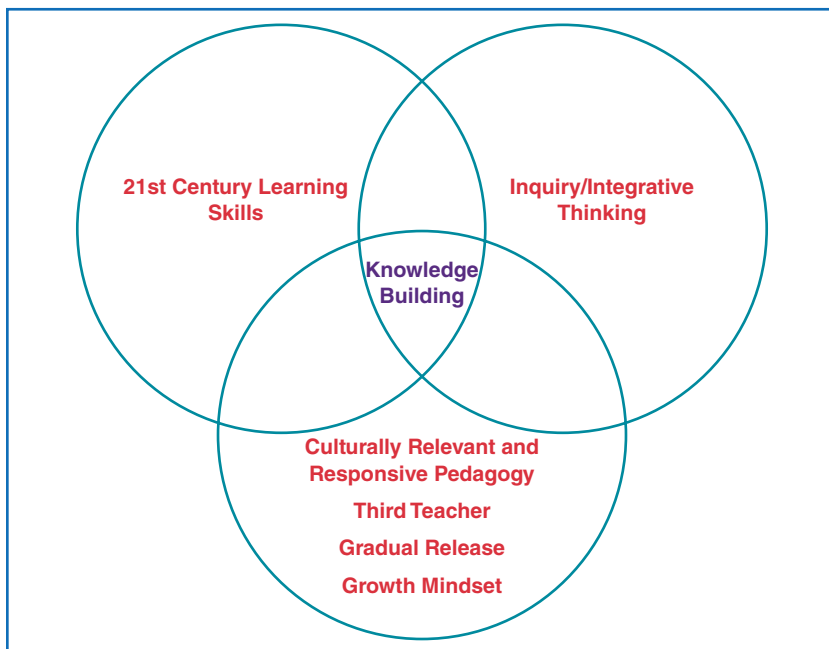


## WEB RESOURCE II: KNOWLEDGE BUILDING FROM A PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE



The above diagram was a way that I was able to see the links between what we were currently exploring and implementing and how knowledge building (KB) would be the next step in our learning journey. It also enabled staff to enter at different points, some of which were already familiar to them, such as Accountable Talk and KB circles, using the Causal Model like a knowledge forum, and examining the 12 KB principles.

### ENTRY POINT THROUGH ACCOUNTABLE TALK AND KB CIRCLES

This past winter, we reintroduced the concept of Accountable Talk with staff as another way of making student thinking visible and increasing

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student engagement. We reviewed Lucy West's "Accountable Talk" videos (The Questioning Learning Video Series, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfeMzMm4pCkand>) and then did an activity in which each group was given a question that they needed to discuss. One member was the observer and recorder, who noted who was talking, who was directing the talking, and what they were doing to direct the conversation. The most common observations noted were that conversations continued by questioning, restating ideas, and building upon them. We then introduced the Accountable Talk stems.

Teachers took the stems back and utilized them in their classrooms during literature circles, consolidation in math, and consolidation in science. One Grade 8 teacher noted that her students "didn't really use the stems but they really built upon each other's ideas." By using the stems in literature circles, students were knowledge building. Another Grade 8 teacher noted in her KB circle that when students did not use the Accountable Talk stems, they "reverted to questions like 'Would you recommend this book? Why?'"

## **ENTRY POINT THROUGH UTILIZING THE CAUSAL MODEL LIKE A KNOWLEDGE FORUM**

Teachers have used the Causal Model like a knowledge forum for such questions as "What causes people to follow/perpetuate societal norms?" "What causes a person to take a stand?" "What causes habitats to change?"

## **ENTRY POINT THROUGH EXPOSING EDUCATORS TO ALL 12 KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING PRINCIPLES**

After introducing the concept of knowledge building and how it relates to our PL at our school this year (see Venn diagram above), at our monthly Family of Schools meeting, we presented school leaders with the 12 knowledge-building principles. At that point, we asked them to "sticker" those principles

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that they felt had links to mathematics (our priority and school focus), keeping in mind the true definition of mathematics: *the study of relationships both quantitatively and spatially to make sense of the world*. They then needed to choose one, and on the back of the principle they needed to write how the principle related to

mathematics

mathematical pedagogy

student learning in mathematics

The three principles in which administrators found a direct connection to mathematics were idea diversity; pervasive knowledge building; and real ideas, authentic problems.

## NEXT STEPS

We have just started the implementation of knowledge building. The more that teachers/administrators can see it as a tool that supports student learning and engagement and evolves out of the current pedagogy in the classroom, the more readily the principles will be utilized and applied across the curriculum. We will continue to enable teachers to “enter” at the point that fits with their current teaching and, through further PL, expose them to all aspects of knowledge building.

Source: Erin Altosaar, principal, Park Lawn Junior Middle School, Toronto, Canada, 2017.