

# Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum:

## The Research:

### Edmonds

- Identified that high expectations, particularly for students of a low socioeconomic status, was a cornerstone in effective schools.

### Newmann

- In an examination of 500 lesson observations and in-depth interviews with teachers, department chairs, and principals from sixteen demographically diverse high schools, researchers found that students were more likely to try, to concentrate, and be interested in academic study when they are challenged to think.

### Reynolds and Teddlie

- They found that the importance of high expectations was one of the most consistent findings in all the literature, whether the research was done in America, Great Britain, or Holland.

### Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbursch

- In one extensive study on teenagers, researchers found that “students behaved better and performed better in schools where teachers were supportive but firm, and maintained high, well-defined standards for academic work” (Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbursch, 1996, p. 50).

## What it is:

- Rigor and Relevance is represented by challenging content that is significant to a topic and includes authentic work.
- It involves original application of knowledge and skills to complex problems (Construction of Knowledge) rather than just routine use of facts and procedures.
- It also entails the use of prior knowledge, the development of in-depth understanding, and the ability to develop and express ideas and findings through elaborated communication.
- It engages students in interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating concepts, and produces an authentic product (disciplined inquiry).
- The content is not just interesting to students, but involves particular intellectual challenge that when successfully met would have meaning to students beyond complying with teachers’ requirements and in contexts outside of the classroom.
- Students incorporate the knowledge or internalize it into their lives (Transfer).

## What it is not:

- It is not repetitive or routine
- It is not work that requires little or no thought
- It is not rote memorization

Edmunds, R. (1979). *A discussion of the literature and issues related to effective schooling*. St. Louis, MO: CEMREL.

Newmann, F.M., (1992). *Student Achievement in American Secondary Schools*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Newmann, F.M., B. M. King, and D. L. Carmichael, (2007). "Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Common Standards for Rigor and Relevance in Teaching Academic Subjects". Des Moines, IA: Iowa Dept. of Education.

Rigor and Relevance Handbook (2002). Rexford, New York: International Center for Leadership in Education.

Steinberg, L., Brown, B., & Dornbusch, S. (1996). *Beyond the classroom: Why school reform has failed and what parents need to do*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Teddlie, C. and Reynolds, D. (2000). *The international handbook of school effectiveness research*. London, New York; Falmer Press.