



***Rigor, Relevance
and
Relationships***

Helen M. Branigan

Senior Consultant

hbranigan@aol.com

Susan Gunderman

Principal, Kennesaw Mt. High School

Susan.gunderman@cobbk12.org

International Center for Leadership in Education

1587 Route 146

Rexford, NY 12148

(518) 399-2776

<http://www.LeaderEd.com>

15th Annual Model Schools Pre-Conference



Introduction to Rigor, Relevance and Relationship

Saturday, June 30, 2007

Helen Branigan and Susan Gunderman

Schools must develop a culture of excellence that challenges every student to achieve high standards. This workshop will introduce the Rigor/Relevance Framework and the Relationship Model. The Rigor/Relevance Framework gives educators a basis to plan curriculum, develop assessments, and select the most effective teaching strategies. When students see the relevance of what they are learning, they are more motivated to learn. Students also need strong relationships that support learning; the Relationship Model provides a means of quantifying those relationships. Behaviors, activities, and school structures that support learning and the personalization of rigor and relevance will be discussed.

Essential Questions

The workshop will focus on the following essential questions.

- Why is it important to focus on rigor and relevant learning?
- How can the Rigor/Relevance Framework provide a measure for improving learning?
- How can the Rigor/Relevance Framework be applied to planning instruction, designing assessments and selecting instructional strategies?
- What are the best practices that raise student achievement by applying the Rigor/Relevance Framework?
- Why is it essential to personalize rigor and relevance?
- Why is it important to build relationships that support learning?
- How can the Relationship Model help to quantify relationships?
- What behaviors, activities, and schools structures contribute to building relationships that improve teaching and learning?
- What are the best practices in schools that enhance the quality of relationships?

Participant Outcomes

Participants will:

- Be able to explain the rationale for applying the Rigor/Relevance Framework and the Relationship Model.
- Understand how the Rigor/Relevance Framework can be used to analyze curriculum, instruction, assessment and learning activities.
- Apply the Rigor/Relevance Framework to various instructional settings, learning experiences, instructional strategies and assessments.
- Recognize the importance of building relationships that support student learning.

- Identify behaviors, activities and school structures that contribute to personalizing rigor and relevance and supportive student relationships.
- Replicate best practices that promote rigor, relevance and relationships for all students.
- Develop an action plan to introduce personalized rigor and relevance learning for all students.
- Become familiar with resources on rigor, relevance and relationships.

AGENDA

- 9:00 □9:30 a.m. **Why Rigor and Relevance**
- 9:30-10:15 a.m. **The Rigor and Relevance Framework**
- Definition
 - Sample Learning Experiences
 - Activities
 - Determining Levels
 - Rigor and Relevance Challenge
- 10:15-10:30 a.m. **Break**
- 10:30-11:30 a.m. **Planning Rigorous and Relevant Instruction**
- Planning Model
 - Activity
 - Student Work
- The Rigor/Relevance Framework and Assessments**
- Correlating the Framework with Types of Assessments
 - Activities
 - Determining Levels of Test Questions
 - Raising Levels of Test Questions
- The Rigor/Relevance Framework and Instructional Strategies**
- Correlating the Framework with Types of Strategies
- Raising the Level of Rigor and Relevance**
- 11:30-12 noon **Lessons and Best Practices on Rigor and Relevance**
- Kennesaw Mountain High School
- 12:00-1:30 p.m. **Lunch**
- 1:30-2:00 p.m. **Lessons and Best Practices on Rigor and Relevance, cont'd.**

2:00-2:45 p.m.

Building Relationships to Support Student Learning

- Student Perceptions, My Voice Survey Results
- The Relationship Model
- Activity
 - Student Profiles
- Supportive Behaviors
- Supportive Activities
- Supportive Structures

2:45-3:00 p.m.

Break

3:00-3:45 p.m.

