

Youth Voice Advocate Tool Kit:

School Transformation... Be the Buzz!



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in partnership with many wise
youth and adult
guides.**

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Youth Voice Advocate Tool Kit

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
YATST Tool Kit Overview	4
Enduring Understandings	5
Essential Questions	5
What Participants will “Know and Do”	6
Objective 1: Provide an overview of YATST’s goal & methods.	7
<i>Activity 1: Graphic Overview YATST Goal & Methods</i>	7
<i>Activity 2: Harwood Prezi Presentation</i>	11
<i>Activity 3: YATST Rap Song & Logo</i>	11
<i>Activity 4: 4 Legged Stool (4 Rs)</i>	14
<i>Activity 5: Margaret Wheatley - “Turning to One Another”</i>	15
<i>Activity 6: Action Research: Graphic Overview Graphic Overview</i>	17
<i>Activity 7: Action Research: YATST Example</i>	20
<i>Activity 8: YATST Time Capsule</i>	25
<i>Activity 8: Newsletter Review</i>	31
Objective 2: Explore compelling reasons why high schools need to change:	
1) what data tells us about how we are currently serving students,	
2) 21 st Century skill set,	
3) what we know about learning	32
<i>Activity 1: What’s S000000 Different??!! Introduction to the 21st Century</i>	33

<i>Activity 2: What ARE these 21st Century Skills??</i>	39
<i>Activity 3: Introduction to 21st Century Skills</i>	42
<i>Activity 4: Some Sobering Statistics</i>	44
<i>Activity 5: Too Many Sitting</i>	45
<i>Activity 6: Chalktalks: Neuroscience of Learning & Education Here & Now</i>	47

Objective 3: Explore why student involvement in transformation work is so important.	50
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

<i>Activity 1: Why Bother? Marketplace</i>	54
<i>Activity 2: Ladder of Youth-Adult Partnership</i>	60

Objective 4: Explore the framework of Rigor, Relevance, Relationship and Responsibility as a foundation for school transformation.	63
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

<i>Activity 1: Introduction to the 4 Rs</i>	63
<i>Activity 2: The 4 Rs: What they Look and Sound Like</i>	73
<i>Activity 3: The 4 Rs: My Personal Stories</i>	76
<i>Activity 4: “Profiles of a Student” Activity: Applying the 4 Rs</i>	77

Objective 5: Envision the Unknown: Exploring Schools of the Future	
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

<i>Activity 1: Transformation Matching Game</i>	81
<i>Activity 2: Video Resources About Innovation</i>	88
Bibliography	90
Acknowledgements	94

YATST Tool Kit Overview

“There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about”.

Margaret Wheatley
“Turning to One Another”, 2002

The first critical step in high school “transformation” is helping our school communities understand the need for change. Change will be possible when ALL the stakeholders - students, teachers, school boards, parents and the community at large - feel the urgency for new ways of teaching and learning. This Tool Kit has been created to provoke this urgency.

Resistance to change is a well-known human phenomenon. There are many forces which motivate us to stay within our comfort zones and our field of known experience. Mandated transformation without authentic buy-in and ownership by the stakeholders is doomed. School communities have weathered many educational bandwagons over the years and often feel powerless and pawn-like in this process. *The key to unlocking cynicism and resistance is dialogue, fostering advocates and allies.*

Youth are uniquely positioned to be instigators of this powerful transformation dialogue. Youth facilitators leading a school community in exploring why change is necessary and what it might look like rekindles a community’s heartfelt commitment and caring for its children. How can adults not respond to thoughtful questions, initiated by students, about ways to best prepare youth in their own community for their futures? The very presence of young people as facilitators reminds us all of what is most important to guide our thoughts and actions - the well being of children. We are also reminded of the invaluable insights, creativity and capacity of youth to play a central role in any change process.

This Tool Kit is a compendium of engaging activities to introduce school transformation to key stakeholders in a community. It also includes activities for YATST teams to introduce their action research work.

CRITICAL POINT: Youth facilitators must be well trained to be competent in this role!

“Tokenizing” students by asking them to lead activities they have very little understanding of, using facilitation strategies they are not confident or competent to facilitate, has the potential to do great harm to the youth as individuals, and to subsequent youth involvement in school efforts.

Please assure quality facilitator training for students and adults using this Tool Kit! The accompanying facilitator guide found on www.yatst.com (resources) may help guide training decisions.

Tool Kit Enduring Understandings

- The demands of the 21st Century workforce require schools to change to meet the needs of future citizens.
- There is evidence that our schools are not meeting the needs of ALL students at the present time, and have a fundamental responsibility to do so.
- The neuroscience of learning informs school change.
- Students have a unique perspective regarding education and school change, and possess the capacity and wisdom to partner in transformation efforts.
- Any school transformation effort that lacks intentional student involvement is fundamentally flawed.
- Credible school change work is founded on 1) action research and 2) involving the community in the creation of the solutions, and youth partnership in the change process.
- Engagement in learning is significantly impacted by the rigor, relevance, the student- teacher relationship, shared responsibility in the learning and decision making process.
- Transformed schools have certain qualities.
- A strengths-based perspective is far more likely to provoke change than a deficit approach.

Essential Questions

- ❖ What is YATST and why is the work of YATST important?
- ❖ What knowledge and skills do our graduates need to be ready for the 21st century work world?
- ❖ What evidence exists that schools are inequitable or not serving all students?
- ❖ Why is equity important?
- ❖ What new discoveries in the neuroscience of learning can help inform school changes?
- ❖ What are deficit- and strength-based approaches and why choose one over the other when you are an “agent of change”?
- ❖ What is the relationship between engagement in learning and rigor, relevance, relationship, shared responsibility in learning and decision making?
- ❖ What does a transformed school look like and sound like?

- ❖ What is action research and how do you do it?
- ❖ How does data empower student voice?

Knowledge and Skills

The ability to.....

- Clearly and succinctly explain the goal of YATST and the action research process.
- Explain why students should be involved in school transformation efforts.
- Explain why schools need to transform using the demands of the 21st Century workforce, the neuroscience of learning and current school data as compelling reasons.
- Interpret data which confirms that schools are inequitable.
- Describe qualities of a transformed school.
- Explain how dialogue with all stakeholders and a strengths-based approach are essential to change.
- Provide examples from personal experience of how rigor, relevance, relationship and shared responsibility in learning and decision making contribute to being engaged.
- Competently and confidently facilitate any of the activities in this Tool Kit, achieving the desired learning objective.

Objective 1: Provide an overview of YATST's goal and methods.

Enduring Understandings:

- Credible school change work is founded on 1) action research and 2) involving the community in the creation of the solutions, 3) youth partnership in the change process.

Essential Questions:

- ❖ What is YATST and why is the work of YATST important?
- ❖ What is action research and how do you do it?
- ❖ How does data empower student voice?

Participants will:

- Clearly and succinctly explain the goal of YATST and the action research process.
- Explain why students should be involved in school transformation efforts.

Facilitator Note: This Tool Kit section relates specifically to the work of the Vermont YATST teams and provides a number of ways to introduce the work.

Activity 1: Graphic Overviews - YATST Goal & Methods

Materials: Initiative Overview handouts (3)

Time Commitment: 10 minutes

Three simple overviews of the goals and structure of YATST are provided for review. The first overview highlights the goal of increasing “engagement in learning” and “voice in decision making,” the 4 Rs and three phases of the work (Be Wise, Make Change, How Did We Do?). The second overview provides an understanding of the process and desired outcomes of the YATST team. The third handout clearly identifies the priority of addressing inequity in education, which warrants highlighting.

Goal:

Increase student engagement in learning and voice in decision-making by creating a partnership between students, faculty and the community to increase rigor, relevance, relationships and responsibility in Vermont schools.

How are we going to do this?

By increasing student engagement through impacting classroom & school-wide

Rigor

Relevance

Relationships

Responsibility

Who is doing this work?

Your Team: Youth and adults working in partnership

What will we be doing?

BE WISE

Become experts on what others think, want & know about school change - do research!

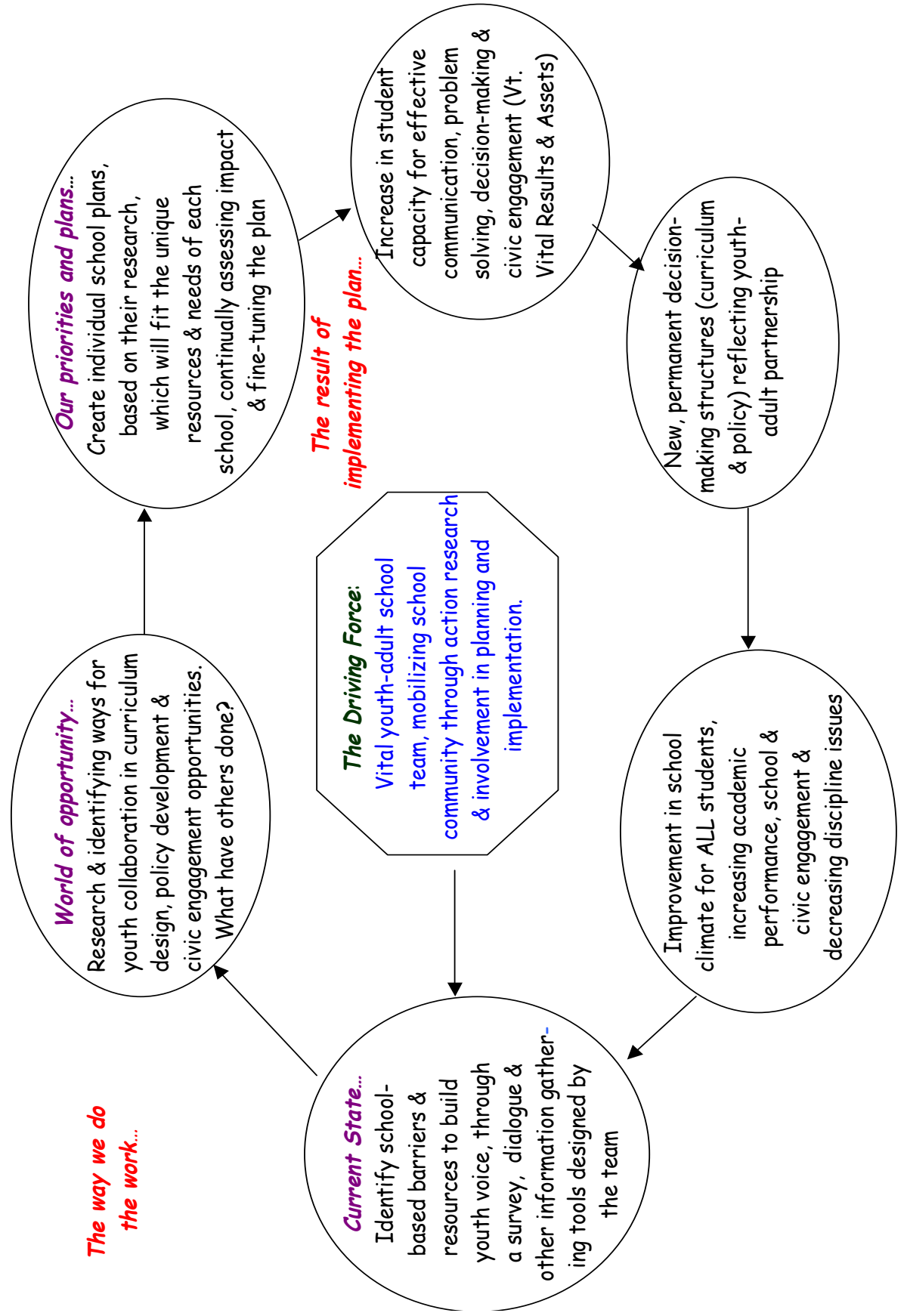
MAKE CHANGE

Do something to change **your** school (engagement or voice) based on your research findings.

HOW DID WE DO?

See if you made a difference and decide what is next.

Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together Overview



We want to make every day, for each student, an even better day by....

Making sure.....

- ❖ we have strong and positive **Relationships** with our teachers & peers in our classrooms
- ❖ all students are challenged and held to high standards (**Rigor**),
- ❖ our learning is **Relevant** and meaningful to our lives,
- ❖ we share the **Responsibility** of our learning with teachers and share school decision making with administration, teachers and the school board.

Changing policies or practices on a school-wide basis that will include students in decision making in new ways.

Assuring that ALL students feel their voice is heard and that their abilities as capable learners and decision makers are honored. We want to make sure EVERY student has **equal access** to all available resources to help them be successful.

