

ACTIVITY 1

The Transformation Matching Game

PURPOSE: Explore the qualities of a transformed school through the 4 Rs framework. This activity asks that school teams begin to assess themselves relative to these variables.

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS

- ♦ One set of Matching Set for each small group — create these sets by making a COLOR copy (card stock) of the following pages and cutting them up. (You may choose to reduce the number of matches if you have less time. If you do omit some, make sure you maintain a balance of qualities for each R.)

FACILITATOR NOTES

- ♦ This activity should only be done after introducing the 4 Rs with one of the activities from Module A or C.
- ♦ 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 helps 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 touches only one of the 4 Rs — it will undoubtedly embody a mix of the four. For example, almost all will have some aspect of relationship. 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 simply call the decision to a vote to ensure that they do not get stuck arguing.
- ♦ Encourage groups to ask questions about what any of the variables mean. Make sure you are versed on topics such as tracking, proficiency-based assessment (students’ progress through school based on mastery), restorative justice, etc.

ACTIVITY

Step 1: Break the group into smaller groups of 6–8. Give each small group one Matching Set, asking them to put aside 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 four 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 are strengths at their school and two attributes that they feel they would like to focus on or represent areas of challenge for their school.

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

Reflection 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 one quality of a transformed school to promote, which one would you choose as a focus and why?

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

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

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

RIGOR High expectations for all leads to challenging curriculum. This helps students master content that is complex, provocative, and challenging.

RELATIONSHIP Strong student-teacher relationships exist, leading to learning tailored to the student's goals. The teacher serves as guide and facilitator, rather than "the expert."

RESPONSIBILITY (SHARED) Students and teachers both actively participate in the learning process and share in decision making.

RELEVANCE Connections are made between course content and previous learning, learners' lives, and their goals.