed upon the six Career Academies, of which four were operational during the 2005-06 school year, with two more being added in the 2006-07 academic year. Recently, A. J. Moore was selected by the Governor and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to receive one of three state STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) Academy grants of \$200,000.

A. J. Moore Academy

Waco,
Texas

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ Academic programs follow the traditional structure and state standards. Teachers add and modify lessons to take advantage of access to technology and to add more relevance. For example, a class of 10th grade biology students took the time to create a brochure using desktop publishing software to apply their knowledge of animal kingdoms. Advanced Placement courses are available in English and history, and enrollment in these courses is increasing. Students have expressed an interest in expanding these courses and having more advanced options available.
- ◆ Approximately 22 percent of the students in this school have disabilities, which reflect its popularity with parents. The school provides a number of instructional services, including resource rooms and integration in regular classes. The integration of students with disabilities into the school population is evident with high academic expectations and a climate of respect for all students. One teacher relayed a story on expectations. A student who apparently was accustomed to being labeled as “special ed” and who thought that mathematics was basic computational skills based on her previous learning experiences was confronted with a lesson on slope of lines. She asked the teacher, “Are you sure this is the Special Ed Math?” The next day the teacher reported that the student had mastered the mathematics concept.
- ◆ There is a strong emphasis on student work and students completing that work. A few years ago, an analysis of student grades showed that students were failing because they did not submit assignments, not because they could not pass the tests. Now, any overdue assignment is quickly brought to the attention of students. Students understand that they must complete their work. There is a system of referral for tutorials if an assignment is not completed. Students must attend tutorials after school until assignments are completed. This

attention has also led teachers to make sure that all work is meaningful and not just busy work.

- ◆ Internships that are required for students in the Academies demand that students participate in a paid employment experience related to this academy. This helps to strengthen the student transition into the business world or further educational endeavors. Several students actually started entrepreneurial businesses while in school using the skills that they acquired in the Academy.
- ◆ The Athens Academy is a program within all others at A. J. Moore. It is a comprehensive college preparatory program intended to prepare students to enter some of the most competitive universities in the country. Athens classes are open to all students. Those graduating with an Athens seal must meet all requirements for the Texas Distinguished Achievement Program, including taking a minimum of 10 Athens courses.
- ◆ Students are encouraged to take classes qualifying for various types of college credit—AP, dual, articulated, and transcript.
- ◆ A minimum of one project-based learning (PBL), cross-disciplinary lesson is required in every academy each semester. This minimum requirement is normally exceeded.
- ◆ Students are challenged toward higher levels of literacy because teachers emphasize reading in the content area and use the Accelerated Reader program.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ Students consistently say that their teachers care about them as individuals and encourage them to succeed. Teachers talk about

instruction in terms of student success. They focus on each student and provide individualized attention that is unique in the high school environment. As one student said, “They push us here, but they push us with love and respect.”

- ◆ According to students, conflicts between students are dealt with swiftly and thoroughly. Students are required to work things out in a respectful and adult-like manner, avoiding a superficial handshake or apology as the solution to a conflict.
- ◆ Staff members frequently spend extra time in school and volunteer for activities. School leadership works to provide extra remuneration where possible, but staff is clearly willing to go the “extra mile.” When asked, staff members acknowledge that they probably work harder and longer than teachers in many schools. They enjoy coming to work, and the principal sets an example for working long hours. Students say that teachers are willing to provide extra help before and after school, and many teachers give students their home telephone numbers and encourage them to call at any time.
- ◆ The school’s shared decision-making team is a key part of school leadership and decision-making. The school also has three active postsecondary partnerships with the local university, community college, and technical college.
- ◆ The school has an active Business Advisory Board that has influenced curriculum and through several partnerships has improved the quality of teaching and learning. The work of the group is substantial and involves several subcommittees. Recently, the council has begun to expand the group to bring in new members. It currently has 48 active members.