Activity 2: Harwood Prezi Powerpoint

Materials: Harwood Prezi Presentation found on the YATST web site

Time Commitment: 10 minutes

Harwood High School created this “Prezi” presentation for a school board presentation to describe their work. It serves as an excellent model for developing your own presentation – or for the students on a newly forming YATST team to design a similar one once they have explored this work further.

Link: www.yatst.com - resources

Activity 3: YATST Rap Song & Logo

Materials: Rap Song audio recording (YATST web)
Rap Song Lyrics
Visual Logo

Time Commitment: 15 minutes

This rap song was created by a team of YATST participants in 2009. You can introduce this in many creative ways. Interesting points to explore are:

- 1) why do some students get enraged?
- 2) what are some other ways students become disengaged besides getting angry?
- 3) what are some reasons students don't get engaged?
- 4) what might increase the number of students who are engaged and want to come to school?
- 5) why do you think “responsibility” was added to the YATST work (the song only notes rigor, relevance & relationship)?

Consider finding some statistics from your school that might surprise participants regarding engagement (i.e. drop out rate, 9th grade failure rates, YRBS data regarding student voice in school decision making, perceived value in the community, etc.).

Link to PodCast: www.yatst.com You will see the Rap Song on the Home Page, left column.

Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together
Rap Song 2009

Don't Get Enraged - Get Engaged

Youth and adults transforming school,
You should try it too, it's really cool.
We care about students and the choices they make,
With stuff like this, you just can't fake.

Here at YATST, we're all about the three R's.
With these as our guide, we reach for the stars.
Rigor, relevance, and relation,
Should be taught in schools across the nation.

Now let's break it down:

Rigor is what inspires us,
What makes us get up in the morning and get on the bus.
Relevance is what ties the past to the now,
Get involved in class and we'll show you how.
Relation is what ties the students and the instructors,
Of their education, they're the conductors.

Look up, Speak out, Transform,
Step away from the norm
Look up, Speak out, Transform,
Makes our hearts feel warm.

Now our song is coming to an end,
To get people engaged is what we intend.
We hope you always participate in infinite learning,
A quest for more knowledge you should always be yearning.

Don't get enraged, get engaged!

Youth and Adults
Transforming Schools Together



Logo Meaning:

- We can “go anywhere” as we change our schools – the sky is the limit. Think big, look up!
- Speak Out – ALL voices are important (students, faculty, administration, board & community). It takes the whole community to continue to “grow” our schools.
- Looking Up & the sun signify hopefulness and new potential horizons.
- The flame is in the infinity sign to mark the goal of fostering infinite, life-long learning.
- There are mountains in our way but we can sail over them if we do this work together.
- We will increase engagement in learning and voice in decision making by increasing rigor, relevance, relationships and shared responsibility at our schools.

Activity 4: 4 Legged Stool (4 Rs)

Materials: 4-legged Stool with the following labels for each leg: rigor, relevance, relationship and responsibility. The seat is labeled “TRANSFORMATION.”

Time Commitment: 5 minutes

Put the goal of YATST on the board (“Increase student engagement in learning and voice in decision-making by creating a partnership between students, faculty and the community to increase rigor, relevance, relationships and responsibility in Vermont schools”). Offer the stool as the visual representation of this work. Explain that engagement is many things, but we do know that it has four key components or “legs”: rigor (high expectations for ALL students), relevance of the learning, strong student-teacher relationships and shared responsibility (students, teachers, parents, community). Transformation happens as we tend to and strengthen these legs.

Explain that YATST’s work is to:

- 1) Research our strengths & challenges in these four areas, and ways they can be further developed.
- 2) Share the research findings with the whole community to honor what we do well, and together discover ways to make the school even more engaging.
- 3) Create & implement a plan for change based on the research and community input.
- 4) Establish a means that student involvement in this type of work becomes institutionalized and part of the culture of the school

Activity 5: Margaret Wheatley – “Turning to One Another”

Materials: Margaret Wheatley poem for each person

Time Commitment: 30 minutes minimum

Explain that this poem beautifully describes the work of YATST. Read the poem together. Ask participants to re-read it themselves and pick out one short phrase or word that is particularly meaningful to them. Ask each person to share their choice and briefly describe why they chose it. Consider using any of the text-based discussion protocols in Appendix __, dependent on the size of your group and available time.

Alternative debriefing questions (consider a micro-lab):

1. What IS so powerful about a community discovering what it cares about?
2. What happens when we treasure certainty more than curiosity?
3. Why ask “What’s possible?” rather than “What’s wrong”?

Summarizing comments relating this poem to YATST:

- YATST is helping to the community to discover what it cares about through dialogue and through research (both quantitative and qualitative). We don’t necessarily have answers, but we have many great questions!
- YATST is committed to a **strengths-based approach** to change - first recognizing our many strengths, then exploring challenges. We realize that the solutions to our challenges will come from our existing strengths. From this balanced perspective, we ask “what’s possible?”.
- We believe that you care as much about a school that serves ALL students as we do - we have the same dream.
- We are committed to hearing ALL voices through our research, so that we make school a more engaging place for ALL students - especially those who are seldom heard. We must talk to those we never talk to, to make the right decision about what actions to take.
- Although it is hard, we try not to jump to conclusions, but rather be open minded and truly listen to different perspectives....without judgment. We know the right action will become evident if we truly listen, and then others will join us in change because they will be committed to the work too.

Turning to One Another

**There is no power greater than a community
discovering what it cares about**

Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know.

Talk to people you don’t know.

Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

**Margaret Wheatley
“Turning to One Another” 2002**

Activity 6: Action Research - Graphic Overview

Materials:

Copy of Graphic Overview of Action Research for each participant

Time: 30 minutes

Facilitator Note: The key to understanding action research is to understand that we all do action research on a regular basis as we make decisions: gathering, analyzing and sharing information, and acting and reflecting on our choices. We use Action Research in a deliberate and purposeful way to understand issues that we care about from multiple perspectives. Importantly, it is a way to gather insight and ideas from others that are interested in the same issue, inviting others to participate in what we care about (often called Participatory Action Research).

Activity

Step 1: Introduce the Model

Briefly explain the five steps in the Action Research model referenced in the handout.

Step 2: Personalizing Action Research

Ask the participants to consider the process of purchasing a cell phone or another item that might have personal relevance to the participants, taking into consideration their age and potential interests. Invite the participants to brainstorm the five steps in action research as it relates to the purchase of a new cell phone or another item or decision that has relevance to them.

For example:

“Gathering Information?” involves researching what phones have your desired qualities - what are the options. This might include going to the store and seeing what is available in your price range. Research would also likely include talking to friends about what they like and don't like about their phones, talking to the sales people in stores and doing internet searches.

The **“Analyzing Information”** step requires pulling together all that you have learned to make up your own mind about what factors will most influence your decision, based on what you now know. You may discover that you actually need to go back and research a bit more.

“Sharing Information” may look like talking your decision over with your friends to explain your reasons and seeking any last minute thoughts which might inform your choice. Consider who might influence or be affected by your decision. For example, you might talk this over with your parents given cost implications of different choices! They are more likely to support your choice when they hear of your thoughtful decision making process and involve them. This step addresses the need to base actions and build support based on other's experience and interest in your action. It potentially builds allies.

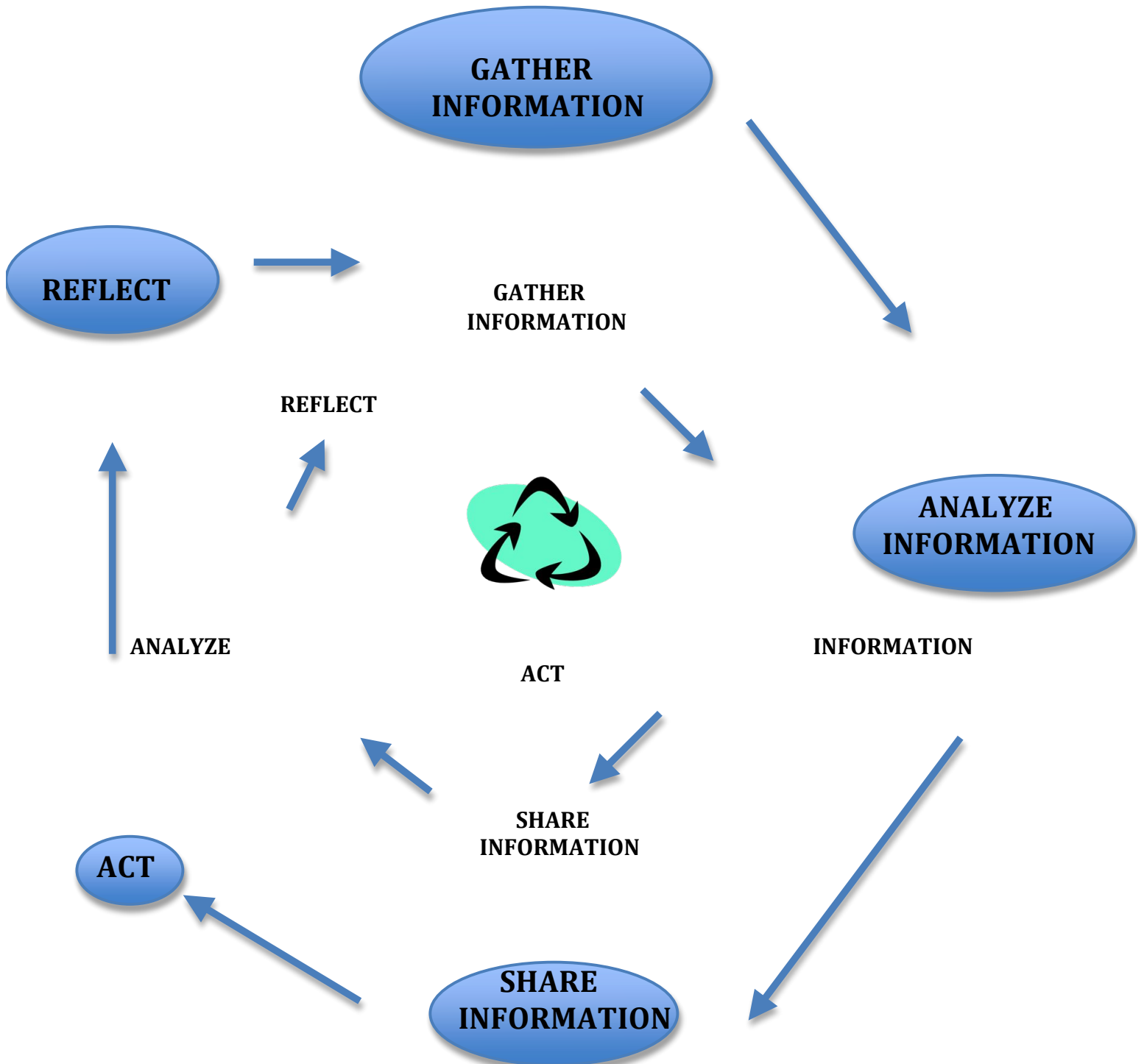
The **“ACT”** step is when you move to action. You purchase your new cell phone.

The **“REFLECT”** step will happen as you uncover both the joys and disappointments of your purchase. Did you make the right choice? Is paying that monthly fee worth it? Will you write a review on a consumer website to share your reflections? What will you be looking for when your contract on this phone is up?

Closing Discussion:

- What other examples can you think of when you, a friend or a family member have used action research to make a life decision? What were those steps?
- Why are each of these steps important? What purpose do they serve?
- What might be the consequence when you skip any one of these steps? Examples?

Action Research Cycle



"Action research involves gathering information about an issue or problem, analyzing the findings, and developing practical plans for affecting positive change....Change is expected to happen as a result of the research."

Activity 7: Action Research YATST Example

Materials:

Copy of “A True Action Research Story” for each participant
Copy of “To Do Lists Clipboards” Cut up. Hand out five lists per group of five participants.
Copy of “You Be The Judge...Does it make the cut”? for each person

Time: 30 minutes

Step 1:

Separate into groups of 5. Hand out the *To Do List Clipboards - One clipboard list per participant*. Make sure that each group has five different clipboard headings (Gather Information, Analyze Information, Share Information, Act, Reflect).

Step 2:

Hand out a copy of “A True Action Research Story” for each participant. Ask the groups to read each section aloud and record what tasks need to be done by the YATST participants in each section of the reading. They should discuss with one another what actions were required for each step in the action plan and then write down each task separately on the appropriate “To Do Clipboard.” Encourage the students to read between the lines. In order to give a written survey, they would have to make a decision about when, where, who, etc... For example, perhaps they would need to make an appointment with an administrator at school beforehand or arrange an information session with students and teachers prior to giving a survey. Be ready to have additional “To do” lists or invite students to write on the back of the sheet.