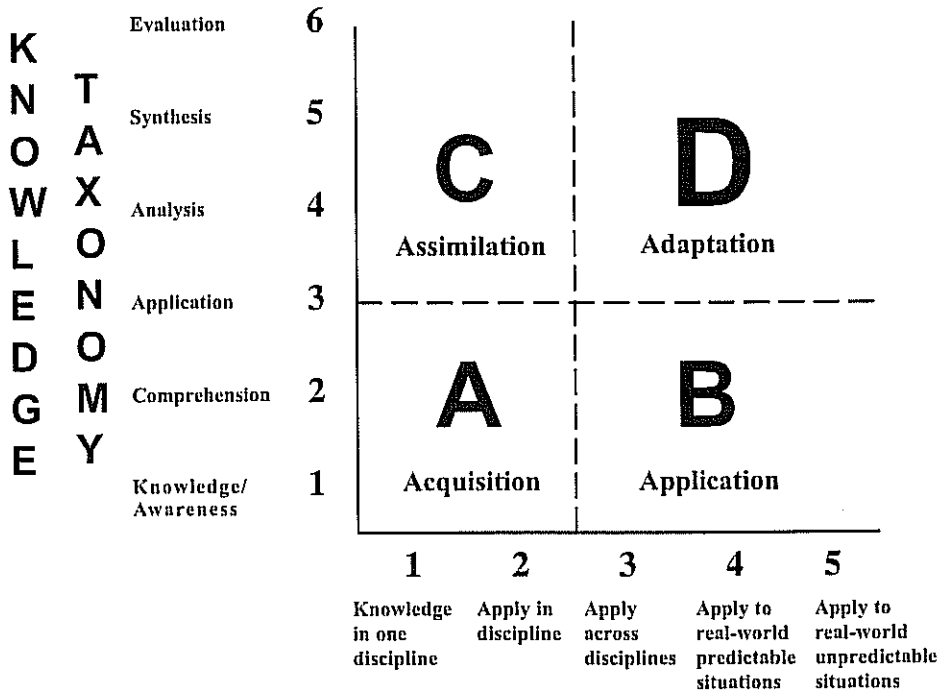
Lessons and Best Practices on Relationships to Support Learning

- Kennesaw Mountain High School

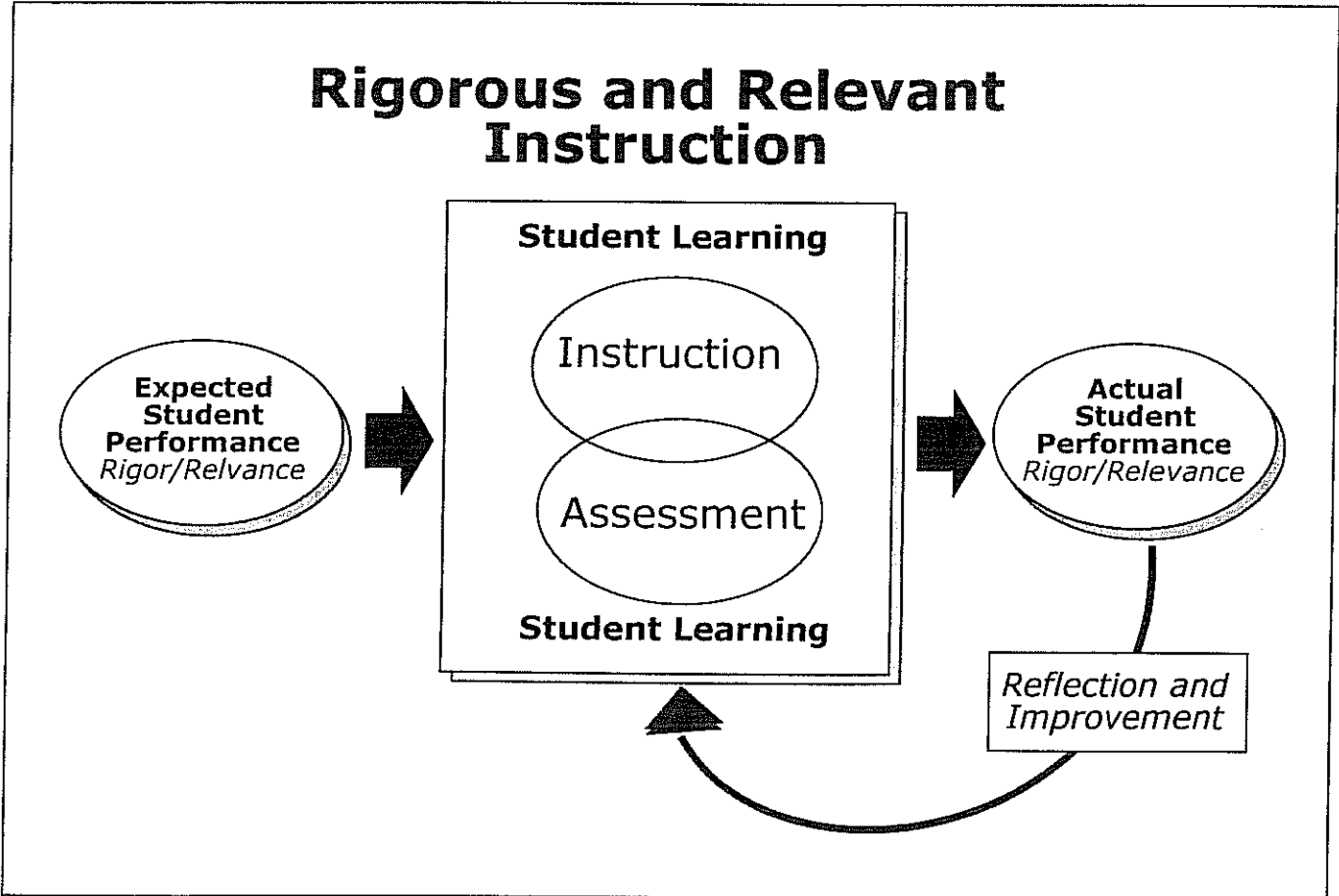
3:45-4:00 p.m.

