



COMEBACK

## MN Comeback 'Framework for school relevance'

Commissioned by the Relevance Committee, prepared by The Culture Piece

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### Background and context

Increasingly, school communities are realizing the importance of making education relevant. When school life is relevant, students – and other stakeholders – are more connected, motivated, and engaged. MN Comeback's 'Framework for school relevance' is designed to help schools define relevance, assess ways they are making education relevant for students, and guide them towards increased relevance.

We believe relevant, real-world school experiences better prepare students for life. A relevant education helps student feel more connected to school, learn more, and have a sense of ownership of their school experience. This framework divides characteristics of relevance into three categories: *Relatedness* (feeling connected to school life – its people, its classes, its policies); *Competence* (learning and making progress in the development of meaningful traits and skills); and *Autonomy* (having input, a voice, a degree of control of one's experience, responsibilities).

### Domain 1: Relatedness

*Essential questions:*

1. Do students (and other stakeholders) feel connected to school – its people and its systems/policies?
2. Does school leadership prioritize relationships?

*Relationships among people are central to students' (and other stakeholders') sense of belonging to school:*

- Educators and students enjoy connective, positive relationships
- Students appreciate each other, feel a sense of belonging
- Parents feel connected to school community
- Neighbors (people, businesses, organizations) have a presence here
- Students feel connected to the larger local community

*Relationships to school systems/policies are also important to student-school connections:*

- Students like how they are expected to learn
- Students approve how learning is measured
- Students feel attracted to/excited by offered and content learned
- Students connect to some of the extra-curriculars offered
- Students feel connected to the local community (outside school)
- Teachers like how they are expected to teach
- Teachers like how learning is measured
- Teachers feel satisfied with extra-curriculars offered

*School culture prioritizes relationships:*

- Positive relationships are used to prioritize relevance and make school experiences relevant
- Time is dedicated to relationships (in class, at assemblies, on teacher teams, at staff meetings, at community events)
- Staff receive ongoing support/training to gain proficiencies in teacher practices that foster relatedness
- Representative leadership assesses quality of human relationships and adjusts as needed
- Representative leadership assesses quality of school systems/policies and their reception by stakeholders, and adjusts as needed

## Domain 2: Competence

### *Essential questions:*

1. Are students getting good at meaningful, useful stuff?
2. Are they making adequate progress? Does learning integrate academics and the social-emotional realm, and does it include cultural understanding?

### *Learning fits today's world:*

- School learning focuses on real-world, 21<sup>st</sup>-century experiences
- Local learning in the community (outside school) focuses on real world, 21<sup>st</sup>-century experiences

### *Learning fits student needs:*

- Students learn things of interest to them, e.g., passions, hobbies, things related to their dreams/goals
- Students practice and refine things they are already good at
- Schools address student weaknesses but not at the expense of offering ongoing support of student interests/strengths
- Learning brings enjoyment to students (and other stakeholders)

### *Learning – degree of challenge (ways educators help optimize student progress):*

- Learning meets students where they are
- Learning content requires effort – but is not too hard
- Students learn at a pace that is optimally challenging – not too slow, not too fast
- Student learning is sequenced, from simple to complex, in a way that fosters proficiency/mastery

### *What's being learned – Which competencies? When are they scheduled?*

- Social emotional learning and cultural understanding are integrated into all learning
- During the school day, students learn core content: math, science, reading, writing, and social studies
- During the school day, students learn things outside math, science, reading, writing, and social studies
- Outside the school day, students have regular opportunities to learn/participate in school life

### *School culture prioritizes competence – directed more at the adult community*

- Schools prioritize student growth in a variety of competencies, including academic, social-emotional, and cultural understanding
- Staff receive ongoing support/training in lesson delivery, SEL, cultural understanding
- School systems support and monitor student growth
- School systems prioritize early identification of and interventions for students who need additional support

### **Domain 3: Autonomy**

#### *Essential questions:*

1. Do students have a voice/agency in their education? What about other stakeholders? Do teachers have input? Parents?
2. Is learning constructed together?

#### *Students have a voice, autonomy, input, and responsibilities:*

- Learning is framed by questions
- Students investigate/explore/are responsible for arriving at their own answers to questions posed
- Students are offered choices in processes and products that matter to them
- Students have a voice in the creation and maintenance of school norms
- Students are included in the assessment of their own progress
- Responsibilities for a wide variety of learning procedures and routines are transferred to students gradually
- Students share responsibility for getting back on track when misbehavior occurs

#### *All stakeholders – including students – are included in decision-making:*

- Creating/maintenance of school mission/philosophy
- Creating/maintaining school policy
- Decisions about what is taught/learned; how it's taught/learned
- How learning is assessed
- Decisions about staff development needs

#### *School culture supports autonomy/agency (school leadership):*

- School creates the conditions for meaningful community input – provides information, family-friendly gatherings, etc.
- Leadership prioritizes including all voices in school development and assessment
- Leadership prioritizes staff training in constructivist and equity pedagogy
- Leadership prioritizes training in positive school culture
- School policy/systems is rooted in the input given by local community/stakeholders

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