Step 3:

After students have completed and discussed their “To Do” lists, invite each group to fill out the “You Be The Judge...” handout. Introduce the “You Be the Judge” handout, explaining that these four categories reflect YATST priorities. They define the work of YATST groups. Each group checks how well this school’s work was aligned with YATST priorities.

Step 5:

The groups report out, step-by-step. Record a fully compiled “To Do” List on the board for each section of the Action Research Cycle.

Step 6:

Review the groups’ responses to the “You be the Judge” checklist.

Step 7: Discuss: What do you think the students learned from the process?

- What do you think the teachers learned from the process?
- How did the students create “a buzz” around their actions?
- What would you do differently if you wanted the same outcome as described here.

A True Action Research Story....

A YATST school surveyed both teachers and students about how engaged students were in learning and how much voice students had in decision making. They used a written survey, and conducted small group interviews.

The team then organized a retreat to analyze the data. They identified a number of key findings. One area of interest surfaced when comparing student and teacher surveys. Teachers reported that 90% of the time they “check in with students frequently about their learning and change their teaching accordingly”. Students reported that teachers “check in with students frequently about their learning and change their teaching accordingly “ happened only 33% of the time. They shared this information with teachers at a faculty meeting and asked what questions arose for them and what actions they could suggest to close this gap and assure that students felt heard.



The YATST team researched ways students had input into the classroom at other schools. A student group at one nearby school had just created a system where students gave teachers feedback about their classroom experience half way through the semester. This gave the teacher an opportunity to change classroom practices for the remainder of the semester, and every student had a chance to share how the class was going for him or her.



The YATST team talked with the creators of this mid-semester feedback system and tailored it to meet the particular needs of their school. Teachers were asked for input. They incorporated a class follow-up session where teachers shared the survey results with the class, noting both strengths and areas that could be changed to better meet the needs of students. They also included questions in the survey that asked students to reflect on their role as learners (are you being timely on assignments, seeking help when needed, etc.).

The YATST youth members made a video for students to watch prior to completing the mid-semester survey, explaining the intention and importance of the survey and spiced up with humor. Teacher and student feedback was gathered after the first round of using the survey and changes were once again made based on this research, continually improving how engaged students were in learning and how much voice students had in decision making..

YOU be the JUDGE....

Does it make the cut??

Is this example of student voice in decision making...

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>Changing something important in the ways students learn in the classroom, specifically improving rigor, relevance, student-teacher relationships or shared responsibility?</u>		
<u>Changing policies or practices on a school-wide level that will make this a more democratic school by including students in decision making in new ways?</u>		
<u>Addressing an equity issue, making sure ALL students feel their voice and their abilities as capable learners and decision makers are honored.</u>		
Total Score:		

* Scoring: 1 YATST point for each “yes”

To Do:
Gather Information

MiniPrintables.com

To Do:
Analyze Information

MiniPrintables.com

To Do:
Share Information

MiniPrintables.com

To Do:
ACT

MiniPrintables.com



Activity 8: YATST “Time Capsule”

Materials: 5 Time Capsule Stations
Tape

Time: 25 minutes

Facilitator Note: This “time capsule” overview is a way to share the major components of action research (YATST) AND the timeframe in which they will occur. It will help individuals realize the scope of the. This activity helps reinforce that doing research IS in fact “doing something.” YATST teams are TAKING ACTION AS THEY DO THEIR RESEARCH and already creating change by “being the buzzzzz.”

Step 1: Put the five stations up around the room, leaving space for the audience to move to each station.

Step 2: Have participants form a semi-circle and move from “station to station” to review what will be happening at each phase. You might introduce each new station by having them think about other things that will be going on in their lives during the time period covered by that phase (e.g. sports seasons, holidays, college applications, etc.). Then review what YATST will be doing at that time, having them take turns reading one of the bullets.

Alternative Step if you are recruiting new members or seeking resources:

Step 3: After the participants have reviewed each station, ask them to pick which phase they are most drawn to. Have them go to that station and talk with others in the same group about why they chose this phase (5 minutes). Now ask if others are willing to join the group or want to be part of a resource “bank” for the team around certain areas of expertise.

Dialogue Questions:

- Does this description of YATST fit with your expectations?
- What confuses you about YATST work?
- What most excites you about the work YATST will be doing?
- How might you help YATST in its work?

September
To
November

Gather Information....



- what do we already know about engagement in learning & voice in decision making at our school?
- what do we want to know?
- what specific questions do we want to ask and of whom?
- what are the best ways to collect the information we need?

Exactly what sorts of things might we be doing during this stage??

Introducing our work to the school board.

Creating our own name if we want to be something different than YATST.

Getting permission from the superintendent to conduct our survey.

Introducing YATST to the school community at an assembly.

Creating YATST signs to go up around the school.

Writing an article for the school and town newspapers about our work.

Recruiting new members to make sure our group is diverse and helping them get oriented

Fine tuning our survey questions for the teacher and student surveys.

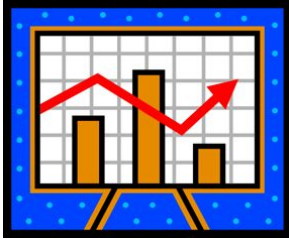
Dealing with the technical issues of formatting the surveys on Survey Monkey, and working out how and when the surveys will be done.

Educating students about why the survey is important to take seriously (making a video, student assembly, visiting Teacher Advisory groups, etc.).

Presenting our plan to the faculty and asking for input.

Visiting another YATST school to see what they are like.

Doing our own photo essay about engagement and voice for an assembly.



Analyze Information

December
to
January

- What kinds of information have been collected?
- What does our survey data mean?
- What groups should we share our data with to understand it better and to encourage future support & involvement?

Exactly what sorts of things might we be doing during this stage??

Organizing a day retreat to figure out what our data means, ending up with a summary of 3 strengths and 3 areas of concern that will become our priorities.

Analyzing any other information (focus groups, etc) you have collected and compare it with the survey findings.

Seeing if other existing surveys help provide additional information about our strengths and concerns (eg. climate survey, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, etc.)

Starting to research the areas of concern - what creates this type of concern and what can be done about it?

Doing an analysis of the people (stakeholders) most affected by those areas of concern we have identified & share the data with them to better understand what it means.

Securing time at the January faculty meeting, school board meeting and all-school assembly to release the findings.

Creating a strengths-based approach to releasing this data - ALWAYS leading with areas of strength and reminding others that answers to concerns often come from existing strengths.

Share Information...



January
To
February

**Who can help us understand this data better?
How do we “get this information out there” to as many people as possible?
Who cares about the areas of concern we have identified, who may become an ally as we make changes?**

Exactly what sorts of things might we be doing during “Share Information”??

Leading a faculty meeting to share the data and your analysis. Have faculty identify their own priorities.

Exploring the “WHY” behind the numbers with teachers at a faculty meeting. Ask, “What are the root causes of this concern” through a Chalk Talk Activity.

Exploring the “WHY” behind the numbers with students by leading focus groups during Advisory time, or putting up a “Graffiti Board” with a key question about the data, or hosting an assembly.

Writing an article for the school newspaper about our findings.

Hosting a Community Dialogue Night and asking for their thoughts about the data, sharing what you have discovered.

Leading a data analysis session with the board to include their perspective in our analysis.

Posting random survey questions and results around the school to spark dialogue, and show students their responses really matter.

Researching what other schools have done to address the challenges we identified, including web searches, teleconferencing and school visits.

Creating a school blog and asking for ideas for change from students, faculty and administrators.

since we now have our ducks in a row...

February
to
May

ACT...



- What action should we take based on our research?
- What are our next steps to take action?
- What evidence will tell us we are successful?
- Who will be our allies, and who will be our resistors, and how do we plan for that?

Exactly what sorts of things might we be doing during "ACT"??

Brainstorming steps we might take to address our identified challenges, researching alternatives.

Deciding which of the options makes the most sense for us (is "doable," "winnable," can be done in a reasonable time frame, consider power issues, etc.)

Talking with other schools who have undertaken similar work and finding out what they did.

Deciding what to do next and who will do it when.

Figuring out what evidence will be collected to know if we are successful....and tracking this evidence.

Introducing the plan to the faculty for their input and support.

Writing newspaper articles about your plan.

Hosting a student assembly and introducing the vision and plan.

Recruiting others to help you.

Meeting with the school board to tell them your intentions and ask for their support and guidance.

March
To
May



Reflect....

What have we learned as a team this year?
How does what we have learned better inform our plan for next year?
What have I learned about myself and my leadership?
What personal and teams goals should be set?

Exactly what sorts of things will be we doing during the "Reflect" stage?

Attending the state-wide Learning in Place conference and sharing our year's work and learning with other teams.

Writing an end of year reflection paper to help focus my thoughts.

Meeting with the school board to review the year, your assessment of your progress on your action plan, and plans for next year.

Throwing an end-of-year YATST rally/celebration

Putting posters around the school noting YATST priorities and progress.

Collecting information from teachers and students about their perception of the impact of YATST.

Writing a Year-in-Review article for the newspaper.

Hosting a team kayaking adventure to celebrate the year.

Thinking about team recruitment needs and who will attend the summer retreat to continue the work.

Presenting at other state-wide conferences to share the work .

CELEBRATING!!!!

Activity 8: YATST Newsletter Review

Materials: YATST Newsletter (see web site: www.yatst.com) for each participant

Time: 30 minutes

Give each participant a copy of the most recent YATST newsletter. Have them just review the pictures and ask them what conclusions they draw from just the photos. Direct them to the narratives and ask them to identify one thing that most interests them regarding the work the schools are doing, explaining why this intrigued them. You might use this opportunity to reinforce that doing presentations to the board and school community, introducing the survey to the superintendent or student body, or conducting the survey all are creating ripples of change – all are “doing something” important to shift the culture to be more inclusive of student voice.

Objective 2: Explore three compelling reasons why high schools need to change:

- 1. 21st Century skill demands**
- 2. What data tells us about how we are currently serving students,**
- 3. What we know about learning**

Enduring Understandings:

- The demands of the 21st Century work force require schools to change to meet the needs of future citizens.
- There is evidence that our schools are not meeting the needs of ALL students at the present time, and have a fundamental responsibility to do so.
- The neuroscience of learning informs school change.

Essential Questions:

- ❖ What knowledge and skills do our graduates need to be ready for the 21st century work world?
- ❖ What evidence exists that schools are inequitable or not serving all students?
- ❖ Why is equity important?
- ❖ What new discoveries in the neuroscience of learning can help inform school changes?

Participants will:

- Explain why schools need to transform using the demands of the 21st Century workforce, the neuroscience of learning and current school data as compelling reasons.
- Interpret data which confirms that schools are inequitable.

Activity 1: What's SOOOOOO Different??! **Introduction to the 21st Century**

Time: 45 Minutes

Materials: "Shifts Happen Brain Twister" for each person

Writing implements for everyone

Computer

Web Access : YouTube – "Did You Know 3.0" researched & directed by
Karl Fisch, Scott McLeod & Jeff Brenman. 2008:

Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv8pmIr3a7k&feature=related>
Speakers

Facilitator Note: It is important to highlight that the purpose of the following activity is to explore how changes in the world impact our schools. Although changes in technology are highlighted in the "Did You Know" video, the purpose is not to start a conversation about technology itself, but rather its implications for how we prepare young people for this rapidly changing world. **If time allows, fold in the next activity which identifies 21st Century Skills as an immediate follow-up to make this point.**

If you are using this with a teaching or administrative audience, consider reading and sharing pieces of the following: <http://www.ed421.com/?s=Shift+Happens+-+Now+What%3F>. This blog highlights that the answer to the technology advances highlighted in "Did You Know" is NOT more technology. "This is really about changing adult perspectives and adult behaviors to create student-centered classrooms that exemplify research-based best practices around learning."

Step 1: Introduce the concept of 21st Century Skills and how it is a rationale for why schools need to change "to prepare students for the 21st Century." Explain that we will first explore how different (or not) this new century really is. After all, each generation has adapted to new innovations and changes. Right? Why is this century any different?

Step 2: Ask participants to pair up with another person – preferably someone of a different generation or someone that they don't know. Pass out "Shifts Happen Brain Twister" and a writing implement, one to each pair. Explain that we will begin by exploring the 21st Century with some current information. The first step will be for each pair to take the Brain Twister. THIS IS NOT A TEST - It will not be graded!! No one will see your answers. It is just a way to open the door to understanding what all the 21st century "buzz" is all about. (7-10 minutes)

Step 2: Explain that a short 5 minute YouTube video has been created which reviews many of the points on the Brain Twister...at a fairly rapid pace. Ask participants to listen carefully to find the correct answers.