Reflection/Action Plan

RIGOR/RELEVANCE FRAMEWORK



APPLICATION MODEL



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

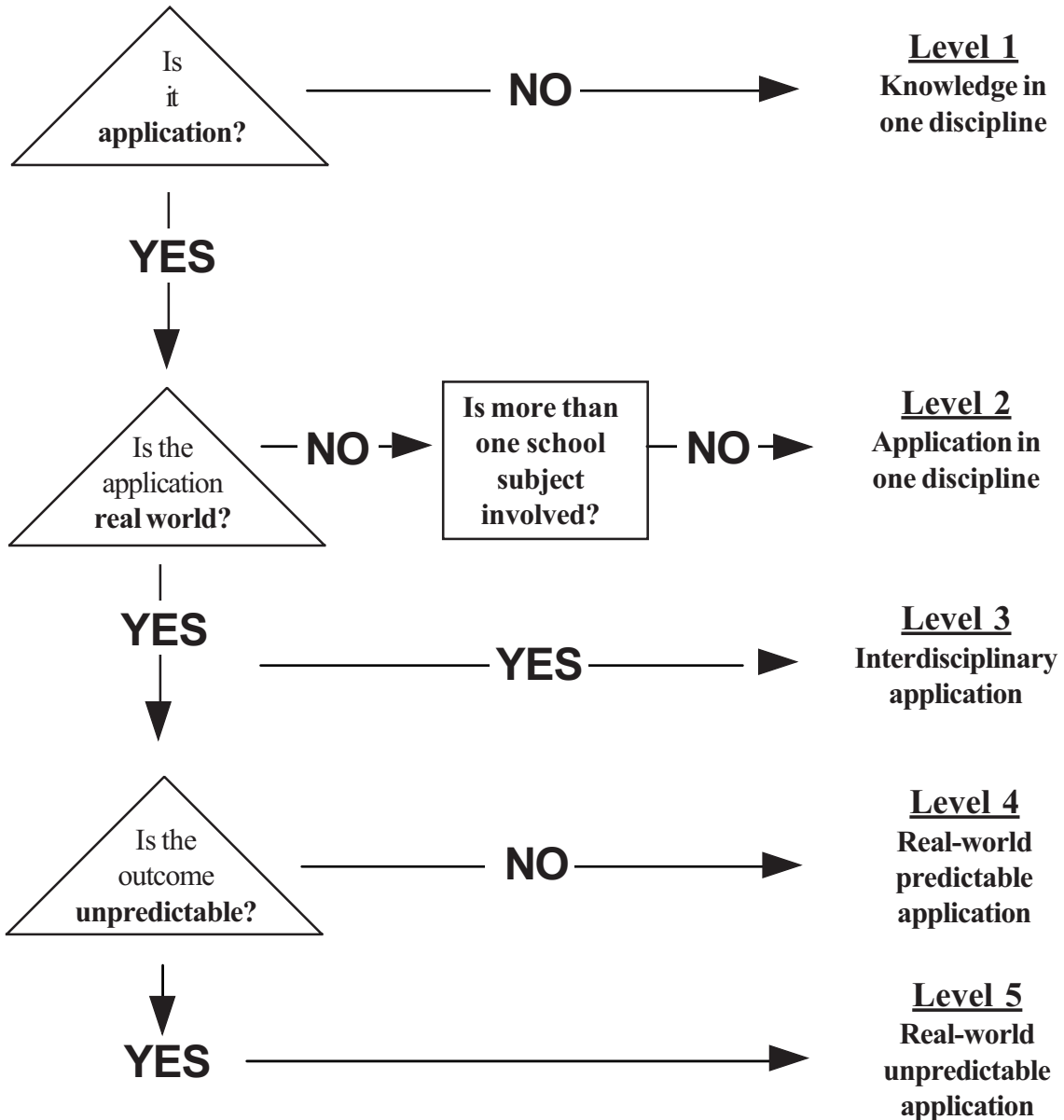
6

Evaluation

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

Application Model Decision Tree

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



Example of Student Performance in Application Model

Application Model

1. Knowledge in one discipline
2. Apply knowledge in discipline
3. Apply knowledge across disciplines
4. Apply knowledge to real-world predictable situations
5. Apply knowledge to real-world unpredictable situations

Public Speaking

Application Level

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | List characteristics of a good speech |
| 2 | Give a presentation to a class |
| 3 | Make an oral defense of a senior exhibition or project |
| 4 | Present a point of view on an issue at a public meeting |
| 5 | Respond to questions a student representative at a board of education meeting |

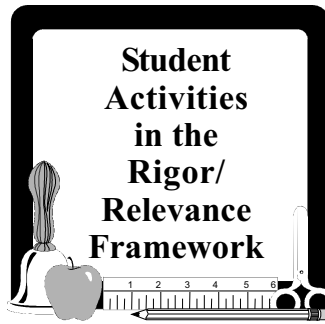


Subject

Application Model

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Science



Elementary Examples

6

Quadrant C Assimilation

- Write and illustrate biographies of inventors.
- Make diagrams of animal life cycles.
- Classify a group of similar objects to create a dichotomous key.
- Conduct experiments to show photosynthesis.
- Research an endangered species.
- Make observations of similarities and differences of fish heads and predict food sources.
- Research characteristics and habits of insects.
- Write a story describing the movement of water through municipal water systems.

5

4

3

2

1

Quadrant A Acquisition

- Memorize names of planets in solar system.
- Demonstrate phases of the moon.
- Participate in simple hands-on activities that demonstrate Bernoulli's principle of air pressure and air flight.
