

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships



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LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

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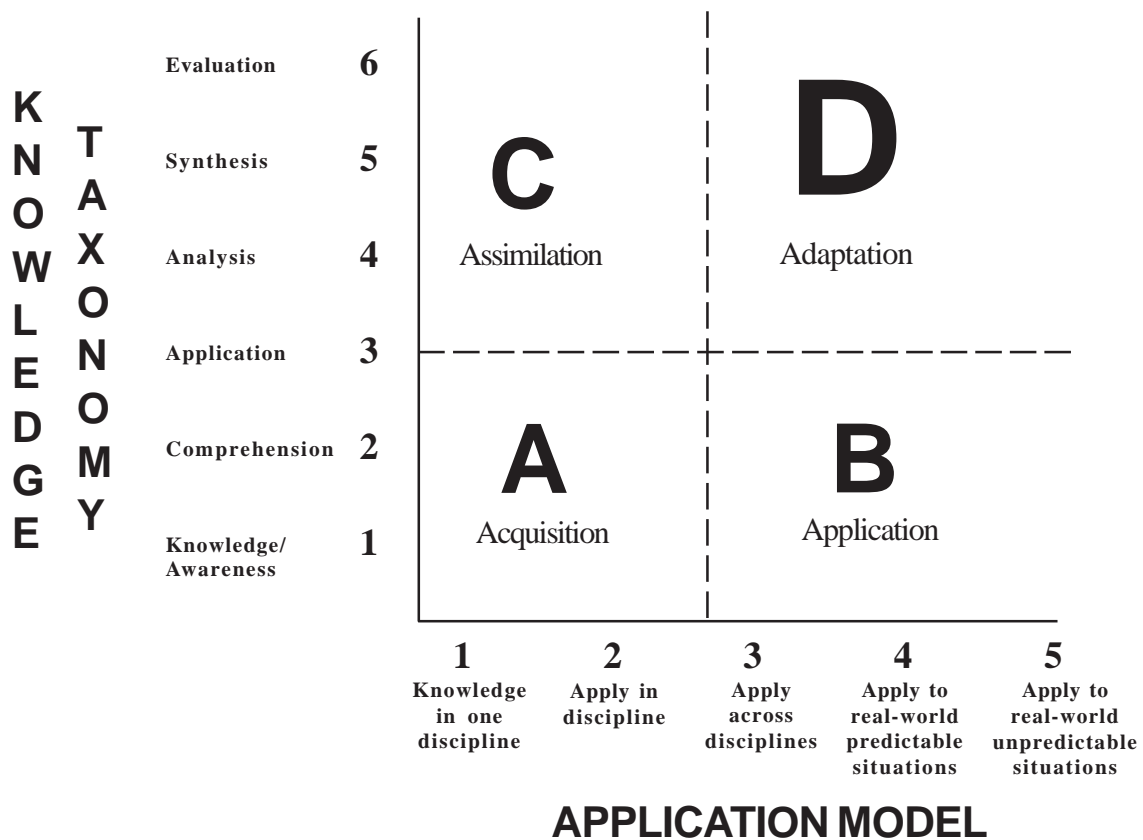
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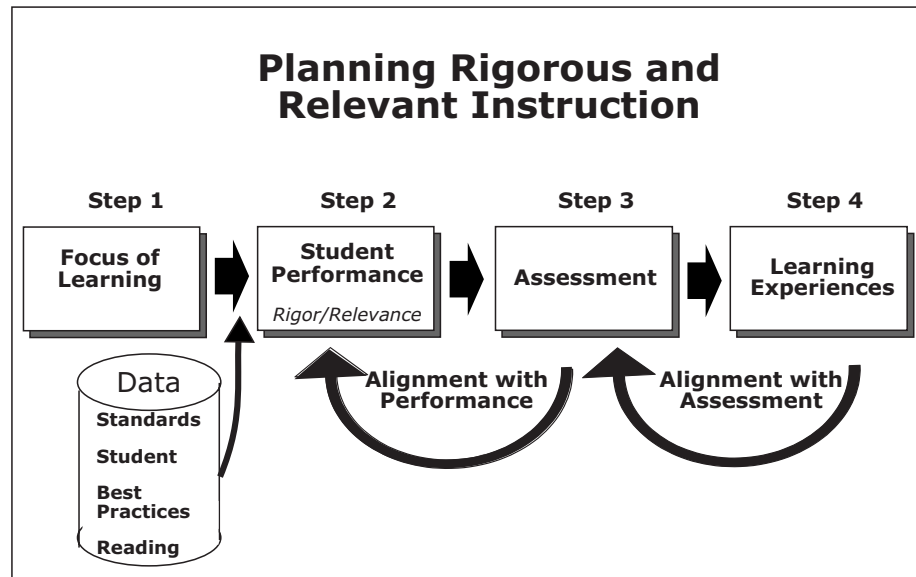
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Rigor/Relevance Framework®





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?