- ◆ Students and staff mention frequent parent communication as one of the school's successful initiatives, and students indicate that attendance and counseling staff develop close relationships with their parents.
- ◆ Each teacher "negotiates" a social contract that students agree to in all classes. This has proven to be a highly effective means to create a positive environment in all classes. Using the "Capturing Kids Hearts" model, these contract agreements are posted in all classrooms and typically include answers to the following questions:
 - How do we want to be treated by our leaders?
 - How should you treat each other?
 - How do you think the leader wants to be treated?
 - How should we handle conflicts that come up between us?
- ◆ Through the Bulldog Pride Incentive Program, students earn points for doing things right. In most high schools, points would be lost because of inappropriate behavior. At A. J. Moore, students bank their points and eventually earn a special letter jacket. This usually occurs during the second semester of the junior year. Additional points earn additional patches to the jacket.

Overview

Granger High School is a small, comprehensive school in Granger, Washington, housing grades 9-12. The school is in a rural part of the state that has a largely agricultural-based economy. Granger has 333 students, including 81 percent Hispanic, 12 percent white, 6 percent Native American, 1 percent Asian-American, and 1 percent African-American students. Eighty-four percent of the student population qualify for free or reduced price lunch. English language learners consist of 20 percent of the student body, 28 percent are migrant students, and 7 percent are students with disabilities. Although possessing limited resources and having a large and

Granger High School

Granger,
Washington

poor minority population, Granger has set and met high expectations for all students in both academic achievement and character development.

Granger operates on an alternating A-B Day, five-period schedule. Periods one, two, and four are 90 minutes; period three is 50 minutes; and the end-of-day advisory period is 30 minutes, as is the lunch period. Wednesdays have early dismissal for staff professional development. A separate, alternative school-within-a-school for about 30 students at any given time is housed in a separate structure on the campus.

Granger is an example of a school that has set high expectations focused on literacy and provided a personalized learning environment that ensures no student will be lost. The instructional leadership of the principal and the collaborative leadership of the teaching staff have actualized the school's vision: "All students are expected to reach their full academic and social potential in a positive and caring learning environment."

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ There is a clear vision of high expectations for all students. This is illustrated in the school's mission: "Our mission is to education students to be competitive and contributing citizens of society."
- ◆ Failure is not an option at Granger. Teachers and administrators have worked together with students and parents to reach a high level of accountability. If a student does not turn in an assignment or is failing a class, then the student is assigned to extra study sessions before or after school.
- ◆ College-bound students need an extra year of advanced math and science and two years (credits) of a foreign language.
- ◆ A comprehensive school improvement planning process focuses all staff on the growth of reading, writing, and math skills. Every staff member is considered either a math or an English teacher first and

then a teacher of their certificated subject area. All teachers take responsibility for teaching English and math.

- ◆ There are math and writing activity sessions focusing on problems and tasks that mirror state testing requirements. These are administered to all students by all teachers on specific days at a determined period of time each week.
- ◆ There is a schoolwide focus on concept mapping and thinking skills.
- ◆ Test results and preassessments are analyzed in detail to inform instruction.
- ◆ All students entering 9th grade are required to take a basic reading and writing skills course until they test out on a freshman level or above.
- ◆ The Orchard Math program and Accelerated Reading program also focus on remedial and “catch-up” curricula.
- ◆ Advanced Placement U.S. History and Pre-Calculus are offered.
- ◆ Students may participate in Running Start through Yakima Valley College.
- ◆ There are many elective and career/technical options available for students. Granger provides an array of extracurricular and cocurricular activities. Students also have opportunities to engage in community service.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ The culture of the school is centered on individual students and their needs. This emphasis on personal attention and student-teacher relationships is demonstrated by the advisory period. Each teacher is assigned 20 students with whom they stay with for four years. Advisory period occurs four days per week for the full four years. This teacher acts as an advocate, getting to know each student well and monitoring each student's progress. A personalized education plan is developed for each student. This plan provides information and strategies for educators, caregivers, and students to work together to help the student be a successful learner.
- ◆ Individual student-led conferences with parents and advisory teachers provide opportunities for sharing the student's personalized education plan and suggestions for how students can improve under the plan. Through these conferences, parents learn the strengths and areas in need of improvement regarding their child's academic progress. Goals are set by parents as well as by students to improve academic results. Granger has been able to obtain 100% participation from families in these conferences.
- ◆ The small size of the school and community creates an environment that promotes adults taking ownership of every student.
- ◆ Outreach programs to Spanish-speaking parents and guardians have forged a school-home partnership that clearly values students above all else.
- ◆ Professional development is supported. Every Wednesday afternoon, early release time provides staff with an opportunity to gain skills and collaborate around priority areas of instruction. Professional learning communities are one of the strategies established to improve learning in staff members. These are part of the school improvement plan. Common strategies for professional development are identified.