- Match pictures of insects with their names.
- Illustrate parts of a cell.
- Make a model of the layers of Earth's atmosphere.
- Make daily observations of the life cycle of a selected species.
- Create a mural showing various kinds of creatures that live in the ocean.

Quadrant D Adaptation

- Design a candy dispenser that works without gravity.
- Invent a musical instrument.
- Design a zoo.
- Study bread chemistry, purpose of ingredients, and how changes affect final product.
- Set up experiments to test life length of batteries.
- Research and write a field guide for identifying local trees.
- Build a simple robotic device with string, tape, and rubber bands.

Quadrant B Application

- Develop a food list for a space trip.
- Create a class book about the animal and plant life in local rivers.
- Take photographs of insects to describe characteristics and behaviors.
- Study examples of paper airplanes and then create one.
- Keep a field journal about the insects that live near your school.
- Develop an acid test and sample rainwater for acidity.
- Create electric circuits of various materials and determine properties of conductivity and insulation.
- Analyze characteristics of different soil types.

1

2

3

4

5

level occurs rarely in education for at this point both parties contribute support to one another in a sustained relationship.

When the relationship framework is applied to learning, it refers to the support that is provided to students from teachers, parents, peers and community. The following chart describes the levels 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, their 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	The highest level of relationships, rarely achieved in school setting where students enjoy high levels of support and also support others in a mutually beneficial learning relationship.

