

The Third Path:

A Relationship-Based Approach to Student Achievement and Well-being

David Tranter, PhD, Lori Carson, Tom Boland

The Third Path integrates well-being and academics by shifting the classroom focus from tasks to relationships, from check-lists to check-ins. It views education as a journey of human development, not just for the student, but for the educator too.

The Role of Educators:	To support ALL students to reach their full potential and to become happy, healthy, and well-rounded human beings.
The Third Path:	Students who are supported academically grow up to be academically strong (Path #1). Students who are supported social/emotionally grow up to have good relationships and higher levels of life satisfaction (Path #2). The Third Path fully integrates Paths #1 and #2 to support the well-being of students, while also supporting academic development. It emphasizes developing the whole student.
The Relationship-Based Approach:	Following the Third Path means focusing on the student-educator relationship first. Caring, intentional and responsive relationships are at the heart of learning and growth. This approach leads to understanding each student, and truly knowing their strengths, struggles, and needs.
The Approach to Student Well-being:	The promotion of student well-being is embedded in everything the educator does. It's not a separate topic in the curriculum, it develops as a result of the relationships and activities that occur every day in the classroom. Well-being arises from all the small, but powerful and cumulative moments in the lives of students.
Well-being and Academic Achievement:	Well-being and academic achievement are inextricably linked. Without well-being, students struggle to learn and develop. Students need to experience success in order to develop well-being.

The Eight Conditions: There are eight hierarchical conditions that support student well-being and academic achievement. Together these create an environment for students to flourish. Educators can start by strengthening any condition. However, if progress is difficult, they should consider focusing on the condition that precedes it.	Safety:	Students require more than physical safety, they need emotional safety too. They need to know that the adults in their lives truly care and are responsive to their needs.
	Regulation:	Stress is a necessary part of growth, and learning how to regulate—to successfully recognize and address stress—is a critical and lifelong challenge. School provides an opportunity to help students recognize their signs of stress, understand its impact, and develop successful coping strategies.
	Belonging:	The more connecting experiences students have, the more they feel they belong. Belonging can be strengthened by increasing the number and depth of connecting experiences that the student has with the school, their educators, and their peers.
	Positivity:	Positivity leads students to be motivated and open to discovery. It's about spreading the joy of learning and believing in the extraordinary uniqueness and potential in each and every student.
	Engagement:	Engagement is about being fully open to learning, connected to others, able to take on complex challenges, and reach conclusions that are thoughtful and accurate. Engagement doesn't just lead students to make good decisions, it also provides them with a deeper sense of satisfaction and confidence.
	Identity:	School is important for students' exposure to a variety of ways of being, and for them to develop a stronger sense of who they truly are. They begin to form an identity that is their own, as well as come to appreciate and support the similarities and differences between themselves and others.
	Mastery:	Successful learning and development requires a sense of personal self-efficacy. Students need regular and accurate feedback along the way. Recognizing the value of effort and experiencing success is critical to maintaining motivation to learn.
	Meaning:	Meaning is a powerful force for ongoing motivation and life satisfaction. Students are much more likely to commit to lifelong learning and personal development when they are able to experience the intrinsic value of the activities they engage in.



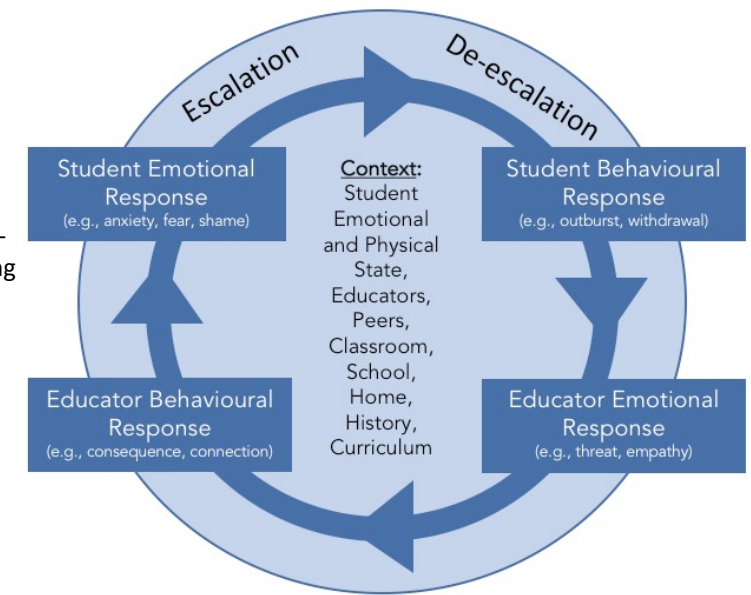
The Third Path Book + Eight Educator Strategy Guides
Published by Nelson
For more info:
www.thirdpath.ca

The Relationship Cycle:

A traditional, behavioural perspective to learning focuses on what is missing and what is “wrong”. Like a detective solving a crime, it looks for a culprit to blame.

In contrast, the Relationship-Based Approach sees learning and behaviour as a dynamic and cyclical process. Like an anthropologist, it seeks to understand, not blame.

It examines how the Relationship Cycle perpetuates success or struggle, and how best to improve the interaction.



How Relationship-Based Are You?



Task-Based

Behavioural Thinking Autopilot

Past or future-oriented
Act out of habit
Identify student learning deficits
Fill in learning gaps
Compliance
Extrinsic motivation
Task completion
Prescribed and clear
Fast

Goal is acquisition of Curriculum

Relationship-Based

Relational Thinking Intentional

In the present
Open to new learning
Attuned to student's state
Responsive to student need
Engagement
Intrinsic Motivation
Exploration
Messy and uncertain
Slow

Goal is Human Development



Walking the Third Path means always asking the question, “What matters most?”