Step 3: Create groups of 4-6 people to discuss the following questions:

- * What are the implications of these shifts for me as an individual?
- * What does this mean for the way schools work? What should change look like?

Step 4: Ask each small group to share some insights for each question, doing a round with the first question and then moving to the second question.

SHIFTS HAPPEN BRAIN-TWISTER....

Check as many boxes in any question as you think make sense!

The Top 10 in-demand jobs in 2008 did not exist in....

2000 1998 1967 2004

The average number of jobs a young person will have (after graduating) before they turn age 38 is:

1-3 4-6 7-9 10-14

The average number of jobs a baby-boomer (50ish) will have before they retire is:

1-3 4-6 7-9 10-14

The number of married couples who met over the internet in 2005 was....

1 out of 15 1 out of 12 1 out of 8 1 out of 3

If the web site "Facebook" were a country (based on the number of users), it would be the ___?___ largest country in the world....

35th 3rd 64th 9th

The number of Google Searches done on a monthly basis in 2006 was...

2.7 Billion 197 Million 31 Billion 986 Million

The number of Google Searches done on a monthly basis in 2008 was.....

2.7 Billion 197 Million 31 Billion 986 Million

The number of text messages sent and received every day exceeds....

- the total population of Vermont
- The total population of the USA
- The total population of North & South America
- The total population of the planet

Think about the time it takes from when a product is created to when there are 50 million people using it. Now guess how many years it took for each of these major inventions to reach the 50 million users mark.

Radio: ____ years

iPod: ____ years

TV: ____ years

Facebook: ____ years

Internet: ____ years

Given the rate at which new technology is becoming obsolete, when a person is half way through a 4 year technology training program, how much of what they learned in the first year will be outdated?

___ 10%

___ 25%

___ 50%

100%__

Direction: Draw a line between the correct number of hours and each activity:

The number of hours youth currently spend per week...

Gaming 2 hours

Watching TV 3 ½ hours

On a Computer 5 ½ hours

Reading a book 5 ½ hours

Listening to an iPod 16 ½ hours

(Total hours engaged with some technology:)

In the last 2 months, YouTube uploaded more video than the major TV networks (NBC/ABC/CBS) have aired since:

___ 1990

___ 1982

___ 1963

___ 1948

ANSWERS

SHIFTS HAPPEN BRAIN-TWISTER....

The Top 10 in-demand jobs in 2008 did not exist in....

2000 1998 1967 2004

The average number of jobs a young person will have (after graduating) before they turn age 38 is:

1-3 4-6 7-9 10-14

The average number of jobs a baby-boomer (50ish) will have before they retire is:

1-3 4-6 7-9 10-14

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35th 3rd 64th 9th

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2.7 Billion 197 Million 31 Billion 986 Million

The number of Google Searches done on a monthly basis in 2008 was.....

2.7 Billion 197 Million 31 Billion 986 Million

The number of text messages sent and received in the world every day exceeds....

the total population of Vermont

The total population of the USA

The total population of North & South America

The total population of the planet

Think about the time it takes from when a product is created to when there are 50 million people using it. Now guess how many years it took for each of these major inventions to reach the 50 million users mark.

Radio: 38 years

iPod: 3 years

TV: 13 years

Facebook: 2 years

Internet: 4 years

Given the rate at which new technology is becoming obsolete, when a person is half way through a 4 year technology training program, how much of what they learned in the first year will be outdated?

 10%

 25%

 ✓ 50%

100%

Direction: Draw a line between the correct number of hours and each activity:

The number of hours youth currently spend per week...

Gaming 3 1/2 hours

Watching TV 16 1/2 hours

On a Computer 5 1/2 hours

Reading a book 2 hours

Listening to an iPod 5 1/2 hours

(Total hours engaged with some technology: 31 hours)

In the last 2 months, YouTube uploaded more video than the major TV networks (NBC/ABC/CBS) have aired since:

 1992

 1982

 1963

 ✓ 1948

Activity 2: What ARE these 21st Century Skills??

Facilitator Note: This activity will work best when preceded by Activity 1.

Materials: Handout “What ARE these 21st Century Skills?
Newsprint Pad & Easel or Computer & LCD
Markers
Writing Utensils

Time: 15 minutes

Step 1: Hand out the “What are these 21st Century Skills?”

Step 2: Write these directions up on a board so that everyone can read them - or create a handout with these directions:

You are going to a 3-2-1 review of this piece. Each person should look the handout over and highlight:

3 skills that you feel schools already address fairly well.

2 skills that schools rarely address directly.

1 skill that you believe is **the most important** to start building in your school to prepare students for this new world.

Give folks 10 minutes to read it over and make these choices.

Step 3: This step depends on the size of your group. If it is a small group (8-12), you could do a whip around, asking people to name the 3 skills that schools already address fairly well. Record responses on newsprint or type them & project them on the LCD. Writing down the skills in advance & leaving a space for recording the “vote” will speed up this process.

You can do similar whips for the next two questions, asking for any thought in-between each round - looking for how diverse or similar opinions were.

If the group is large, or you just want to make sure everyone has an opportunity to express themselves, create small groups of 2-4 to share each question in turn. Allow 3-5 minutes for each question.

What ARE these 21st Century Skills?

Below is a list of the “knowledge, skills and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21st century” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Framework Definitions, 2009, www.p21.org).

Core Subjects & 21st Century Themes

Core Subjects: (English, reading, language arts, world languages, arts, math, economics, science, geography, history, government & civics)



Global Awareness

Financial, Economic, Business & Entrepreneurial Literacy

Civic Literacy

Health Literacy

Environmental Literacy

Learning and Innovation Skills

Creativity and Innovation

- Think Creatively
- Work Creatively with Others
- Implement Innovations

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- Reason effectively
- Use systems thinking
- Make judgments and decisions
- Solve problems



Communication and Collaboration

- Communicate clearly
- Collaborate with others

Information, Media and Technology Skills

Information Literacy

- Access and evaluate information
- Use and manage information



Media Literacy

- Analyze media
- Create media products

Information, Communication and Technology Literacy

- Apply technology effectively

Life and Career Skills

Flexibility and Adaptability

- Adapt to change
- Be flexible

Initiative and Self-Direction

- Manage goals and time
- Work independently
- Be self-directed learners

Social and Cross-cultural Skills

- Interact effectively with others
- Work effectively in diverse teams



Productivity and Accountability

- Manage projects
- Produce Results

Leadership and Responsibility

- Guide and lead others
- Be responsible to others

“The core problem is that our education and training systems were built for another era, an era in which most workers needed only a rudimentary education. It is not possible to get where we have to go by patching that system. We can get where must go only by changing the system itself.”

The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 2007

Activity 3: Introduction to 21st Century Skills

Facilitator Note: This is an alternative to Activity 2.

Materials: 21st Century Skills Overview
Handouts
4 Newsprint pages
Tape
Markers
Computer & LCD if using the powerpoint

Time: 45-60 minutes

Preparation: Each newsprint page will focus on one of the 4 skill areas (i.e. 1. Core Subjects & 21st Century Themes, 2. Learning & Innovation Skills, etc.). Make a “T” chart with the skills from one section listed down the left hand column and the right half of the page left blank. Box off the bottom 6” of newsprint. Hang these pages around the room and leave markers at each page.

Review the power point presentation “21st Century Skill Background” which was developed by Bill Romond (past Deputy Commissioner for the Vermont Department of Education). This can be accessed through www.yatst.com - resources). Adapt the presentation to meet the needs of your group – choosing the most interesting facts which highlight our changing world.

The web site www.p21.org is worth visiting and printing out one copy of the “P21 Framework Definitions”. This is a slightly more in-depth overview of the summary sheet provided. Also, a number of the facts presented in Bill Romond’s powerpoint were taken from this site.

Step 1: Introduce the concept of 21st Century Skills and the need for schools to adapt to prepare students for a very different world than the older generation has known. The “21st Century Skill Background” powerpoint may be helpful in this regard. The “Some Sobering Statistics” can also be used to introduce the need for change.

Step 2: Hand out the “21st Century Skills Overview and introduce the concept of the “Partnership for 21st Century Skills” group designing schools around these skill areas. Note: many schools around the country are using this model to guide their redesign.

Step 3: Ask participants to split themselves into 4 groups and go to one of the newsprint stations. Explain that they will have 5 minutes to note evidence or examples of where these skills noted on the left hand column are currently being addressed in their school. Also note that the bottom box is for ideas they may have about ways these skills might be built (that are not currently happening). After 5 minutes, you will ask everyone to rotate and move to the next station. They will then review what the prior group(s) have written and add their own thoughts and ideas.

Step 4: Have participants wander to all 4 completed stations and write down 1) one thing they noticed when they first looked at the skills list, 2) one thing that surprised them as they worked through the stations, and 3) one thing that they might want to know more about. Share these with the group.

Activity 4: Some Sobering Statistics....

Materials: Some Sobering Statistics Handouts for all participants

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1: Pass out "Some Sobering Statistics...."

Step 2: Ask participants to read the page and highlight one sentence that particularly stands out for them for any reason. Allow up to 3 minutes.

Step 3: Split into groups of 4. Have each person explain his/her choice. Allow 1 minute per person.

Step 4: Invite any closing thoughts or reflections.

Note: This page can be included in the "What we know about the present state of education" chalk talk.

Some sobering statistics*

* In order to earn a decent wage in today's economy, most students will need at least some education after high school. Indeed, an estimated 85 percent of current jobs and almost 90 percent of the fastest-growing and best-paying jobs now require postsecondary education. Even today's manufacturing jobs now largely require postsecondary training and skills. On average, an individual with a Bachelor's degree earns \$23,348 annually more than a worker with a high school diploma (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007). Think what that means over a lifetime!

But.....

* Only about 1/3 of US high school students graduate ready for college today, and the rates are much lower for poor and minority students. Forty percent of *all* students who enter college must take remedial courses. And while no hard data are readily available, it is estimated that one out of every two students who start college never complete any kind of postsecondary degree.

Furthermore....

* Our high school graduation rate in the United States is about 70 percent – well behind that of countries such as Denmark (96%), Japan (93%), Poland (92%) and Italy (79%).

“In today's highly competitive global “knowledge economy,” *all students need new skills* for college, careers and citizenship. The failure to give all students these new skills leaves today's youth – and our country – at an alarming competitive disadvantage. Schools haven't changed; the world has.”

Tony Wagner, *The Global Achievement Gap*, 2008

* These “sobering statistics” are cited from Tony Wagner's, “The Global Achievement Gap,” 2008, p. xi

Activity 5: “Too Many Sitting”

Materials: 10 Note cards, each with A number 1-10 written on it

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1: Ask for 10 volunteer students to stand up front in a straight row. Give each a number 1-10.

Now ask #1-5 to sit down. Then note....

- * *Those left standing* are the ones who believe their **voices make a difference** and may or may not chose to use them to influence their schools.
- * *Those sitting* are the ones who do **not** believe they have a say in decisions that are made at their schools.

Those sitting become passive recipients of their education. They are at risk of disengaging. They may also become bored and resistant. They do not perceive they have value in the system.

When students are not given an opportunity to voice their opinions and know that these opinions will be valued, there is a powerful implicit message that “You are not wise enough or mature enough to be a meaningful player in your own education.” This message can greatly undermine a person’s sense of worth and motivation.

TOO MANY SITTING!!

Step 2: Ask 1-2 and 8-10 to sit down.

Those left standing are the ones who **feel hopeful about their future.**

Those sitting, # 1 & 2, are the students who are “discouraged”
about their future.

8-10 report feeling “stuck” with few choices.

Hope was studied in the Gallup poll because it has a major influence on grades, achievement scores, retention and employment. “Hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than are high school GPA, SAT and ACT scores”. (p.1)

Ask that folks think about hope and how it influences their lives....what it feels like to wake up and feel positive about the future versus a day where a person may feel like there is no future out there for them - and often no way to influence that sense of reality.

TOO MANY SITTING!!

Step 3: Ask 3 & 4 to sit down. Ask 5-7 to get down on their knees.

Those left standing are the ones who feel engaged in school (involved & enthusiastic)

Those sitting: The 3 of you who are on your knees are “disengaged from school”

The 2 of you sitting are “actively disengaged from school”

Note that the number one reason that students drop out of school is that they report it is boring and not relevant to their lives. Dropping out is NOT linked to their intelligence or their potential. ALL students have a capacity to learn. Rather, it is linked to factors of engagement like positive relationships with teachers, high expectations for ALL students, and curriculum that has meaning in their lives.

Too often disengaged students have gotten the subtle (or not so subtle) messages that they don't have potential - systems that track students to lower and higher levels do this - with devastating results. When a person knows that others have low expectations, they often believe the message that they are not capable and perform accordingly. The reverse is true - when we have high expectations for ALL students and students are encouraged to believe in their potential and capacity, they achieve.