Overview

Kennesaw Mountain High School is a growing suburban school supported by a growing community. In school year 2003-04, the enrollment of 2,240 students was served by 185 certified staff members. Located in the city of Kennesaw, the school serves the northwest area of Cobb County, which has the second largest school system in Georgia and the 30th largest in the United States. The student population consists of 80.5 percent white, 11.2 percent African-American, 3.6 percent Hispanic, and 2.7 percent Asian students. Students with disabilities comprise 11.4 percent of the student population; gifted 19.2 percent; and ESOL 1.2 percent. The percentage of students on free or reduced price lunch was 4.6. Three percent of students dropped out of school. The school operates on a four-period block schedule. Approximately 190 students take AP exams. The average class size is 26.

Students choose from a variety of class offerings consistent with other Cobb County high schools. Numerous electives and academic courses, including honors, inclusion, and Advanced Placement (AP) classes, are offered to students who are obtaining college preparatory and technology/career diplomas. Kennesaw Mountain offers a total of 115 core courses, including 17 AP courses and 165 elective courses in 13 curricular areas. Through multiple pathways, the high school is able to personalize instruction around students' interests, learning styles, and aptitudes. Among those pathways are a magnet program in advanced mathematics, science, and technology; a National Academy of Finance; a Naval ROTC program; career and technical education programs in family and consumer sciences, travel and tourism, horticulture, and marketing; courses for gifted students; Advanced Placement courses; resource courses in reading enrichment, study, and social skills; community service under Reading Is Succeeding Everyday (RISE); and articulated programs with area colleges.

Kennesaw Mountain continues to expand the student learning communities of the school into additional academies or houses to provide more personalized educational opportunities. The school has a strong commitment to ensure that no child is left behind or allowed to fall through the cracks.

Kennesaw Mountain High School

Kennesaw,
Georgia

In fact, the commitment to put students first is so strong that students who drop out of school are kept on the rolls and contacted periodically by the staff to let them know that the school is still open to them. As the principal stated, “We’ve got to do better. It’s not about us; it’s what we are doing for the kids.”

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ Standardized test score data is used as an indicator for opportunities to improve student achievement.
- ◆ The school’s results on the Georgia High School graduation test continue to improve in English and mathematics.
- ◆ The school is working to close the achievement gap between the scores of Asian and white students compared to black and Hispanic students. Professional learning communities have been established with the specific goal of providing consistent learning opportunities for all ethnicities.
- ◆ The mission and vision statements are displayed prominently throughout the school and include such words as “relevant learning,” “a tradition of excellence,” “mutual respect,” and “shared responsibility.”
- ◆ Instruction is a top priority. There is “bell-to-bell protection of instruction.” A culture has been created wherein instruction is discussed constantly among professionals.
- ◆ Through a software program entitled Picasso, teachers are asked to identify instructional activities, strategies, and lessons in the Quadrant D that relate to the state’s quality core curriculum. These quality core curriculum plans/lessons are then shared with other staff throughout the district.