How the Relationship Framework Helps Teachers

Once teachers make relationships important, they can begin to reflect about current practices and discuss how to improve relationships. Relationships are not simple good or bad, there are degrees. And relationships can be changed over time. The usefulness of the Relationship Model is that it first helps teachers understand that there are degrees of relationships. When they think about their relationships with students, they can use the Framework to apply a qualitative measure to the level of relationships. 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 simple dichotomy of good or bad, teachers are not likely to reflect on practice or make self directed changes. If changes 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 you use a leveled framework for describing relationships it has a different effect on teachers. Even if relationships are poor, there are at least some positive aspects to build on. This makes teachers less defensive because there is at least some positive aspects to relationships. This is something to build on and doesn't create a sense of there is nothing the teacher can do to improve. At the other end of the scale and in a situation where relationships are generally "good", they are 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. This gives a common focus to teachers. Everyone needs to work on relationships and it is not just a burden to those teachers with "poor" relationships.

The other aspect that is powerful in using the Relationship Framework is the levels help to identify the changes that need to be made to improve relationships. If a teacher observes a student that 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 student "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 that sits alone in a school cafeteria. If a teacher observes that current student relationships are at the "Known" level, relationship intervention can focus on frequency of contact and exhibiting behaviors of receptivity. The next level is moving up to behaviors the react to providing support to students. This levels of the Framework provide this guidance to the interventions that will lead to high levels of student support and learning relationships.

School leaders should begin to use the Relationship Framework as a way to describe levels of relationships in supporting student learning and to guide teachers in reflecting on current practice to increase student support.

Classroom Mgt. vs. Learning Relationships

The teacher role and 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 usually refers to the processes and techniques that teachers use to set the climate for learning. Classroom management is a term that create the impression that the classroom is a industrial process rather than a collaboration among people. Classroom management requires that the teacher applies certain management techniques without any emotion to make sure that the classroom runs smoothly and efficiently. Classroom management is a term that originates in the industrial model of education. This industrial model is the same model that gives us a rigid bell schedule, differentiation of labor and large schools houses. School leaders are now questioning many of these industrial model characteristics. Perhaps one of the changes we 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. But this is not a process to be managed. The classroom is a group of students that desire and deserve a high quality personal relationship with adults and peers. It is this quality of relationship that drives their behavior and leads to learning. The following table describes some differences from

looking at the climate building for instruction as relationship building rather than 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 activity engaged
Risk Taking	Discouraged	Encouraged
Control Mechanism	Negative punishments	Positive reinforcement
Primary Teacher role	Absolute attention	Source of encouragement
Voice	Group pronouncements	Private conversations

Improving Student Support for Learning

Supportive Behaviors – *ways teachers act and interact with students to positive learning support and good relationships.*

- ◆ Showing Respect
- ◆ Being There
- ◆ Active Listening
- ◆ Frequent Contact
- ◆ Encouragement
- ◆ Avoiding "Put Downs"
- ◆ Displaying Student's Work
- ◆ Writing Encouraging Notes
- ◆ Identifying Unique Talents and Strengths
- ◆ Celebrating Accomplishments
- ◆ Serving as a Role Model
- ◆ Using One-on-One Communication
- ◆ Encouraging Students to Express Opinions Ideas
- ◆ Creating Inviting Classroom Climate
- ◆ Exhibiting Enthusiasm
- ◆ Using Positive Humor
- ◆ Students Praising Peers

Supportive Initiatives – *school initiatives that contribute to positive learning support and good relationships.*

- ◆ Character Education
- ◆ Beginning of the Year Student Social Activities
- ◆ Team Building
- ◆ Mentoring
- ◆ Rewards, Recognition, Incentives
- ◆ Student Advocacy
- ◆ Advisement Program
- ◆ Peer Mediation
- ◆ Students as Teachers
- ◆ Family, Community, Business Partnerships
- ◆ Service Learning
- ◆ Extra and Co-curricular Activities
- ◆ Sports Programs

Supportive Structures – *major organizational changes that contribute to learning support and good relationships.*

- ◆ Small Learning Communities
- ◆ Alternative Scheduling
- ◆ Team Teaching
- ◆ Teacher Continuity (multi-age, looping)
- ◆ School-based Enterprises
- ◆ Professional Learning Communities

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.

Personalization Survey

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.