Vermont has one of the best graduation rates in the country - the estimates vary between 82% and 89% depending on which numbers you look at. STILL -- of the 10 standing, at least one, and perhaps more like two, will not make it through high school.

TOO MANY SITTING!!

Step 4: Close by reinforcing that the job of YATST is focused on those who were sitting.

Dialogue Questions:

- What was it like to watch this stand up-sit down piece? What feelings did it provoke? Why?
- Which of these statistics feels “truest” or “most compelling” for you? Why?
- Do you have any friends or classmates you can think of who concern you because they seem to match this data?
- What group(s) in your school might benefit from seeing “Too Many Sitting”?

Note: You may choose to get your school data to make these points.

About the source: This “Gallup Student Poll National Report” was done in conjunction with “America’s Promise Alliance”. A total of 70,078 students in grades 5-12 from 335 schools and 59 districts located in 18 states and the District of Columbia were surveyed in April of 2009. Dr. Shane J. Lopez was the Senior Scientist and author. (permission needed?)

Activity 6: Chalktalks : Neuroscience of Learning & Education Here & Now

Materials: Large piece of paper
Markers
Choice of prompts

Time: 45 Minutes

The directions for facilitating Chalk Talk are found in the Facilitator Guide. The main prompt for each Chalktalk should read: “What do you think and feel when you see this data? How does it help us understand the need for high school transformation?”

You can separate out these prompts into two chalk talks. One focuses on “What we know about learning” and would include pages 49, 50 & 51. The second chalk talk focuses on “Education Here and Now” and would include the bar graph on p. 52, “Great Expectations...or not?!” on page 53, and “Sobering Statistics on p. 45. You can also use any of the “Too Many Sitting” statistics.

Choose the facts that best match with the group. The first 3 prompts should be provocative for any group!

Discussion Questions:

- What comes to mind when you look at all the Chalktalk comments?
- How does it help in understanding transformation efforts?

IMPORTANT FACILITATOR NOTE: These facts, particularly the “Education Here and Now” are unsettling or disturbing for most people. We **DO** want people to become uncomfortable as they realize the difference between beliefs and hopes for education and the reality reflected by these statistics. We **DON’T** want them to react by going to a blaming place (eg. it’s bad teachers, it’s lazy students, etc.). ***No positive change can happen when people are locked in a blaming game.*** You can introduce the activity noting the importance of not blaming, and/or redirect the focus if you see written comments or the debrief going in this direction.



Figure 3.9 The diagram shows the average percentage of retention of material after 24 hours for each of the instructional methods.

Note: Source of Figure 3.9 is David Sousa, "How the Brain Learns", Third Edition, 2006

- **Young adults ideal exposure time to new learning is 20 to 30 minutes with a 5 to 10 minute rest to “consolidate” the new learning. If we don’t consolidate our learning, we forget it.**





Keys to deeper learning.....

Emotion:

Content that triggers emotions is most readily remembered; also, content that is relevant and meaningful.

Attention:

New learning happens within 15 minutes of exposure - which is about the maximum time a person can attend to hearing new information.

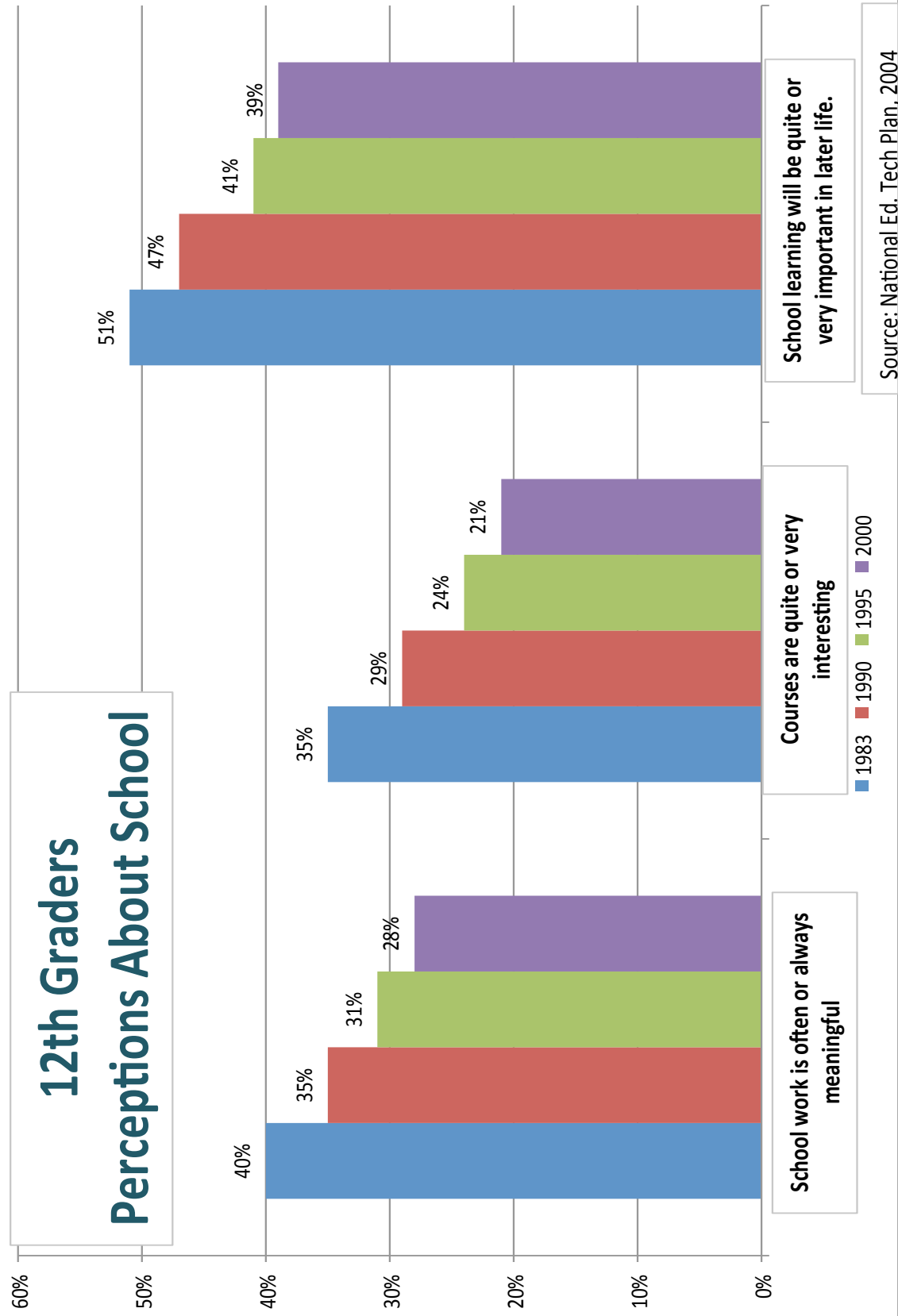
Settling Time:

The brain needs “settling time” or “consolidation time” to make sense of this new material through practice, discussion or just rest time where nothing else is competing with new learning.

Repetition/Rehearsal:

Provide time to practice or rehearse the new content (eg. predictions, discussions, hands-on experiences). Thinking about meaning through varied opportunities for repetition will create memories and deepen learning.

What Do Students Say?





**GREAT
EXPECTATIONS...**

Or not?!

We know that teacher expectations for success are a strong predictor of whether or not a student does succeed. Research clearly shows that students perform up or down to the teacher's either high or low expectations of them. When adults give up on students, they give up on themselves. When adults believe every child can be successful, they help each child realize this potential. Given this fact, consider this.....

44% of high school students strongly agreed that all of the teachers in their school wanted them to succeed. 56% were getting mixed messages.

71% of high school teachers agreed that “students only do enough work to do as well as they need to get by in their school”. Only 36% of students agreed with this statement.

On average, teachers expect that 50% of their students will attend a two- or four-year college. In contrast, 79% of high school students reported planning to attend a two-or four-year college after high school.

Source: MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, April 2010. Study was conducted with a representative national sample of 658 public high school students and 160 teachers.

Objective 3: Explore why student involvement in schools and transformation work is so important.

Enduring Understandings:

- Students have a unique perspective regarding education and school change, and possess the capacity and wisdom to partner in transformation efforts.
- Any school transformation effort that lacks intentional student involvement is fundamentally flawed.
- The demands of the 21st Century workforce require schools to change to meet the needs of future citizens.
- There is evidence that our schools are not meeting the needs of ALL students at the present time, and have a fundamental responsibility to do so.

Essential Questions:

- ❖ Why is the work of YATST important?
- ❖ What knowledge and skills do our graduates need to be ready for the 21st century work world?
- ❖ What evidence exists that schools are inequitable or not serving all students?
- ❖ Why is equity important?

Participants will:

- Explain why students should be involved in school transformation efforts.
- Describe the demands of the 21st Century workforce and apply this knowledge to school change.
- Interpret data which confirms that schools are inequitable.

Facilitator Note: These first two activities surface the guiding principles and rationale of YATST work, including the rhyme and reason for youth-adult partnership, inclusion of student voice in change efforts, and the issue of inequity in our schools.

Activity 1: Why Bother? Marketplace

Materials: Marketplace Quote Stations (below)
Tape

Time: 25 minutes

Step 1: Hang the quote stations around the room.

Step 2: Participants move to the station that is the most compelling reason for including youth in transformation work.

Step 3: Have participants talk with others at that station about why they chose this station. (5 minutes)

Step 4: Ask each stations to report out of the varied reasons individuals went to that particular station, as well as any common themes. (10 minutes)

Doing this work is a RIGHT and a part of being a CITIZEN IN OUR DEMOCRACY

“Students must have an active role in their learning if that learning is going to be meaningful and lasting, and such an active role should include having input into how their learning is facilitated. This is the right of the students, and it is the responsibility of adults to ensure that that right is guaranteed.”

Alison Cook-Sather, 2008

“If the central goal of schools were to prepare students to engage productively in a democracy, then students would be working on the concerns of their immediate and future life and on the concerns of their immediate and extended communities.”

Carl Glickman, *Renewing America's Schools*, 1993.

53% of Vermont students report not feeling valued by their community (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009).

In a recent survey in two of our YATST schools, one in three students disagree that, “Teachers check in regularly to see if I am learning and adjust instruction based on what they hear.”

Doing this work **PROMOTES OWNERSHIP**

“If students feel some ownership in the school where they learn, we might have better attendance, fewer suspensions, and more respect for keeping our building clean. Also, having a choice in how we are taught might make most students more enthusiastic about learning.”

From a student group’s proposal for democracy.
A. Fletcher. Meaningful Student Involvement:
Guide to Inclusive School Change.

“Motivation to engage wholeheartedly in a task is reinforced when people feel they have had some choice in selecting the task/and or understand its rationale. Children, as well as adults, are more likely to resist an activity that holds little meaning or relevance for them or they feel was arbitrarily imposed. It has been my experience that if most members of a school community perceive that they have limited input into what transpires in that community, the motivation to teach and to learn will be compromised.”

Robert Brooks, December 2003. Web Article

In a recent national student Gallup poll, 30 % of students report being “disengaged” from school; 20% are “actively disengaged”. Only 50% report feeling engaged.

**Through this work STUDENTS TRANSFORM FROM
BEING “OBJECTS” TO BEING “INVENTORS”**

“There’s a radical – and wonderful – new idea here...that all children could and should be inventors of their own theories, critics of other people’s ideas, analyzers of evidence, and makers of their own personal marks on the world. It’s an idea with revolutionary implications. If we take it seriously.”

Deborah Meier (1955)

“There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is designed to serve.”

Alison Cook Sather (2009)

50% of students in Vermont report that they do not have a say in decisions that are made at their schools.

YRBS 2009 Survey

Sharing this work RENEWS HOPE

“Hope is something shared between teachers and students.... [when] we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy.”

Paulo Freire, 1998

Hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than are high school GPA, SAT and ACT scores.

Gallup Student Poll National Report,

A recent Gallup Student Poll of 70,078 students (5th – 12th grades) found that, “Half of students are hopeful; these students possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. The other half of students are stuck or discouraged, lacking the ideas and energy they need to navigate problems and reach goals.” “Hope” was studied because there is direct relationship between hope and how well a person does in school.

Doing this work will IMPROVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS

“There are numerous reasons to believe that engaging students is a critical step in improving schools. Foremost, engagement will almost certainly improve learning outcomes.”

F. Jowlsowsky. *Youth Engagement, High School Reform and Improved Learning Outcomes*. NASSP Bulletin, 2007.

“Aspiring for rigor, relevance and relationships in the classroom will not only trigger excitement about learning. It will also increase performance and better prepare our children for their lives beyond school.”

