RELATIONAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW
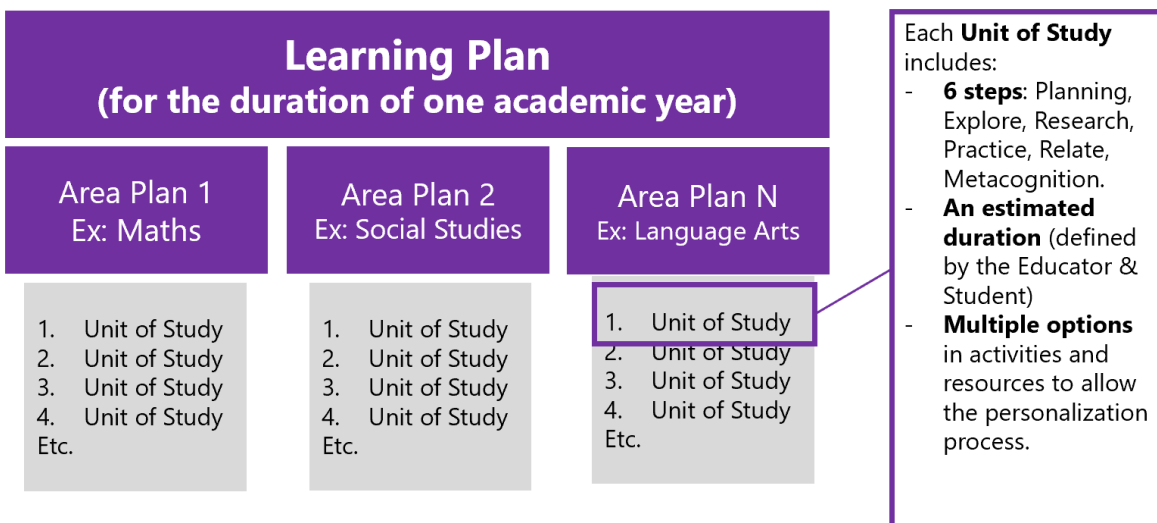
Introduction

This document presents the main elements and steps that define the Relational Learning Framework, from a curriculum development perspective. It is a guide for educators to create and adapt their lessons, transforming them into units of study that guarantee successful and autonomous learning processes.

While working on a series of units of study, students are not only learning content: most importantly, they are developing skills such as planning, decision-making, and self-assessment, among others. Facilitating personalized learning experiences for students means adjusting different elements in their learning process.
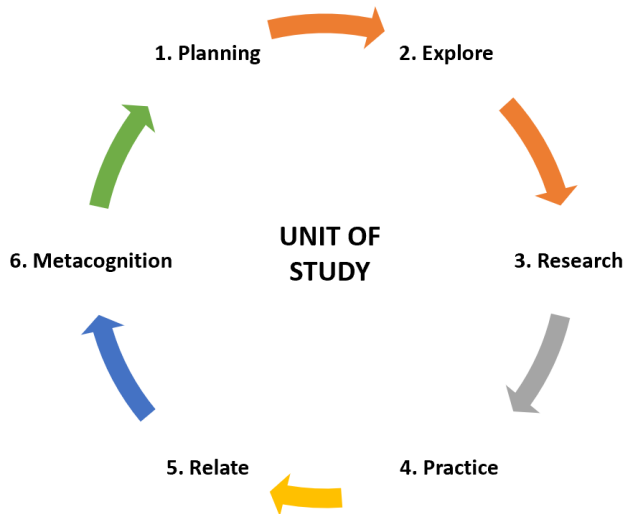
Learning Plan, Area Plan, and Units of Study

Each educational system defines what students should learn at school in a curriculum. Some systems revolve around a content-based curriculum, fewer have created a skill-based curriculum. The Relational Education Framework can be developed in either context, and it has been proven effective in a variety of contexts, with students of all ages. The graph below shows the structure of the main elements to be defined under this framework: **the Learning Plan, the Area Plans, and the Units of Study.**

Learning Plan
(for the duration of one academic year)

Area Plan 1 Ex: Maths	Area Plan 2 Ex: Social Studies	Area Plan N Ex: Language Arts
1. Unit of Study 2. Unit of Study 3. Unit of Study 4. Unit of Study Etc.	1. Unit of Study 2. Unit of Study 3. Unit of Study 4. Unit of Study Etc.	1. Unit of Study 2. Unit of Study 3. Unit of Study 4. Unit of Study Etc.

Each **Unit of Study** includes:
- **6 steps**: Planning, Explore, Research, Practice, Relate, Metacognition.
- **An estimated duration** (defined by the Educator & Student)
- **Multiple options** in activities and resources to allow the personalization process.

Units of Study

Each unit of study includes **six steps**, with specific purposes. This process is aligned with how the brain works, thus guaranteeing students have meaningful learning experiences.

When creating units of study, consider these general characteristics:

- Learning plans and Area plans are dynamic: units of study can be added, adjusted or removed, depending on each student's needs.
- Units of Study differ from lesson plans: they are written **by** the educator but directed **to** the students.
- In every step, activities must include a **deliverable product**.
- It is important to explicitly **state the purpose of each step** in the unit of study, as part of the activities. This helps students understand the learning process.