Relationship Framework

A question for school improvement is about the role of relationships and whether it can be a deliberate improvement strategy. 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 learning environment for students. Clearly positive relationships occur in many schools. The question is whether in the process of school improvement, can we 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 fifty 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 relationships related to learning.

The following relationship framework describes the levels of relationships.

<p>Relationship Framework</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">0. Isolation1. Known2. Receptive3. Reactive4. Proactive5. Sustained6. Mutually Beneficial

Level 0 on the framework is **Isolation**. This is the lack of any positive relationships and the individual feels alone and isolated from social relationships that would enhance learning. Level 1 is **Known**. You must know someone before you develop a relationship. When teachers seek to develop positive relationships with students, the first step is getting to know them — their families, their 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 level is exhibiting the perception that you are interested and genuinely care about developing a relationship. This comes from frequent contact, in multiple settings and taking and active interest. Level 3 is **Reactive** in which one person receives guidance or support from another. The relationship then 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, but take an active interest and supports the other person. **Sustained** is Level 5. At this level the positive relationship of support is balanced from all family members, peers and teachers. It is also a relationship that will endure over a long period of time. This is the level of relationships that parents have with their children. The highest level is 6 — **Mutually Beneficial**. This

level occurs rarely in education for at this point both parties contribute support to one another in a sustained relationship.

When the relationship framework is applied to learning, it refers to the support that is provided to students from teachers, parents, peers and community. The following chart describes the levels 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, their 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	The highest level of relationships, rarely achieved in school setting where students enjoy high levels of support and also support others in a mutually beneficial learning relationship.

How the Relationship Framework Helps Teachers

Once teachers make relationships important, they can begin to reflect about current practices and discuss how to improve relationships. Relationships are not simple good or bad, there are degrees. And relationships can be changed over time. The usefulness of the Relationship Model is that it first helps teachers understand that there are degrees of relationships. When they think about their relationships with students, they can use the Framework to apply a qualitative measure to the level of relationships. 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 simple dichotomy of good or bad, teachers are not likely to reflect on practice or make self directed changes. If changes 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 you use a leveled framework for describing relationships it has a different effect on teachers. Even if relationships are poor, there are at least some positive aspects to build on. This makes teachers less defensive because there is at least some positive aspects to relationships. This is something to build on and doesn't create a sense of there is nothing the teacher can do to improve. At the other end of the scale and in a situation where relationships are generally "good", they are 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. This gives a common focus to teachers. Everyone needs to work on relationships and it is not just a burden to those teachers with "poor" relationships.

The other aspect that is powerful in using the Relationship Framework is the levels help to identify the changes that need to be made to improve relationships. If a teacher observes a student that 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 student "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 that sits alone in a school cafeteria. If a teacher observes that current student relationships are at the "Known" level, relationship intervention can focus on frequency of contact and exhibiting behaviors of receptivity. The next level is moving up to behaviors the react to providing support to students. This levels of the Framework provide this guidance to the interventions that will lead to high levels of student support and learning relationships.

School leaders should begin to use the Relationship Framework as a way to describe levels of relationships in supporting student learning and to guide teachers in reflecting on current practice to increase student support.

Classroom Mgt. vs. Learning Relationships

The teacher role and 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 usually refers to the processes and techniques that teachers use to set the climate for learning. Classroom management is a term that create the impression that the classroom is a industrial process rather than a collaboration among people. Classroom management requires that the teacher applies certain management techniques without any emotion to make sure that the classroom runs smoothly and efficiently. Classroom management is a term that originates in the industrial model of education. This industrial model is the same model that gives us a rigid bell schedule, differentiation of labor and large schools houses. School leaders are now questioning many of these industrial model characteristics. Perhaps one of the changes we 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. But this is not a process to be managed. The classroom is a group of students that desire and deserve a high quality personal relationship with adults and peers. It is this quality of relationship that drives their behavior and leads to learning. The following table describes some differences from

looking at the climate building for instruction as relationship building rather than 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 activity engaged
Risk Taking	Discouraged	Encouraged
Control Mechanism	Negative punishments	Positive reinforcement
Primary Teacher role	Absolute attention	Source of encouragement
Voice	Group pronouncements	Private conversations

Improving Student Support for Learning

Supportive Behaviors – *ways teachers act and interact with students to positive learning support and good relationships.*

