Defining Relevance

Relevance refers to learning in which students apply core knowledge, concepts, or skills to solve real-world problems. Relevant learning is interdisciplinary and contextual. Student work can range from routine to complex at any school grade and in any subject. Relevant learning is created, for example, through authentic problems or tasks, simulation, service learning, connecting concepts to current issues, and teaching others.

The Application Model describes the levels of relevance.

Identifying the level of relevance of curriculum objectives and instructional activities is a little more difficult than determining the Knowledge Taxonomy level because there is no verb list. However, just as the Knowledge Taxonomy categorizes increasing levels of thinking, the Application Model describes increasingly complex applications of knowledge. Any student performance can be expressed as one of five levels of the Application Model. The Application Model Decision Tree can assist in setting the desired level of expected student performance in application.

The basic nutrition example that follows is similar to the example in the Defining Rigor section in that it uses nutrition to describe student performance at various levels. Each level requires students to apply knowledge differently.

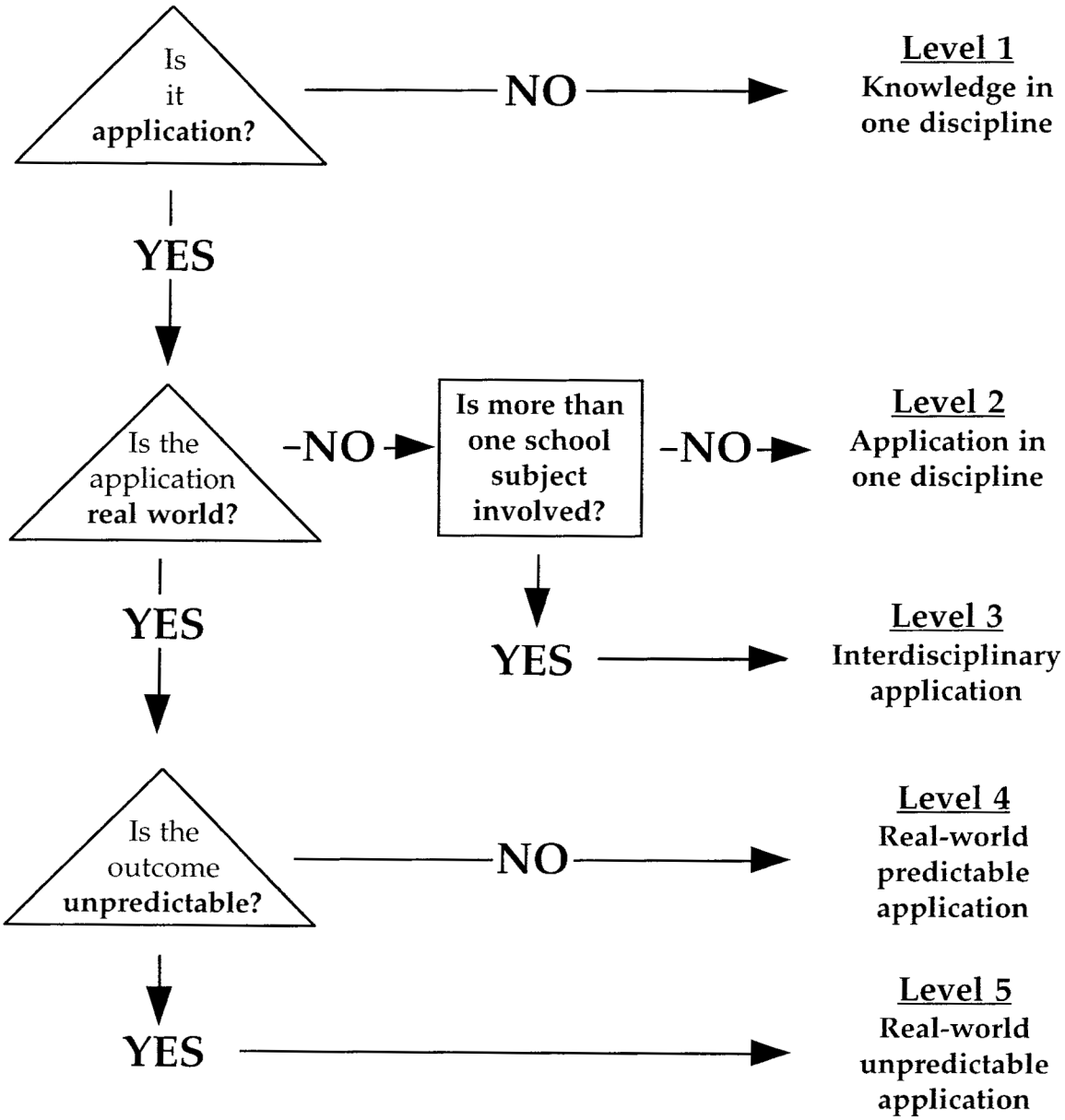
Basic Nutrition

Level	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge in One Discipline	Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Application in One Discipline	Rank foods by nutritional value
Level 3 – Interdisciplinary Application	Make cost comparisons of different foods considering nutritional value
Level 4 – Real-world Predictable Situations	Develop a nutritional plan for a person with a health problem affected by food intake
Level 5 – Real-world Unpredictable Situations	Devise a sound nutritional plan for a group of 3-year-olds who are picky eaters

Similarly, the expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition can vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher wants students only to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at level one is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a significant impact on nutritional habits, then some of the objectives need to be at levels 4 and 5.