- ◆ The teachers want to stretch the students in their learning. The school maintains a close relationship with postsecondary education and brings in postsecondary teachers to work with the students.
- ◆ Kennesaw Mountain has one full-time staff position dedicated to promoting high student achievement. This individual is an in-house master teacher who focuses on teaching and learning. This teacher works with teachers all day long, improving pedagogy and helping teachers to stay on the path of rigor and relevance.
- ◆ A community service program gives students an opportunity to contribute to their community. Students spend from 80 to 135 hours per year participating in community service.
- ◆ With the school's commitment to teaching relevant skills based upon strong academic skills, community members are actively engaged in helping to identify and present Quadrant D level examples of what students need to know and be able to do.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ Students are valued and trusted. The culture of respect is due in large part to a highly visible and successful character education program.
- ◆ The school culture is also one of expansive capacity building of all staff, rather than trying to control staff with rules, mandates, and demands. Staff has a passion for meeting the needs of students and has support from the administration to do so..
- ◆ Staff is always seeking ways to personalize education for students through programs such as the academy and magnet. Extracurricular and interscholastic activities are viewed as ways to personalize the high school experience and to get to know the students.

- ◆ The entire staff appears to work with students in academic areas and on extracurricular activities. They always seem to “be there” for their students.
- ◆ The teachers and administrators have made a commitment to model lifelong learning through a professional learning community. They discuss how to get students to meet high expectations and curriculum needs, communicate with each other openly and freely, take ownership for their successes and failures, and communicate on a regular basis with parents and the general community. This ongoing communication occurs in many ways, including an essential skills survey that the school administrators use to gather opinions as to what parents and community members would like to see in the school.
- ◆ Students have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. The student council members set an example for other students and help maintain high expectations. The student leaders feel empowered to motivate students and monitor behavior.
- ◆ Students do a great deal of mentoring and tutoring of elementary students as part of their leadership activities.
- ◆ Community members and parents are strongly encouraged to participate in school activities in a variety of ways. Members of the community participate in the character education program by talking to students about character-related issues experienced in the real world outside school.
- ◆ Professional development is part of the culture of this school. This is evidenced in both formal programs and ongoing daily activities. The school has several professional development groups that meet once per month. They are comprised of 15 to 20 teachers who work with the principal and assistant principals to discuss how to focus on instruction and meet the needs of all students, review school data,

and determine how to both protect and improve instruction. The school has periodic early release to provide teachers time to collaborate, discuss, share, and evaluate instructional practices.

- ◆ Relationships between students and teachers are based on respect and mutual commitment to learning.

Overview

Excelsior Education Center (EEC) is a charter school housing grades 7-12 located in Victorville, California in the high desert area known as the Victor Valley of San Bernardino County. It is 97 miles northeast of Los Angeles and 35 miles northeast of San Bernardino, at the end of the Mojave Desert. Excelsior opened as a school of choice in the 1995-96 school year. Approximately 800 students are enrolled at EEC.

Students have multiple options to pursue learning. Since “attendance is optional, and learning is mandatory,” students may opt to complete all high school requirements through a program of home study. Students may also elect to participate in on-campus workshops, labs, and online courses. Dual credit and/or college credit may be earned through a partnership with Victor Valley Community College. Under a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), students may choose any combination of these options and advance at their own pace, which results in many students completing requirements in less time than it takes in a traditional high school.

In addition to these multifaceted delivery options, students meet rigorous academic requirements within the context of relevant, career-oriented learning through required participation in small learning communities or academies. These academies provide students with many opportunities, including: being introduced to career possibilities; achieving state standards through an integrated approach within the career program of study; mastering a specialty area within the career academy; participating in work-

**Excelsior
Education
Center**

Victorville,
California

based internship programs; and engaging in on-campus, student-run business enterprises. At the 7th and 8th grade levels, students enroll in a Prep Academy that introduces them to the “Excelsior Way.” In the Prep Academy, students receive a standards-based academic program that is made relevant through various enrichment activities, preparing them for the high school experience.