- ◆ Showing Respect
- ◆ Being There
- ◆ Active Listening
- ◆ Frequent Contact
- ◆ Encouragement
- ◆ Avoiding "Put Downs"
- ◆ Displaying Student's Work
- ◆ Writing Encouraging Notes
- ◆ Identifying Unique Talents and Strengths
- ◆ Celebrating Accomplishments
- ◆ Serving as a Role Model
- ◆ Using One-on-One Communication
- ◆ Encouraging Students to Express Opinions Ideas
- ◆ Creating Inviting Classroom Climate
- ◆ Exhibiting Enthusiasm
- ◆ Using Positive Humor
- ◆ Students Praising Peers

Supportive Initiatives – *school initiatives that contribute to positive learning support and good relationships.*

- ◆ Character Education
- ◆ Beginning of the Year Student Social Activities
- ◆ Team Building
- ◆ Mentoring
- ◆ Rewards, Recognition, Incentives
- ◆ Student Advocacy
- ◆ Advisement Program
- ◆ Peer Mediation
- ◆ Students as Teachers
- ◆ Family, Community, Business Partnerships
- ◆ Service Learning
- ◆ Extra and Co-curricular Activities
- ◆ Sports Programs

Supportive Structures – *major organizational changes that contribute to learning support and good relationships.*

- ◆ Small Learning Communities
- ◆ Alternative Scheduling
- ◆ Team Teaching
- ◆ Teacher Continuity (multi-age, looping)
- ◆ School-based Enterprises
- ◆ Professional Learning Communities

Kennesaw Mountain High School

Kennesaw, Georgia

Summary

Kennesaw Mountain High School in Cobb County, Georgia, is a national model of how to hold high expectations for all students and meet individual student needs within a large comprehensive high school. 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 math, 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 other programs; and articulated programs with area colleges. The school operates on a four-period block schedule.

From administrators to classroom teachers to students, the concept of rigorous and relevant academic standards being set and achieved is deeply embraced. The curriculum and supportive instructional activities have been organized and the multiple pathways have been established to enable all students to achieve instructional goals. Students are held to high expectations that are supported in numerous ways. It is clear throughout the building that students are valued. This culture of respect is due in large part to highly visible and successful service learning and character education programs. The school culture is also one of expansive capacity building of all staff. The staff has a passion for meeting the needs of students and support from the administration to do so.

The overriding characteristic of the school is leadership. Multiple levels of leadership exist within the school. The principal created the culture, or environment, that demands high standards for all students. The commitment to high standards is carried out by the assistant principals, instructional leaders, classroom teachers, students, parents, and community members. As one student said, "It's cool to be smart." Based on observations, it is cool to be smart not only for "the smart kids" but also for all students.

The school makes an extraordinary commitment to and has great success in its special education program. Students with disabilities are held to high standards and are supported to get there. Numerous resource courses are available, either team taught in mainstream classrooms or delivered in self-contained classes. These classes include most of the core courses in the major academic disciplines that are offered to all students. In addition, resource course options include study and social skills, work-study, and reading enrichment.

Kennesaw Mountain 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 consisted of 80.5% white, 11.2% African American, 3.6% Hispanic, and 2.7% Asian students. Students with disabilities were 11.4% of the student population; gifted was 19.2%; ESOL was 1.2%; and the percentage of students on free or reduced price lunch was 4.6%. Three percent of students dropped out of school.

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. Approximately 190 students take AP exams. The average class size is 26.

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. The commitment to put students first is so strong, in fact, 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.

Kennesaw Mountain recognizes the challenges that it will face during the next few years, especially in terms of growth and diversity. Staff realizes that they must continually evaluate their programs to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all of their students. As the principal stated, "We've got to do better. It's not about us; it's what we are doing for the kids."

Evidences of Rigor and Relevance

- There are high expectations for all students. The teachers and administrators uniformly have a deep commitment to high expectations and to do whatever it takes to get there.
- The school's results on the Georgia High School graduation test continue to improve in English and math.
- Standardized test score data are used as indicators of opportunities to improve student achievement.
- 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 D quadrant 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 teach and learning. She works with teachers all day long, improving pedagogy and helping teachers to stay on the path of rigor and relevance.