Dr. Bill Daggett, Success Practices Network

Alienation results in 25-70% of students being disengaged from high schools. Disengaged students attend school less, have lower self-concepts, achieve less academically, and are more likely to drop out of school.

Cited in Dana Mitra and Steven Cross’s article, *Increasing Student Voice in High School Reform: Building Partnerships, Improving Outcomes*, Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 2009.

Activity 2: Ladder of Student Involvement

Materials: Copy of the Ladder of Student Involvement for each participant

Time: 30 minutes

Step 1: Pass out the Ladder of Student Involvement and briefly explain the steps on the ladder.

Step 2: Create groups of 3. Make these groups multi-generational if possible. Ask each group to come up with an example of as many of these “rungs” as is possible from their own school experience. Share examples.

Alternate Step 2: Skits:

Separate the room into 4 groups. Have each group develop a skit based on a common theme

(i.e. developing a new dress code or changing the cafeteria food).

Suggested ladder step grouping for skits:

Steps 1-3

Steps 4 & 5

Step 6

Step 7 & 8

After each skit, ask what *thoughts and feelings* were provoked watching the skit.

Dialogue Questions:

- If you looked at your school as a whole, which rung best represents how the majority of decision making happens?
- What are the barriers to moving up the ladder?
- What are the supports in place for moving up the ladder?
- What will moving up the ladder require of students?
- What will moving up the ladder require of adults?
- What will moving up the ladder require of parents?

FACILITATOR NOTE:

If time allows, consider ending with this video which touches on both youth-adult partnership in learning and certainly the importance of rigor/high expectations. Adora Svitak is a 12 year old (remarkable) girl who shares her view of youth-adults as partners in learning.

http://www.ted.com/talks/adora_svitak.html

Climbing Towards Partnerships

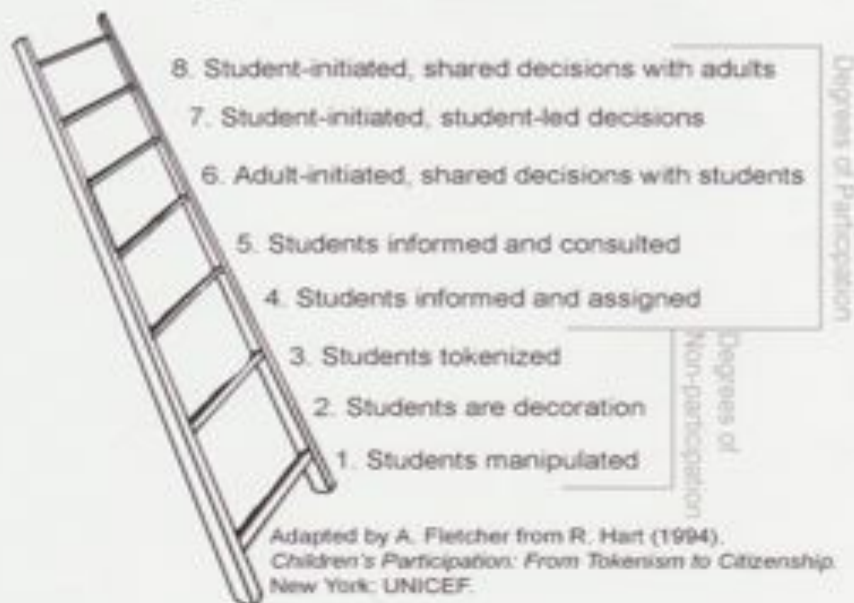
As this guide describes, simply calling something "meaningful" doesn't make it so. Saying that young people are complex is an understatement; saying that schools need to be responsive to their complexity seems overtly simplistic. However, according to the following measurements, many schools may currently be treating students in a disingenuous, non-empowering way. Schools should aspire to the challenge William Butler Yeats is said to have written, "Education should not be the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

Simply calling something "meaningful" doesn't make it so.

Measuring Student Involvement

The Ladder of Student Involvement in School is designed to allow students and educators a way to measure situations and activities that involve students throughout schools⁶. The higher the rung on the *Ladder*, the more likely that activity is going to be meaningful to students. This guide seeks to help schools reach higher rungs by increasing the amount and improving the quality of student involvement in schools.

Figure 2. Ladder of Student Involvement



Each rung on the *Ladder* can be applied to a variety of situations in schools. There are important differences for each type of student involvement that acknowledge a particular activity's current position on the *Ladder*. There are three important points to consider about the *Ladder*:

1. The *Ladder* is not designed to be applied to a whole school at once; instead, use it to assess individual activities.

2. There is an active debate among young people, educators, and others about the placement of rungs 7 and 8. Which is more meaningful? Meaningful student involvement should build community in schools while empowering students, which makes activities that students initiate and share decisions with adults most important.
3. The rungs are not a process that happens in order. Activities can go from the second rung directly to the sixth; sometimes, they'll be on two rungs at different ends of the Ladder at once, depending on who is looking.

These considerations are crucial to understanding the potential of this Ladder as a planning and assessment tool. Students and educators can reflect on the Ladder as they understand it, and should consider the possibilities of how other people might view their circumstances, also.

Descriptions of Student Involvement

The following descriptions of Student Involvement describe the Ladder further, calling on readers to examine student involvement in their own setting.

8) Student-Adult Partnerships. Students initiate action and share decision-making with adults. Meaningful student involvement is integrated into school improvement at every level. Students are authorizing with the authority to create change, and incorporated throughout school improvement activities.

7) Student-Initiated, Student-Led. Meaningful student involvement is propelled by students and creates opportunities for students to initiate and direct projects, classes, or activities. Adults are involved only in supportive roles.

6) Adults Initiate Action and Share Decisions with Students. Students are involved in designing projects, classes, or activities that are initiated by adults. Many activities, including decision-making, teaching, and evaluation, are shared with students.

5) Students Consulted by Adults. Students give advice on projects, classes, or activities designed and run by adults. The students are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

4) Students Assigned to be Involved. Student involvement is assigned by teachers, who assign specific roles, determine how, and teach students why they are being involved.

3) Tokenism - Students appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2) Decoration - Students are used to help or bolster a cause in a relatively indirect way; adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by students. Causes are determined by adults, and adults make all decisions.

1) Manipulation - Adults use students to support causes by pretending that those causes are inspired by students.

Considerations

The Ladder is meant to inspire action that validates students by authorizing them to improve schools. When students initiate action and share decisions with adults, partnerships flourish. Further in this Guide there are examples of specific ways that students and adults can work together to realize that vision.

Suggested citation: Taken from Fletcher, A. (2005) *Meaningful Student Involvement Guide to Students as Partners in School Change*. Seattle, WA: HumanLinks Foundation. Available online at www.soundout.org

Objective 4: Explore the framework of “Rigor, Relevance, Relationship and Responsibility” as a foundation for school transformation.

Enduring Understandings:

- Engagement in learning is significantly impacted by the rigor, relevance, the student- teacher relationship, shared responsibility in the learning and decision making process.
- Transformed schools have certain qualities.

Essential Questions:

- ❖ What is the relationship between engagement in learning and rigor, relevance, relationship, shared responsibility in learning and decision making?

Participants will:

- Provide examples from personal experience of how rigor, relevance, relationship and shared responsibility in learning and decision making contribute to being engaged.

Activity 1: Introduction to the 4 Rs

Materials: Short articles of the meaning of Rigor, Relevance, Relationship and Responsibility (provided). Enough copies of the description of that “R” for each participant. Newsprint pages with one of the R’s written at the top and the unfinished sentence, “The reasons this R is important is important to engagement is.....” Markers for each of the 4 stations

Time Commitment: 1 hour

Step 1: Create 4 “stations”, one for each of the Rs. Put the reading for just one of the “Rs” on that table - enough for each participant. Also put the newsprint paper with the name of the R and several markers.

Step 2: Split your group into four smaller groups (if you do this with a large group, make sure no station has more than 12). Have each group go to one of the Rs.

Step 3: Have group members read the brief description of their station's R. Ask them to underline one sentence or phrase that is most thought provoking or powerful for them. After the designated reading time of 8-10 minutes, ask that each person be given a maximum of 1 minute to share their phrase and why they chose it. Explain that this is a listening activity for everyone but the person sharing their designated phrase or sentence - not a time for dialogue. Make sure each table designates a time keeper.

Step 4: Next, ask each person at the table to share one story where *this "R" factor* influenced a memorable learning experience of their own. It can be about the presence of this "R" and how it positively influenced the learning, or its notable absence and how this negatively influences the learning. This chosen event does not need to take place in school. It just has to be a time when the person vividly remembers a learning "event" that was particularly memorable.

Step 5: Ask participants to re-read the short description and think about their own personal story. Have them write down on newsprint why this "R" is important to engagement. What does this quality provide that makes it so important for learning to occur? Why does it matter? How would you explain the importance of this quality of engagement to someone else? Make sure people think about the personal stories they heard, as well as the reading, to create as long and comprehensive of a bulleted list as is possible.

Step 5: Have each group report out, asking for one or two stories from each group and their lists of the ways this R relates to engagement. If it is a small group, each person might share their personal story in a very limited time frame.

What some experts say about Rigor ...

This blog is all about teaching and learning in America's public schools. The articles I publish here reflect my experience and insight into issues facing today's secondary schools. My intention is to provoke thought and discourse on how to make our schools stronger by preparing our students to succeed in the globally competitive world in which they live.

Is it Rigor? Or is it Something Else?

There's a lot of talk in education circles today about rigor. Educators all over America are frantically waving copies of Thomas Friedman's, *The World is Flat*, as they attempt to awaken their colleagues to the impending doom our nation faces if we do not deliver a rigorous and relevant education to every American child. Politicians talk about the need to return rigor to the classroom. Parents demand rigorous programs for their children. School administrators performing classroom walk-throughs look for signs of it, and teachers are resolutely attempting to prove their lessons are full of the stuff.

But what is rigor?

Let's start with what it is not. Rigor is not fifty math problems for homework when fewer will achieve mastery. Rigor is not more worksheets for the student who finished the assignment early. Rigor is not using a seventh grade text book with your high performing sixth grade students. Rigor is not covering more material in a shorter period of time. Rigor is not cold or impersonal. And most of all, rigor is not just for a select group of students.

So, what is rigor? The most concise definition of rigor I've encountered is taken from *Teaching What Matters Most: Standards and Strategies for Raising Student Achievement* by Richard W. Strong, Harvey F. Silver and Matthew J. Perini, ASCD, 2001. According to Strong, Silver, and Perini, **"Rigor is the goal of helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally or emotionally challenging."**

Isn't it ironic that this definition of rigor presents the possibility that even an advanced placement course may not be full of rigor? While the curriculum may be complex, time may not be given to allow the content to reveal its ambiguous, provocative, or personally and emotionally challenging nature. And because of this, students are simply memorizing huge chunks of facts, regurgitating them onto an AP exam, and then forgetting them forever. How discouraging it must be for both the teacher and the student to expend so much time and energy and have so little to show for their efforts.

But do we really need all this rigor? Can we just set it aside for our gifted and high achieving students or as we say in Florida, our Level 4's and 5's? Strong, Silver, and Perini make clear that a rigorous learning environment is for every student. Their findings show **“the decision to withhold rigor from some students is one of the most important reasons why schools fail.”** (Strong, Silver, Perini, 2001)

What is the mind set that would consciously design a system where some students receive a rigorous education and others do not? I don't want to think about the history of class distinction, prejudice, tradition, and countless other factors that might have lead us to such a system. But I do want to think about what it will take to ensure that every American classroom provides the kind of rigorous learning environment that will guarantee all our students' ability to successfully compete in the flat world in which they live.

Think about what kind of teaching methods will allow teachers to deliver their curriculum in ways which meet the requirements of rigor set out by Strong and company. Then factor in the skills we must help our students acquire so they may successfully encounter curriculum on this level.

We're talking about instructional delivery methods like project based instruction which use an inquiry model to empower students to seek their own answers to important issues, create models that represent their findings, and explore ways their discoveries can make a positive difference in the world. We're talking about classrooms that find ways to be connected to the world, whether or not they use the latest technologies, to help create those personal and emotional synapses that motivate students to embrace challenging curriculum. We're talking about classrooms where students are taught the strategies they need to attack challenging text, detect bias, gather relevant information, and decide how to put what they've learned to work in a useful way.

But we'd better do more than talk. It's time, really past time, that we make the changes that create these wonderful classrooms. If you've got ideas on ensuring rigor for every student, I want to hear them. Our combined efforts can have a powerful positive influence on the future of American schools.