Evidence of Rigor and Relevance

- ◆ The academic goals for all students include a rigorous, relevant, standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results (ESLRs). The ESLRs are integrated in all learning options. They consist of:
 - Students will be academically competent individuals.
 - Students will be involved, productive citizens.
 - Students will be effective communicators.
 - Students will be technologically skilled individuals.
- ◆ Students receive credit for assignments when they demonstrate competency in each standard by passing a standards-based assessment.
- ◆ To graduate, students must earn a total of 230 credits. They must also successfully complete the state’s exit exam, the school’s algebra test, a reading assessment, a writing assessment, and 120 hours of community service.
- ◆ The relevance of instructional programs is evident in the academies, majors, and specialty options. Each student enrolls in an academy, which requires completion of a general course of instruction and career exploration in potential professions.

- ◆ Students engage in internships at local businesses and/or participate in school-based business enterprises. Student-run businesses exist in insurance and investment, banking, travel and tourism, construction, and computer repair.
- ◆ Students have the opportunity to earn their associate degree and their high school diploma at approximately the same time.
- ◆ The Excelsior motto is “Attendance is optional; learning is mandatory.”
- ◆ The curriculum is developed using a variety of sources such as state curriculum content standards and frameworks, locally developed standards, and parent and student requests.
- ◆ Small learning communities under the career academy model bring relevance and preparation for tomorrow’s workplace to the curriculum; much of the instruction falls in Quadrant D on the Rigor/Relevance Framework.
- ◆ Relevancy mixes with rigor when students studying carpentry learn math skills used by carpenters, and students studying banking and finance receive history credits by learning about the history of banking.
- ◆ Learning goals are adjusted so that each student is challenged relative to his or her ability.
- ◆ An education team develops the student’s program of study. This team consists of the student, parent/guardian, and a credentialed staff member (facilitator). The team works cooperatively to assist the student in reaching academic and career goals.
- ◆ Students may take college courses at the nearby community college.

Evidence of Relationships

- ◆ All students receive a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). The PLP is modeled after the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as outlined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An individual education team—made up of a student, parents, and a staff member—builds a partnership that develops a custom-designed curriculum that meets the unique needs of the student through a PLP.
- ◆ Excelsior fosters a climate of respect and support where the entire staff works together toward common goals for the common good of students.
- ◆ Education is the combined responsibility of the caring education team consisting of the student, parents/guardian, and facilitator (staff member). The education team works together to plan, deliver, and assist in the student's achievement of academic goals.
- ◆ Each student enrolls in a career academy thus receiving more personalized learning opportunities.
- ◆ Many opportunities are available for students to participate in extracurricular and cocurricular activities. In response to student interest, an athletic director is on staff and has developed a sports program encompassing a variety of sports options.
- ◆ Parents are active in the Parent Eagle Network (PEN), which meets twice per month to discuss matters important to the school.
- ◆ Local businesses support and finance specialty classes in the academies.

- ◆ Peer leaders are trained and provide peer training in self-awareness, values clarification, stress management, peer pressure, family issues, diversity, decision-making/problem solving, listening skills, and so forth.

Chapter 9

Personal Portfolio

Purpose of the Portfolio

The Personal Portfolio is designed to be used as a working document that you can help plan and reflect on the progress in your school to achieve rigor, relevance, and relationships. This chapter is not intended to stay within this notebook. This is your document to modify to meet your needs. An electronic copy of the portfolio is provided on the companion CD and can be printed and adapted to your use.

Print out the portfolio and create your own notebook of progress on rigor, relevance, and relationships. Keep in mind the continuous efforts necessary to envision, discover, build, create, develop, and support. The Personal Portfolio has four parts: Benchmark Tasks, Implementation Actions, Evidence, and Reflection.

Benchmark Tasks is a checklist of the major tasks related to each phase of the change model. Use this checklist as a list of what to do and steps to take. Rate the current progress of school staff periodically to reflect on where progress is being made and what remains to be done.

Use **Implementation Actions** to record your personal goals and actions to further implementation.