Evidences of Relationships that Support Student Learning and Staff

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.
- Through multiple pathways the school is able to personalize instruction. 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 capacity of the staff is expanded by treating teachers in a professional manner.
- Kennesaw Mountain continues to expand the division of the school into additional career academies or houses to provide more personalized educational opportunities.
- 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 high expectations and meet 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 administers to gather opinions as to what parents and community members would like to see in the school.
- The administration clearly wants and ensures open communications with staff, community, and students. Administrators emphasize in both word and deed their desire to hear what people really think and not what they think the administration wants them to hear.
- 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.
- The school has a full-time staff person who promotes student empowerment, leadership and excellence. Known as Vision. Quest, the program provides performance awards for students and teachers.
- The school has periodic early release to provide teachers time to collaborate, discuss, share, and evaluate instructional practices.
- A community service program gives students an opportunity to contribute to their community. Students spend from 80 to 135 hours a year in community service. 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.
- 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 D-level examples of what students need to know and be able to do.
- 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 a month. These are comprised of 15-20 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.

Time is set aside in small planning rooms for teachers to meet with each other to discuss both coordination of curriculum and the needs of individual students, especially those students with disabilities.

- There are strong relationships between students and teachers based on respect and mutual commitment to learning.

Student Profiles for Profile of a Student Activity

Student 1

You are life smart, but not school smart. You would do almost anything to not look stupid in school. You are the class clown, or the loud political protester, or the persistent talker □on the edge of being a □behavior problem.□ You don't mind being sent to the office instead of having to give an oral presentation □and you know just how to get sent there. Everyone at the office knows you well and greets you with affection, as they know you as □really, a nice kid.□ The thinks you are really good at seem to have little place in school.

Student 2

You are a good but unremarkable student. You have figured out what each of your teachers wants, and you do exactly that □on time, and completely. You are a committed student, but take few risks, and so seldom challenge yourself to higher levels of learning. You are one of those kids people talk about □the quiet kid whose work always falls within the □norm.□ Because you complete your work, get A's and B's, and are never any trouble, you are often overlooked.

Student 3

You love learning. You can't get enough of it. You actually look up those books that your teachers mention in passing and independently figure out alternative math theorems □just for fun. Your only beef with school is the busy work you have to do and those classes you have to take with kids who just don't seem to care about learning.

Student 4

Who are you anyway? It often takes teachers a full semester to remember your name, and you often feel invisible. This is either because you like it that way [i.e., you sit in the back and hide behind textbooks, hats, whatever □happily forgoing a few percentages to keep from going public, and doing decent but unremarkable work to keep a low profile]. Or, this is because you feel disenfranchised and disempowered, for all kinds of reasons. You watch the □in□students with a mixture of envy and disdain. You know more about certain subjects than they do, but most teachers don't know that.

Student 5

In your mind, there is not way you can succeed in school. You have been a □remedial□student from before your memory kicked in. You read slowly, and seldom get a passing grade on an in-class essay. You do have strengths, but no one seems to notice or value those. You wonder if life after high school will feel like more of the same.

Student 6

You are a finely tuned teacher-pleasing machine. You know exactly what you need to do to maximize your graded and you do it (no matter what) and then some. You are organized, disciplined and focused □on your homework, on getting good grades, and on your extra curricular activities, which will look good on your transcript when you apply to college. Your teachers know you will always volunteer for anything they ask □and you often do.

Student 7

You are an efficiency hound to leave time for other things in your life □the lowest passing grade possible for the least amount of work is your mantra. Why pass a class with a 78% when you can pass with a 69.2% and a good sob story: You know all the tricks: make up tests, rewrites, re-dos, extra credit points, parental pressure, coach pressure, group work (with the right partners). You put more effort into beating the game than learning.

Student 8

You have a creative mind, love the arts (drawing, music, and/or drama) and believe that most of the significant ideas in life can't be expressed talking or writing, which is all anyone seems to want to do in school. You have a hard time staying focused in most of your required classes. You are happy with yourself, but often feel like you are □marching to a different drummer.□

Student 9

Who said academics and classes and grades are the most important things about school? As far as you are concerned, your classes are the places where you get to see your friends, and sometimes, frankly, they seem to interrupt what's really important □like talking to your friends, and going to games, and participating in what they call the □extra curricular□activities. These activities don't seem □extra□to you at all, but instead are □central□to what school is *really* about.