

Assuring Rigor and Relevance (Authentic Student Work)



**ConnectEd Multiple Pathways Institute
June 2009**

**Pathway/District Coaches with
District Pathway Leads & Teacher Teams**

Session Objectives:

- ▶ Debrief the two sessions: Curriculum/Curriculum Integration and ConnectEd Studios
- ▶ Clarify Your Own and Your Pathway’s Definition of Rigor
- ▶ Discuss Rigor and Authentic Student Work in the Context of your Pathway; Consider Next Steps

(NOTE: Facilitators and participants should determine if they will meet in a large group format OR in three or four smaller pathway specific teams; Each group should decide on a facilitator and recorder.)

TIME	TOPIC/ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	DELIVERABLES
2:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share “take away” ideas from curriculum & curriculum integration sessions. ○ Brainstorm ways in which your pathway team might utilize ConnectEd Studios ○ Discuss implications for your team, especially with regard to scope and sequence of pathway curriculum; curriculum mapping and curriculum integration. 	<p>Participants share “take away” ideas from morning and afternoon sessions</p> <p>Team discusses implications for their own pathway curriculum and action planning related to curriculum</p>	
3: 00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity: Images of Rigor (p.3-4) ○ Team Discussion: What is our pathway definition of rigor? What is our pathway definition of relevance? What evidence exists of rigor and relevance in our pathway? ○ How can a project-based classroom increase rigor while still meeting standards and increasing student achievement? 	<p>Each Participant will reflect on her/his own images of rigor as a student and as a teacher.</p> <p>Team will discuss its own pathway definition of rigor.</p> <p>Team will discuss its own pathway definition of authentic student work (relevance).</p> <p>(If time permits, team leaders will discuss and share the existing evidence of rigor and authentic student work in their pathways.)</p>	Completed Images of Rigor Reflection Form (p. 3-4)
3:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion/Team Work Continued: Use Rigor, Relevance, Readiness, and Results Form (p. 5) to Guide Discussion ○ Time for Pathway Team Action Planning 	<p>Team members continue to discuss rigor and relevance</p> <p>Team members continue to review Pathway Certification tool and spend time on action planning</p>	Completed Responses to Questions on the Rigor, Relevance, Readiness and Results Form Action Planning

4:05	Reflection & Closure What challenges have you identified? What support do you need?	Team members determine professional development, technical assistance, and coaching needs. ○ Next Steps	
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Images of Rigor

A certain severity (as in *mortis*) surrounds the concept of rigor. When we think of rigor, we may imagine detailed discussions on the fine points of gerunds and participles; endless repetition of mathematical formulas; long hours of practice and drill. But this is not at all what rigor should look like. Here are a few different images:

- At one high school, a local author came to speak to an eleventh grade Media pathway English class and made a presentation about her work and spoke about how she wanted to encourage students to explore careers in writing and all aspects of the industry from publishing, writing, and the business and marketing side. In the follow-up discussion, the students decide to host a writers' fair and invite authors and representatives from the publishing fields to a Saturday event at a local hotel convention center. Their goal was to expose many more students to the range of careers in writing and publishing. The students worked to plan the event, market it, do all of the invitations, acquire sponsors, create a webpage, develop and manage the registration, and plan the food and entertainment.

In the process the teacher challenged students to research various writing genres and to arrange for a wide spectrum of authors and publishers. The students worked on the same project in their media and design class where the development of the web materials, marketing materials and event planning took place. In Math, the students calculated the number of books sold, the profits and losses of various publishers, made statistic projections, designed charts, and prepared historical trend graphs. In U.S. History, students researched the various American authors and analyzed the impact of those writers on history.

The event was a huge success with 1000 students participating and over 350 community members attending in the evening.

- Students in a high school learning community complete an interdisciplinary project (in English, Social Studies, & Science) in which they research, write, illustrate, document, and publish a professional quality (and quite beautiful) 250+ page Field Guide to a local bay. With funding from outside grants and through industry partnerships, students are able to work with professional graphic artists, photographers, and book designers as their publication advisors and mentors. The resulting Field Guide is used as a text in both high school and college classrooms and sold to the public in local bookstores and on amazon.com. The following year, another cohort of students working with the same three teachers, completes a similar professional book project on the history of the bay.
- Ninth grade students in an Aviation High School work with aeronautical engineers as their mentors to design and test wing prototypes for commercial airplanes. The project involves significant research and writing, scientific method, and advanced math and physics. Students present their findings and recommended wing design to a panel of

aviation experts and engineers. Students prepare a professional presentation and exhibition of their work that includes detailed reports illustrating the scientific and mathematical evidence that supports their conclusions.

Reflecting on Your Images of Rigor

As a student:

- What courses or subjects did you find most challenging in high school and/or college?
- Did you ever have a teacher who taught in a rigorous manner? In what ways was this teacher rigorous? How did you respond?
- Did you ever have a teacher whose expectations of you seemed too high?
- When you studied something demanding, what made that subject difficult? How did you go about gaining control over the content?
- Did you ever have a teacher who taught you in a non-rigorous, undemanding manner? How did that affect you?

As a teacher:

- What have been your own experiences with teaching – or attempting to teach – rigorously?
- What are some concepts, skills or texts that you have taught – or would like to teach – that you consider rigorous? Are there any of these concepts, skills, or texts you consider too difficult for your students? If so, what makes them difficult? What would your students need to learn or be able to do to master the concept, skill, or material?
- When you are teaching a particularly difficult concept or skill or text, how do you go about it? How do your students respond?
- What are the main barriers facing you as you work to increase the rigor of the content you teach?

What is your own definition of rigor?

How is rigor defined in your pathway?

RIGOR, RELEVANCE, READINESS, AND RESULTS

"It is a curious fact that we Americans habitually underestimate the capacity of pupils at almost every stage of education from the primary school through the university . . . It seems to me probable that the proportion of grammar school children incapable of pursuing geometry, algebra, and a foreign language would turn out to be much smaller than we now imagine." *Charles Eliot, President, Harvard University, 1893*

"America's high schools are obsolete. ... Today, only one-third of our students graduate from high school ready for college, work, and citizenship. The other two-thirds, most of them low-income and minority students, are tracked into courses that won't ever get them ready for college or prepare them for a family-wage job—no matter how well the students learn or the teachers teach. . . . This isn't an accident or a flaw in the system; it is the system. Once we realize that we are keeping low-income and minority kids out of rigorous courses, there can be only two arguments for keeping it that way: either we think they can't learn, or we think they're not worth teaching. The first argument is factually wrong; the second is morally wrong." *William H. (Bill) Gates II*

Questions for Discussion:

- To what extent does our pathway provide a rigorous and relevant learning experience for every student?

- In what ways are we successful in having all students graduate ready for college, career, and civic life, without need for remediation?

- What are our gaps? What are the aspects of our pathway that we need to improve if we are to achieve our student outcome goals and achieve multiple pathway certification? What do we need to include in our action plan?

- With regard to increasing rigor and relevance, what are our pathway professional development and technical assistance needs? Coaching needs? Other needs?