The Relational Learning Framework in Six Steps

1. Plan and Set Goals

PURPOSES	STUDENTS' GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS	SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED
• Improves self-regulation and self-monitoring of specific actions. • Develop perseverance and agency.	• Set personal intentions. • Pick achievable and measurable metrics. • Plan tasks to reach each goal.	• Use a planning template. • Structure goals: What (verb) + What for + Time	• Organization, work effectiveness, decision-making, prioritization, responsibility, accountability.

Examples of activities for the Plan and Set Goals step:
- Breaking-down activities or processes into manageable steps or tasks.
- Reading proposed activities and setting goals for each step of the unit of study.

2. Explore

PURPOSES	STUDENTS' GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS	SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED
• Explore the students prior knowledge or invite them to make hypothesis about their own process. • Motivate students and prepare them to learn.	• Defining personal goals. • Organizing planning their work.	• Dynamic activities, games, reflections	• Association, relating, projections, sequences, planning, hypothesis.

Examples of activities for the Explore step:
- Analyzing situations related to the students' interests, to motivate them.
- Inquiring about prior knowledge.
- Short readings, analysis of images, songs or videos,
- Formulating and hypothesis.
- Exploring news or events to reflect on specific issues, topics, or situations.
- Contextualized and / or problematizing questions.
- Situations that generate a connection between the topic and their own lives.

3. Research

PURPOSES	STUDENTS' GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS	SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED
• Associate new and previous knowledge. • Access information and structure information.	• Research concepts and gather information from different sources. • Organize information in a structured way, avoiding transcriptions.	• Suggest sources that are appropriate to the students' learning style and level of autonomy. • Always include some bibliography.	• Research, inquiry, interpretation, comparison, analysis, communication, organization.

Examples of activities for the Research Step:
- Selecting a research resource, or choosing between different resources, to locate information.
- Reading, and designing an organizational grid or another graphic organizer such as concept maps, mind maps, comparative tables.
- With early childhood students, you can start with simple questions or provide worksheets to help them organize the information.

4. Practice

PURPOSES	STUDENTS' GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS	SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED
• Scaffold the development, synthesis and application of new knowledge through planned activities.	• Apply and practice the skills and contents that were explored at the Research step.	• Propose didactic and ludic activities that will prove that students have mastered the targeted skills.	• Abstraction, problem solving, argument, comparison, classifying, induction, deduction, analysis, communication

Some examples of activities for the Practice step:
- Practical exercises and problem-solving, for instance in Math.
- Creating stories or writing essays.
- Proposing examples related to the topic.
- Making Lab experiments.
- Practicing a dance, creating some artwork, or performing a piece in Arts.
- Composing song lyrics or poems.

5. Relate

PURPOSES	STUDENTS' GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS	SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED
• Tie the learning process back to the student's life, according to student's unique environment and/or personal aspirations.	• Apply their newly acquired skills and learnings to new contexts. • Assess their work to identify strengths and improvement opportunities.	• Propose reflexive activities. • Reinforce community building activities.	• Proposing, making decisions, creativity, assessment, generalization, conclusions.

Examples of activities at the Relate step:
- Using the new knowledge to solve a problem in your environment or community.
- Getting to know more about yourself, your family, or your community.
- Sharing the new knowledge and expertise through campaigns, public displays, and presentations.

6. Metacognition

PURPOSES	STUDENTS' GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS	SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED
• Assess planning and actions for continuous improvement.	• Develop self-awareness and self-improvement, finding meaning in the learning process.	• Include self-assessment questions at each step. • Ask questions to help students assess their own progress. • Praise progress.	• Accountability, Work effectiveness, decision-making, prioritization, responsibility, perseverance.

Examples of activities at the Metacognition step:
- Reflecting about the process step by step.
- Answering self-assessment or reflection questions at the end of the unit.
- Reviewing planning and goals to define improvement opportunities.

Personalization

Students need to participate in the personalization of their learning process. However, when students are not used to this process, they need to be exposed to concrete examples and choices, **to develop agency**, before they are ready to propose a personalization of their learning.

Autonomous students can personalize their process. Nevertheless, at the Directed, Guided, and Oriented levels[1], Educators can help students to envision the benefits of personalization by:

- **Gathering information valuable information about the students' needs**, challenges, strengths, likes, and dislikes, via activities and self-assessment questions. This information can be used to prompt and propose personalization strategies.
- **Taking into account each students pace** when planning and goal setting, considering their needs, strengths and weaknesses when allocating time for each activity. For example, some students may need more time at the Research step, others may need to invest more time into Practice.
- **Introducing options in the resources and activities** in units of study. When students make their own choices in their learning path, for instance by choosing between two resources to Research, they enjoy the learning process and they experience the benefits of decision-making.
- **Asking students to propose at least one resource or one activity in each unit**. When educators promote these practices, selecting their resources and proposing their activities, agency becomes a habit.
- **Proposing products based on the needs and traits of each student**. For instance, students who need to improve writing skills can be motivated to produce written products rather than videos; students who enjoy oral presentations can be encouraged to develop their presentation skills. Motivating students to propose their products fosters intrinsic motivation and self-awareness.

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[1] For references about the Levels of Autonomy, refer to Unit 2 – Research Step.