In the **Evidence** section, place examples of school success. Consider this your rigor, relevance, and relationships scrapbook. Insert copies of good examples of high rigor, high relevance lessons or practices. Any specific examples of relationship development should be kept here as well. When you want to show progress to new staff, district leaders, or visiting educators, you will have convenient examples of rigor, relevance, and relationships in your school.

Reflection is a place to periodically make notes of your progress and needs. The reflection questions will guide you to the important aspects of change. In the space provided you can make notes, organize thoughts, and leave reminders of future work.

Benchmark Tasks

Use the following checklist of benchmark tasks to reflect on the various aspects of progress in implementing rigor, relevance, and relationships in your school.

Leadership for Rigor/Relevance/Relationship

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	Envision <i>"Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time. Action with Vision is making a positive difference."</i> Joel Barker
					1. Share information on WHY rigor, relevance, and relationships are important.
					2. Collect ongoing evidence of the need for rigor, relevance, and relationships.
					3. Engage staff in discussions to understand, embrace, and reflect on the need for rigor, relevance, and relationships.
					4. Establish common definitions of rigor and relevance.
					5. Establish common definitions of relationships to support student learning.
					6. Establish common definitions of relationships to support staff collaboration.
					7. Share examples of rigor and relevance in the school.
					8. Connect rigor and relevance with instruction and assessment practices.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	Discover <i>"The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but seeing with new eyes."</i> Marcel Proust
					1. Analyze local assessments for levels of rigor and relevance.
					2. Identify examples of Quadrant D lessons in the school.
					3. Share examples of high rigor and high relevance learning.
					4. Analyze state assessments for levels of rigor and relevance.
					5. Conduct student focus groups on rigor and relevance.
					6. Conduct student focus groups on relationships.
					7. Survey students as to the current levels of learning support and relationships.
					8. Share examples good learning support and relationships with staff.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	Build <i>"You lead today by building teams and placing others first."</i> Jeff Immelt
					1. Share Rigor/Relevance Framework with students.
					2. Explain Rigor/Relevance Framework to parents.
					3. Engage staff in applying Rigor/Relevance Framework to their instruction.
					4. Explain Relationship Framework to staff and reflect on current levels of relationships.
					5. Create consensus on priority standards for learning.
					6. Map instruction at each grade and each course to state standards.
					7. Agree on a common lesson format for high rigor/high relevance instruction.
					8. Reflect on positive and negative staff behaviors that influence learning relationships.
					9. Analyze strengths of extra-curricular activities that contribute to positive learning relationships.
					10. Establish student learning criteria and data measures for school that relate to core and stretch learning.
					11. Establish student learning criteria and data measures for school that relate to student engagement and personal skill development
					12. Improve staff collaboration through team building activities.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	Create <i>“The goal isn't to live forever; the goal is to create something that will.”</i> Chuck Palahniuk
					1. Design interdisciplinary lessons.
					2. Design new activities to strengthen learning relationships among students.
					3. Design activities to strengthen support and relationships for students in the transition year into the school.
					4. Create new instructional activities that increase rigor and/or relevance.
					5. Create new assessments that increase rigor and/or relevance.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	Develop <i>"When you shift people's perceptions, their actions follow."</i> Rayona Sharpnack
					1. Develop staff skills to create, adapt, and use performance assessments.
					2. Develop staff skills to identify and write good test questions.
					3. Develop common performance tasks for typical student performance, e.g. writing, presentations.
					4. Develop staff skills to write high rigor/high relevance performance tasks.
					5. Develop staff ability to select and use instructional strategies appropriate for high rigor/high relevance.
					6. Develop staff skills in building positive learning relationships.
					7. Develop staff ability to create classroom procedures that build learning relationships.
					8. Create structures and support for daily professional learning.
					9. Create a model of peer teaching and coaching.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	Support <i>“Some people change when they see the light, others when they feel the heat.”</i> Caroline Schoeder
					1. Conduct frequent walk-throughs to observe instruction.
					2. Include rigor and relevance as a part of the observation protocols for classroom walk-throughs.
					3. Provide opportunities for peer review of instruction.
					4. Conduct peer review of learning experiences for rigor and relevance.
					5. Conduct celebrations of achievement of rigor and relevance.
					6. Conduct celebrations of developing learning relationships.
					7. Analyze data of student learning criteria on core and stretch learning related to rigor and relevance.
					8. Analyze data of student learning criteria on student engagement and personal skills development related to relationships.
					9. Staff gives each other feedback on positive relationship behaviors.