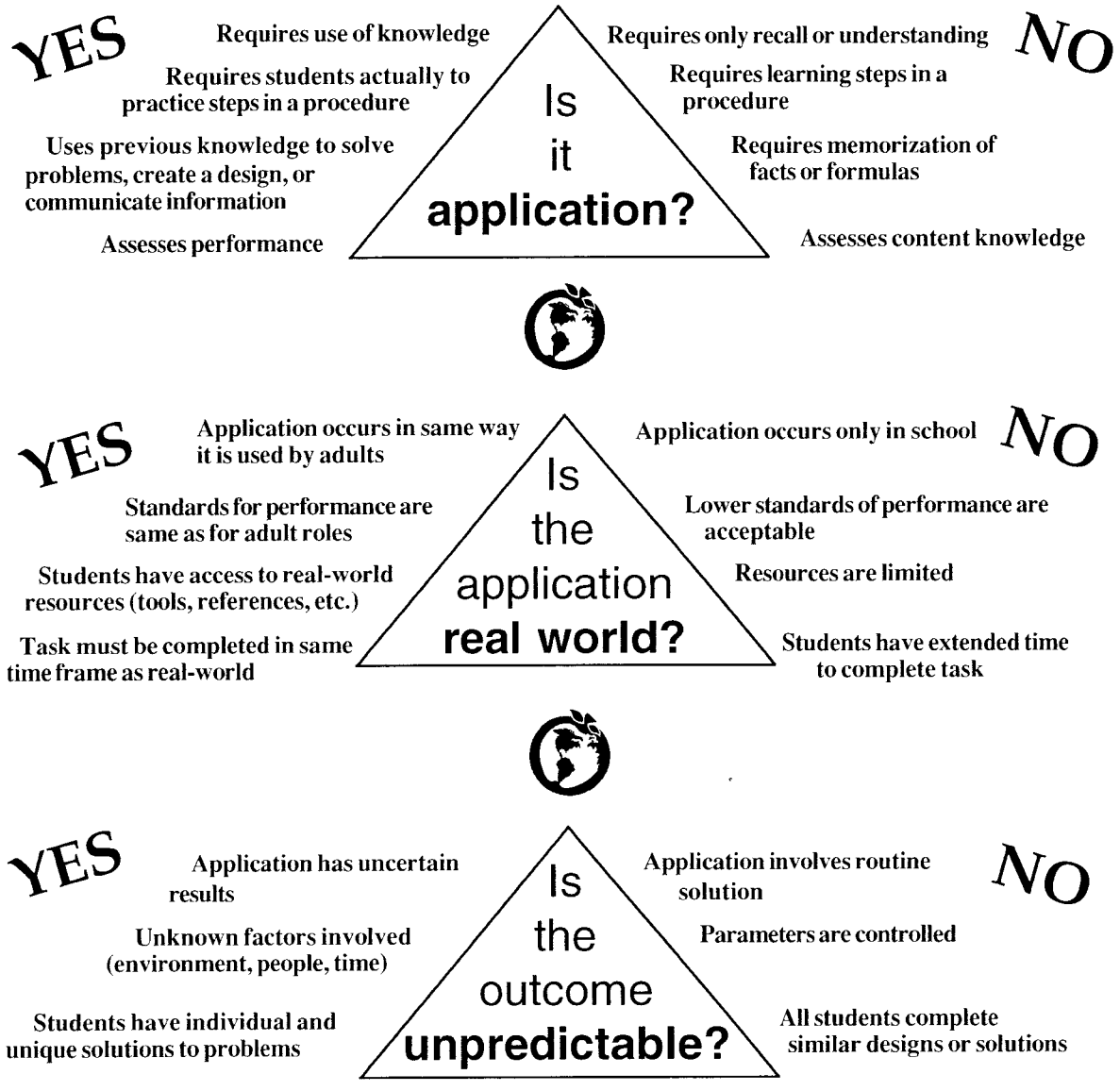
Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Select a task, application, or activity and then answer the following questions. See next page for clarification of the questions.



Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Use the following statements to clarify where a task, application, or assessment belongs on the Application Model.



Use of the Application Model Decision Tree can help to describe desired performance. Start by writing draft statements of student objectives and then use the Decision Tree to reflect on and revise these statements. The Decision Tree focuses on the three key characteristics that distinguish levels of the Application Model: *application, real world,* and *unpredictability.* The second page of the Decision Tree offers additional criteria to determine whether an objective meets the test of application, real world, and unpredictability.

The Application Model Decision Tree can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Answer the questions to identify the level of student performance for the instruction or assessment.

Teacher/Student Roles

One way to think about the Rigor/Relevance Framework in day-to-day instruction is in terms of the roles that teachers and students take. These roles are represented in the following figure. When instruction and expected student learning is in Quadrant A, the focus is on "teacher work." Teachers expend energy to create and assess learning activities — providing information, creating worksheets, and grading student work. The student is often a passive learner.

When the student expectation moves to Quadrant B, the emphasis is on the student doing real-world work. This student work is often more complicated than Quadrant A work and requires more time. Learning in Quadrant B is best described as "student work" because students are doing extensive real-world tasks.

When the learning is placed in Quadrant C, it is best described as "student think." In this quadrant, the student is expected to think in complex ways.