<http://debbieshultsblog.blogspot.com/>, Tuesday, September 4, 2007

Rigor is based on a deeply held belief that EVERY child can learn
if given the support and resources to do so....

“There is a brilliant child locked inside every student”

Marva Collins

What some experts say about RELATIONSHIPS....

Administrators, students, staff members, parents, and community share responsibility for creating a safe, caring, ethical and supportive learning environment.....and building relationships that are based upon their mutual aspirations and interests.

Daniel Baron, 2007

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Respectful Relationships: Finding the Key to Motivation

This brings us to the third R and the most important element in motivating students to want to achieve at high standards, the quality of *relationships* with their teachers. It has always been true that students tend to learn very little from teachers who they feel are not respectful toward them. They may feel goaded into doing the minimum by a teacher who uses fear and intimidation, but they will never do their best, even in subjects they enjoy. And for today's students, who often have little contact with their parents or other adults, relationships with caring, respectful teachers have become even more important.

As a part of our work with schools we conduct focus groups with students - sometimes in middle schools, but more often in high schools and with recent graduates or dropouts. We ask students to describe their school's strengths, things that need improving, what they might change that would make the greatest difference in their learning, and to define good teaching.

The replies to the last two questions are essentially the same everywhere we go. Students attending urban, suburban, or rural high schools; students who struggle academically; and students who take advanced courses all say that the one thing that makes the greatest difference in their learning is the quality of their relationships with their teachers. They want teachers who care about teaching and who are challenging and competent, of course, but what they talk about most often is how they are treated by their teachers. Does the teacher see them as individuals, rather than just faces in the crowd? Does the teacher try to know and understand what students may be dealing with at home or in their neighborhood? To what extent does a teacher go out of his or her way to ensure that all students are learning versus just plowing through the chapters? Or does the teacher only pay attention to the "smart" kids? It is increasingly clear to us that, although many of today's students may have diminished fear and respect for formal authority, they have an increased need to connect with adults who can guide and coach them in school and in life.

Research by the Public Agenda Foundation, the leading public opinion research firm studying Americans' views on complex social issues, confirms our observations. In its study of adolescents' views of school, the foundation reports the most startling finding is the issue of lack of respect in schools, in general, and particularly between teachers and students. Only four in ten public school students thought most of their teachers treated them with respect. And more than two-thirds of the students surveyed said that they learn "a lot more" from a teacher who treats them with respect, explains lessons carefully, and cares personally about them.

Many teachers also want closer relationships with their students. Most feel that they could do a better job with all students if their classes were smaller. A growing number understand that, in fact, they cannot motivate a student whom they do not know, as Ted Sizer, founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools, has often said. "Teachers ask: "How can I get to know all of the 130 or more students whom I see in 50 minutes classes for a semester or perhaps a year?" The conditions of teaching and learning in most schools - especially secondary schools - make it extremely difficult for teachers to establish the closer relationships with students that many seek. This is a significant problem that we discuss throughout this book.

What constitutes respect? How do respectful relationships best promote student achievement? How do we assess whether these relationships exist, and how do we promote them? Addressing questions such as these can lead educators to the clarity they need about what constitutes this aspect of good instruction.

Tony Wagner, 2006

What some experts say about RELEVANCE...

Relevance” Connecting the Curriculum Through Real-World Applications

The number one question on many high school students’ minds is, “What’s the point of school - why do I have to know this stuff?” When you ask students why they have to learn the material in any given lesson, most will simply roll their eyes and shrug. Too many students who dare to ask this question aloud receive vague answers such as, “You’ll need to know this in college” or, more simply, “Because it’s going to be on the test.” More often, the question is never asked or answered, either by students or by the teachers themselves. Many teachers are covering material that they have been told they should teach -- a textbook or curriculum where little or no effort has been made to explain why something is important to learn or how it prepares the students for adult life. Even less frequently are students helped to pursue their own areas of interest through independent reading or research projects. There’s not time; there’s too much to cover.

Yet it is increasingly clear that many of today’s students do not retain knowledge or master skills that appear to have little or no relevance to their lives. Acculturated as skeptics and experienced consumers, they need reasons to learn, to “buy in” to what’s going on in class. We are not suggesting a return to the liberal sixties notion that all learning has to be relevant in a narcissistic sense. Rather, as we discussed in Chapter One, because today’s students have less extrinsic motivation to learn, such as fear of authority, their intrinsic motivations to learn must be tapped more than is currently the case in most classrooms.

We need to show students how math concepts apply in the solution of real world problems and how science is used in workplaces. Students need opportunities to discuss how knowledge of history can deepen their understanding of important current issues. They need to see and understand, through job shadowing and internships what skills adults need and how they use them in their daily work. Students also need more opportunities throughout their school years to pursue their own individual areas of interest - in part to experience the satisfaction of learning for its own sake, and in part to gain mastery of the skills and discipline needed to be an independent, lifelong learner. These are only a few examples, and what relevance will mean in any particular school or district will naturally vary.

How to draw on students’ current experiences and interests and how to help them imagine and be motivated by the futures we desire for them are neither obvious nor easily settled matters. Making these decisions and determining how to recognize and promote the appropriate kinds of relevance in instruction require careful thinking and discussion.

Relevance, then, is essential for students to understand the purpose of learning and be motivated to achieve rigor. Students in all ability groups, when asked what

changes would help them learn more in school, talk about needing opportunities for hand-on and applied learning. This answer is second only to the issue of teacher-student relationships in their discussions of how schools can be improved.

Tony Wagner, 2006

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Relevance. Learning becomes relevant when a school infuses the cultures of all of its students into the life of the school. Equitable schools integrate the historical contributions and historical inequities of diverse cultures into their curricula and are committed to personalized teaching and learning that ensure that students are engaged in a rigorous course of study that honors their ancestral roots and cultural histories. Equitable schools eliminate the predictive value of race, social class, sex, ethnicity, and disability and interrupt past practices that do not serve each student well.

Daniel Baron, 2007

What some experts say about RESPONSIBILITY...

Because we want students to be responsible, we must give them occasions to practice responsibility. Because we want them to act respectfully, we must respect and appreciate them. When we believe in their abilities, students deliver. When we trust them, and they know it, we can allocate our resources of time and energy differently.

Nelson Beaudoin, 2005

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In addition to educators helping them to feel welcome, another factor that students describe as integral to reinforcing a positive tone in schools is whether or not they are provided some input into their own education, that is, whether they experience a sense of ownership. While many students with whom I have spoken feel that their teachers invite and respect their opinions and explain the rationale for different educational practices, many others perceive this quality to be lacking in their schools. The following opinions are a representative sample offered by this latter group:

“No one explains why homework is important. They just give it to you.”

“There are so many rules in a school. I think some of the rules are there to aggravate students.”

“Kids have no say in anything they do in school.”

Some might dismiss these and similar sentiments as complaints lodged by a dissatisfied group of children and adolescents who believe they should have total control of what transpires in school. For instance, at one of my workshops an educator responded to a discussion about “student ownership” with the view, “Most students never feel they have enough say. If it were up to the students, especially adolescents, they would make up all the rules and probably do away with homework and tests.”

I do not agree with this teacher’s observation. I do not believe that the goal of the vast majority of students is to dictate what all of the rules of a classroom or an entire school should be. If anything, in my interviews I have found that most students are receptive to parents and teachers establishing rules and limits as long as they feel the adults have listened to and respected their opinion. Some may argue that students only feel listened to when adults agree with them, but I have not discovered this to be the case. From my perspective, problems arise when students sense their voice is not being heard, when they experience rules as arbitrary and imposed with little explanation, and when they perceive that adults are speaking down to them. In such instances, a feeling of ownership is lacking, replaced by resentment and a lack of cooperation.

It has been my experience that if most members of a school community perceive that they have limited input into what transpires in that community, the motivation to teach and to learn will be compromised.

Robert Brooks, 2003

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When put into practice, student voice at the most basic level can consist of youths sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions at the most basic level. Partnering with students to identify school problems and possible solutions reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate. Students also can raise tough issues that administrators and teachers might not highlight, including examining structural and cultural injustices within schools rather than blaming failing students for not succeeding in schools (Fine, 1991; Mitra, 2001).

Although uncommon, student voice initiatives can entail instances in which young people collaborate with adults to address the problems in their schools and in the broader policy environment. In a *youth-adult partnership*, specifically, youths and adults together have the potential to contribute to decision-making processes, to learn from one another, and to promote change. A focus on mutual teaching and learning can develop in youth-adult partnerships with the expectation that all parties involved assume a leadership role in some aspects of their shared effort (Camino, 2000).

In the case of youth-adult partnerships, it is often assumed that an increase in youth leadership means that adults must simply “get out of the way” (Camino, 2005; Mitra, 2005, 2006a). School personnel, therefore, might express concerns that youth-adult partnerships create an expectation of equal roles among students, teachers, and administrators. Yet it is a mistake that empowering some in a youth-adult partnership means that others must give up power. Equality is not a focus of youth-adult partnerships. Instead, such endeavors foster mutual respect and responsibility. Both adults and youths need opportunities to share what they have learned based on their experiences and their beliefs.

Research has found that youth-adult partnerships can 1) contribute **to improved educational outcomes** and serve as a catalyst for changes in schools which have led to improvements in curriculum and assessment development...2) have also **improved classroom practice** directly by teachers working with students to co-create curriculum and to engage in dialogues about ways to shape the learning occurring in the classroom...3) **improved teacher training**...4) **increased positive youth development outcomes**. Participation can increase youth attachment to schools, which in turn correlates with improved academic outcomes. Youth-adult partnerships can lead to powerful increases in civic engagement of youths, including an increase in the belief of young people that they can make a difference in their lives and in the lives of others.

Dana Mitra, 2007 (slight editing)

Activity 2: The 4 Rs: What they Look and Sound Like

Materials: Web access
Computer, LCD, speakers
Copies of the 4 Rs grid for each person

Time: 20 minutes (minimally)

The following are alternative resources to deepen participant's understanding of the 4 Rs by previewing video and other materials to discern what these concepts look and sound like in practice. Facilitators should preview these options and choose the one that best fits for their audience.

History You Can Touch

These audio clips and photos, along with a companion article, tell the story about a charter school that focuses on history.

Link:

http://www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2009/06_history_touch/index.html

Constructing Wings to Fly With

This video clip is an overview of a unit of study undertaken by 9th graders at Aviation High School in Seattle, Washington (9:54):

Link:<http://firesinthemind.org/2010/05/31/constructing-wings-to-fly-with/>

What makes the pages turn?

This clip describes how a school made reading come alive for students.

Link: <http://firesinthemind.org/2010/06/29/what-makes-the-pages-turn/>

Lights the Fire of Project Learning

This Video Clip provides an overview of students studying homelessness in their community. This high school had 100% of students in the 1st graduating class be accepted to college (75% 4 year schools) and exceeded state averages on all core subject and SAT standardized testing. It is an Expeditionary Learning school.

Link: <http://www.edutopia.org/maine-project-learning-rigorous-real-world-relevance-video>

What if We Tried This

<http://firesinthemind.org/2010/09/20/what-if-we-tried-this/>

Students at High Tech High in California describe their experience in a robotics club. The 4 Rs are evident throughout.

Movie: Freedom Writers. This is a full length movie. If you have the time, the examples of the 4 Rs are abundant! People of all ages are moved by it.

Step 1: Ask participants to preview the video or audio piece you have chosen (or read the complementary article). Pass out the 4 Rs grid and ask them to be thinking about what evidence they see of any one of the 4 Rs in the chosen piece. Inform them that they will have time afterwards to work with another person to build and share their observations.

Step 2: Give 2 minutes at the close of the viewing/reading to let each individual note what they saw as evidence of any one of the Rs. Then have them join with a partner and review lists.

Step 3: Ask the full group for examples for each R - starting with one R and having each group just give one example. Ask them to only share new and different examples as you do these rounds.

Alternate: Make a large 4 quadrant grid out of masking tape on the floor. Label each quadrant one of the Rs. Ask the group to choose the one moment or piece of evidence in the video that was most vivid or memorable as evidence of an R. Ask them to physically go to that part of the quadrant and then share their stories.

The 4 Rs Grid

<p style="text-align: center;">RELEVANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The learner can make a connection between the content and their past learning, personal lives and/or future academic and career goals.	<p style="text-align: center;">RIGOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Teachers have high expectations for <u>ALL</u> students.❖ Curriculum is challenging, developing the capacity to understand content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative and personally or emotionally challenging.
<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ A strong student-teacher relationship exists❖ Learning is tailored to the individual's goals because the teacher knows the student well.❖ The teacher is seen more as a guide & facilitator, rather than "the expert".	<p style="text-align: center;">RESPONSIBILITY (SHARED)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Students and teachers understand that both play a key role in learning and share responsibility accordingly in the classroom.❖ Students are incorporated into decision making in school-wide issues impacting them.