Elementary Level Examples

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

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

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

Middle Level Examples

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

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

		Science	
R I G O R	High	Identify chemicals dissolved in an unknown solution.	Collect data and make recommendations to address an environmental problem.
	Low	Construct models of molecules.	Collect data on dissolved oxygen, hardness, alkalinity, and temperature in a stream.
		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.	Develop a sampling plan for a public opinion poll.
	Low	Predict the probability of events using ratios.	Measure small metal objects using calipers and micrometers.
		Low	High
		RELEVANCE	

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

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

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

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.

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:

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

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

Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

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

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 (I 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 class.
- Teachers make me feel 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 to 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.

Build 5

- ★ Rigor/Relevance
- ★ Relationships

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 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 prerequisite 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 above. 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	<p>Rubrics</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Common rubrics are used throughout the school for typical performances such as student writing and presentations.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers are proficient in creating and adapting rubrics to their instruction.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Students are informed of evaluation criteria in advance of completing their work.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers share rubrics among other teachers.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teacher use rubrics beyond those required for reporting grades.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Reading</p> <p><input type="radio"/> All teachers use reading in the content strategies as part of instruction.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers have access to data on the reading level of each of their students.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Reading level of students is measured frequently to determine progress.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers know the reading level of materials used in the classroom.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers differentiate instruction to accommodate different reading levels of students.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Reflective Thought</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers often create student work that requires students to develop an answer rather than recall an answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers give students time to think in classroom instruction.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers help students relate learning to student background and personal experience.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers frequently use the inquiry method to encourage students to pose questions.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Students have opportunities to reflect on the quality of their work and summarize what they have learned.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Revision</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers share innovative lessons with other teachers.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers have opportunities to observe other classrooms demonstrating best instructional practices.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers have access to adequate technology for integration of technology in instruction.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> There is a common structure to lesson plan development across subjects or grades.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers collaborate in development of interdisciplinary lessons.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Research</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers collect data to evaluate effectiveness of innovative practices.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers select innovations and instructional programs based on research data.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers visit other classrooms and schools to identify best practices.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers analyze data on students to identify strengths, weaknesses, and interests to differentiate instruction.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers stay current in the profession by reading journals and participating in professional organizations.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Resilience</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Teachers know individual student’s strengths and give them daily opportunities to use their strengths.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> There are ample opportunities for students to explore interests through in-class and other school activities.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The school uses a variety of recognitions to “catch” students succeeding.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> School provides a safe and secure atmosphere where students are comfortable and willing to take risks.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Students who fail or act out and are removed from schools have ample opportunity to re-enter the system.</p>

Signposts on the Road to Rigor and Relevance Checklist (continued)

Yes	Partial	No	<p>Relationships</p> <p>Students actively support each other while attaining higher levels of achievement.</p> <p>Teachers work with students frequently outside of classroom instruction.</p> <p>Parents and community members are frequent participants in school activities.</p> <p>Teachers consistently exhibit behaviors that show they care about and respect students.</p> <p>Each student has an adult advocate that knows the student well and meets regularly to identify needs, problems, and accomplishments.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Reschedule</p> <p>The length of instructional periods allows for students to complete projects and problems consistent with high rigor/high relevance.</p> <p>Teacher teams have the flexibility to modify the schedule to meet student needs.</p> <p>The master schedule is designed around the needs of students.</p> <p>The schedule provides planning time for teachers to discuss student needs and plan interdisciplinary projects.</p> <p>Teachers are skilled in maximizing all of instructional time.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Rejuvenation</p> <p>Teachers are encouraged to participate in self-directed professional learning.</p> <p>Teachers collaborate frequently by sharing ideas and strategies.</p> <p>Coaches are available to work with teachers individually on professional development priorities.</p> <p>New teachers are provided with mentors and time to meet with them.</p> <p>School or district professional development is personalized to teacher needs.</p>
Yes	Partial	No	<p>Rewards</p> <p>Students are recognized in a wide variety of events and activities.</p> <p>Students and staff celebrate schoolwide academic achievement.</p> <p>Students get frequent feedback from teachers about the quality of their work.</p> <p>Incentives are provided to teachers that take on extra work or make outstanding contributions.</p> <p>Both parents and the community provide rewards and recognition to students.</p>

Leadership for Rigor/Relevance/Relationships

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	<p style="text-align: center;">Build</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"You lead today by building teams and placing others first."</i> Jeff Immelt</p>
					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	<p style="text-align: center;">Create</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"The goal isn't to live forever; the goal is to create something that will."</i> Chuck Palahniuk</p>
					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	<p style="text-align: center;">Develop</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“When you shift people's perceptions, their actions follow.”</i> Rayona Sharpnack</p>
					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	<p style="text-align: center;">Support</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Some people change when they see the light, others when they feel the heat.”</i> Caroline Schoeder</p>
					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.