Implementation Actions

In this section of the portfolio, plan your specific actions. What will you do? Reference materials from the resource kit you will use and set specific goals and deadlines. Use any of the included forms, or create your own.

Action Planning Form

Identify the objective of what you intend to do as a follow up action. Then brainstorm and identify actions to be taken, who will take responsibility, and date to be accomplished. Finally, identify the data or measure that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken.

Action Planning Form**Identified Objective: What do you plan to accomplish?**

Actions to be Taken: What do you plan to do?**Who will do this?****By When?**

Data to Measure Effectiveness: What will be different and how will you know?

Evidence

This is your section to keep a scrapbook or journal of the progress toward rigor, relevance, and relationships. Place copies of written materials, model lesson plans, memos, photographs of student work, descriptions of student and other items that have been created in your school and are great evidence of the progress you are making toward the goal.

Reflection

In this section of the portfolio you can reflect on progress. Use the reflection questions to guide you in considering various aspects of making the change to rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Using the Right Strategy

There is a time and place for everything. One of the keys to being an effective leader and change agent is to take the right action at the right time. The right action, of course, depends on the symptoms of your organization and the phase of change process.

The following chart shows negative characteristics of an organization that indicate a weakness in making a successful change. Opposite each set of symptoms is the strategy you should use. Use this chart to reflect on your organization and help to define where you should focus your efforts

Symptoms	Strategy to Focus on
Apathetic, Uncommitted	Envision
Low Morale, Unproductive	Discover
Traditional, Committed to Status Quo, Tunnel Vision	Create
Confused, In Conflict, Anxious, Rampant Rumors	Build
Fearful, Frustrated, Lacking Confidence	Develop
Tentative, Slow Implementation, Discouraged, Uneven Results	Support

Considerations

As you work in each of the phases of change, consider some of the following when selecting and implementing change:

Envision

- Focus on the future
- Don't lay blame
- Paint mental pictures
- Use metaphors
- Be enthusiastic
- Keep the message simple
- Repeat, repeat, repeat

Discover

- Focus on the positive
- Reflect on what works well
- Develop mental images of high performance
- Ask "what if" questions
- Tell success stories
- Focus on and work from what is known

Create

- Encourage divergent thinking
- Build trust
- Provide extensive information
- Use brainstorming
- Allow open participation
- Recognize that it's okay to feel uncomfortable

Build

- Encourage convergent thinking
- Give adequate lead time
- Use consensus decision making
- Provide "situational leadership"
- Be empathetic to human needs

Develop

- Use outside people to start
- Use inside people to carry out
- Provide "just-in-time" development
- Encourage and support personal development
- Use skilled communicators
- Keep communication simple
- Get verbal commitment to change

Support

- Provide adequate resources
- Provide recognition and rewards
- Expect results and inspect progress
- Evaluate and revise
- Consider individual differences
- Provide follow up

Reflection Questions

Is the vision clear and accepted so that you hear others repeat the vision?

Is the focus of decisions on the needs of students?

Does staff identify current success in rigor, relevance, and relationships without defending all current practice?

Do we have the right people involved?

Does staff feel comfortable and empowered to take risks and innovate?

Is there a consensus of action agreed upon by all staff?

Is staff excited about continual learning and frequently share ideas?

Are the staff needs identified and met?

Does staff feel supported in making changes?

Have we provided adequate resources?

Have we focused on the positive success, celebrated achievements?

Do leaders follow through?