Activity 3: The 4 Rs: My Personal Stories

Materials: Chairs
The 4 Rs Grid for each participant
Pencils or pens

Time: 30 Minutes

Facilitator Note: The Wagon Wheel protocol (Critical Friends Group) is a very effective means of getting everyone in the room engaged in addressing core questions or exploring issues. In this variation of the activity is a means to share personal stories.

In this activity, participants rotate (like a wheel) during the activity, so that every time they move, they have a new partner.

If the 4 Rs have been introduced by use of Activity 1, skip to Step 2.

Step 1: Introduce the 4 Rs by reviewing the 4Rs grid with the brief descriptions of each R. Provide a brief personal story as an example of each R.

Step 1: Place four chairs back-to-back as the hub of the wheel and 4 chairs in the outer circle facing the chairs at the hub (each making a spoke). (if you have an uneven number, you can reconfigure accordingly, either making a “spoke” with 3 members or making the wheel have 5 spokes, etc.)

Step 2: Pass out “The 4 Rs Grid”. Ask the participants to reflect on powerful or memorable learning experiences in their lives, either in or outside of school. Their task is to find one example from those memories where each of the 4 Rs played a significant role. You might give the following clarifying questions:

- ❖ When were you in a learning situation when the **relationship** with your teacher/mentor was what made you stick with the task?
- ❖ When did someone hold **high expectations** of you, expectations you might not have believed you could reach, but you did? This is an example of **rigor**.
- ❖ When did you have a satisfying learn experience because what you were learning was **relevant** to your life?
- ❖ When did you assume a level of **responsibility** for learning that challenged you and brought you to a new level of confidence in your ability to take on responsibility?

Ask them to just jot down **briefly** a learning moment for each R, specifically noting how that particular quality made it was so memorable. Allow 5 minutes for this.

Step 3: Start the Wagon Wheel! Explain that each person in the pair will have 1-2 minutes to share the story of that particular R. The listener can ask probing questions of the story teller to know more about the story, but can not otherwise interrupt. At the designated time, notify the group that it is time to switch roles and the listener becomes the storyteller.

Step 4: Ask the participants sitting on the outside of the wheel to rotate one seat to the right. After they settle down, ask them to go the next “R” and share stories about that learning instance. Continue this pattern for the remaining 2 Rs.

Step 5: Ask for a story or 2 from each R that a person heard, that they thought was interesting or a particularly good example of how powerful that “R” is to engaging learning. This requires participants to recount what they heard from a storyteller (not telling their own story). If time allows, you can open it up to any particularly compelling personal stories to complement what has been shared.

Activity 4: “Profiles of a Student” Activity : Applying the 4 Rs

Adapted from the School Reform Initiative protocol: www.schoolreforminitiative.org by Gene Thompson-Grove

Materials: Copies of the “Profiles of a Student” options for each participant
Newsprint paper (have 9 pieces available)
9 markers

Time: 45 minutes

Facilitator Note: This activity is another means to introduce the 4 Rs through personal stories. Providing the profiles of students not only will trigger memories, but it will also highlight the need to personalize learning due to the diversity in any one classroom. This activity will work well with multi-generation gatherings. The instructions assume that both youth and adults are present, but could be facilitated for a youth-only or adult-only audience.

Step 1:

Instruct participants to read the student profiles and identify the one that most accurately describes who they are as a current student or who they were as a high school student in the past. If several fit (this will be true for many), ask that they

choose the one that is currently affecting them the most, or did affect them the most. Adults might consider the one that now seems most significant as you look back at the high school experience. (5 minutes)

Step 2: Without using the number of the student profile, ask participants questions and find the people who chose the same profile you did. (5 minutes)

Step 3: Keep people in their like-profile groups. Ask them to choose a facilitator/timer and a recorder/reporter.

Step 4: Talk about their school experiences together. What is/was it like to be this kind of student? Each person in the group should have an opportunity to talk **uninterrupted** for 2 minutes (about 10 minutes)

Step 5: Ask participants to think about the 4 Rs and how they play a role in who this student is and what this student needs. Ask groups to make a 4 Rs grid on the newsprint. The recorder should take notes on what Rs they might need more of to be fully engaged in learning. (10 minutes)

Step 6: Have each group briefly share their profile and 4 Rs analysis. (10 minutes)

Debriefing Questions:

1. What strikes you as you listen to the needs of these students?
2. How does this activity help you understand the 4 Rs?

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 things 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 no 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 grade 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 by 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* all about.

Objective 5: Envision the unknown: Exploring schools of the future.

Enduring Understandings:

- Transformed schools have certain qualities.

Essential Questions:

- ❖ What does a transformed school look like and sound like?

Participants will:

- Describe qualities of a transformed school.

Activity 1: The Transformation Matching Game

Facilitator Note: This activity was informed by the Vermont DOE “Opportunity to Learn: Defining Vermont Education for a New Generation of Learners” final report of policy recommendations for the Education Transformation Policy Commission (December 2009 Draft). A “T” chart found on page 77 is titled, “Essence of Education Transformation” and reflects this committee’s significant research into school transformation and 21st Century Schools.

The following matching game will help people understand some of the founding principles of a transformed school, opening the door to dialogue about complex concepts such as the destructive nature of tracking, performance-based assessment, and new and varied roles for students.

The steps in this activity require that a group work with these concepts on increasingly deeper levels. The first matching task is quite simple, but at least requires that the group grapple with basic ideas and help clarify language. The second stage of grouping these according to “Rigor, Relevance, Relationship and Responsibility” brings much richer dialogue and exploring core concepts. Reinforce that none of these qualities only touches one of the 4 Rs - it will undoubtedly embody a mix of the four. For example, almost all will have some aspect of relationship to them. The group’s job is to decide which of the Rs is most heavily impacted by this particular transformation attribute. You may need to help groups establish a time limit for each matched pair or a simple call the decision to a vote to assure that they do not get stuck arguing about where any pair belongs in the 4 Rs.

Encourage groups to ask questions about what any of the variables mean. Make sure you are versed on topics such as tracking, performance-based assessment (students progress through school based on when they master the material/content), etc.

NOTE: This activity should only be done after introducing the 4 Rs in withractivity above.

Materials: One set of Matching Set for each small group - Create these sets by making a **COLOR copy (card stock) of the following three pages and cutting them up. (You may choose to reduce the number of matches if you have less time).**

Time: 60 minutes

Step 1: Break the group into smaller groups of 6-8. Give each small group one Matching Set., asking them to hold out the “Rigor, Relevance, Relationship and Responsibility” labels.

Step 2: Explain that the group’s first task is a matching challenge. All the cards in black print represent qualities of many schools today and our starting point for change. All the color cards represent what a transformed school might look like. The group is to match the black and white cards with the appropriate color card. Offer a time frame of 20 minutes for this task. Make sure you tell groups to ask you questions if there are any words or concepts that they don’t understand.).

Step 3: Ask the groups to now take out the 4 Rs labels and create 4 columns. Their second matching challenge is to decide which column each matched pair best resides in - which of the Rs does it most directly address. Explain that there are no absolute right or wrong answers for this part. After about 3 minutes debating where a match belongs, each group is encouraged to take a vote to avoid getting stuck. The point is to explore the potential impact of this approach or quality. Allow 30 minutes for this task.

Step 4: Self-assessment. Ask the groups to identify two attributes out of their matched pairs that they feel is a strength at their school and two attributes that they feel they would like to focus on or is an area of challenge for them.

Step 5: Have each small group report out their two strengths and two areas of desired focus.

Dialogue Questions:

- What did you learn from this activity?
- What questions did it raise for you?
- What one quality of a transformed school most intrigues you?
- If you could only choose on quality of a transformed school to promote, which one would you choose as a focus and why?

<p>Some students achieve.</p>	<p>ALL students achieve.</p>
<p>Expectations vary for different students - some are seen as “college material” and others are not.</p>	<p>Every learner graduates ready for college. There are high expectations for all students.</p>
<p>Lectures are the norm in classrooms.</p>	<p>Instruction is personalized & flexible, with diverse learning options. There are many examples of learning through experience (internships, independent studies, etc.)</p>
<p>Subjects are taught in isolation.</p>	<p>Subjects are often combined - there are many opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.</p>
<p>Common sense is highly valued.</p>	<p>Imagination and creativity are highly valued.</p>
<p>Memorization of facts is stressed and highly valued.</p>	<p>Deep understanding of concepts is stressed – priority is given to problem solving & analysis.</p>

<p>Students progress through the grades in the traditional way (passing GPA).</p>	<p>Learners progress through school based on when they master the material.</p>
<p>The teacher is the expert.</p>	<p>The teacher is a facilitator of learning & discovery</p>
<p>Students are rarely involved in school decision making.</p>	<p>Learners are often involved in school decision making.</p>
<p>Students receive the curriculum designed by the teacher.</p>	<p>Learners' input continually helps shape the curriculum, with students becoming the teacher at times.</p>
<p>Teachers assess students. Principals assess teachers.</p>	<p>Learners continually assess self, peers, teachers, classes and the principal.</p>
<p>School discipline issues are dealt with by administration only.</p>	<p>Students play an important role in addressing wrongdoing in school through restorative justice systems, peer mediation or student courts.</p>
<p>Teachers and administrators hire all new faculty and staff.</p>	<p>Students participate in the hiring decisions.</p>

<p>Adults collect and analyze school data to continually improve the school on behalf of students.</p>	<p>Students collect and analyze school data to continually improve their education, in partnership with adults.</p>
<p>School is done FOR & TO students.</p>	<p>School is done WITH students.</p>
<p>Students are tracked based on assumed ability. Some students would report often being put in low expectation classes.</p>	<p>Faculty believe that ALL students are capable of learning & mastery. All students are encouraged to hold high expectations for themselves and are given the opportunity to realize them.</p>
<p>Students-teacher relationships are based on traditional roles and teacher-driven curriculum.</p>	<p>Student-teacher relationships are based on teachers helping students identify and reach their own learning goals and make choices in what they take.</p>

RIGOR

RELATIONSHIP

RESPONSIBILITY

RELEVANCE

Activity 2: Video resources about innovation

Facilitator Note: The following are videos which may be used to provoke discussion about transformation. It is very important that it is clear that there is no recipe for transformation - no one right way. We should not be looking for what others have done and replicating it because they appear transformed. Rather, we need to look carefully within our own schools and decide what is right for us. We do know that if we increase rigor, relevance, relationships and shared responsibility, we will be on the right path! Having said this, there is still a natural desire to see what transformative practices look like. Here are some resources:

These two videos are another way to introduce the 21st century technology changes and how that impacts education:

Learning to Change; Changing to Learn YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tahTKdEUAPk>

This 5:37 minute video introduces reasons why schools need to change. The message is delivered by all adults and would work best in an adult-majority setting.

Learning to Change: Changing to Learn: Student Voices

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHSehFV98TY&feature=related>

This video was produced by the students at High Tech High in California about how technology is integral to their lives and learning.

Other Videos:

21st Century Skills: What Do We Do? (3:22)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AvZ5ulVyLc&feature=related>

This short video reviews a way schools can adapt to better address 21st Century skill needs.

Transformed by Technology: High Tech High Overview (4:10)

<http://www.edutopia.org/collaboration-age-high-tech-technology-video>

This California school is often cited for its innovative curriculum.

Around-the-Clock Learning: Extending the Definition of 'School'

<http://www.edutopia.org/around-clock-learning-spry-community-school>

Chicago's John Spry Community School goes beyond traditional hours on and off campus to foster student success.

Learning on Purpose: Transforming a Good School into a Great School

<http://www.edutopia.org/south-grand-prairie-career-academies-video>

Wall-to-wall career academies and a transition program for ninth graders have helped create an environment at this Texas high school in which rigorous, relevant education -- inside and outside of the classroom -- is the norm for all students.

Transformation included creating separate academies.

History You Can Touch

This is the story of a charter school with a history theme. You hear student interviews reflecting on their experiences and can read a complementary article about the school.

Link:

http://www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2009/06_history_touch/index.html

Bait the Hook for Math Thinking

<http://firesinthemind.org/2010/06/06/for-patient-math-problem-solving-bait-the-hook/>

This resource is particularly appropriate for teachers when considering ways to make learning more rigorous and relevant across subjects - although the example comes from the math curriculum. This is a TED video (single person presentation) of a math teacher providing examples of how to move from more traditional text book learning to more inquiry based learning.

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Go to www.soundout.org for numerous resources on youth-adult partnership.

The web site, www.whatkidscando.org has excellent examples of student-centered learning and youth-adult partnership.

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