Does our school need an alignment?
The following assessment will assist in determining the degree of necessity for a strategic alignment map. Assign a number ranking to each of the following statements. 1 is “definitely not true,” 3 is “somewhat true,” and 5 is “definitely true.”

1. We have met WASC evidence guide for standard 2 (page 14) that “requires evidence of the alignment of structures and processes with educational objectives and standards of achievement, and evidence that core functions are mutually supporting. Most challenging of all, it demands evidence that learning is actually occurring and that key education goals are being achieved.” .......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5

2. As a school we have a clear understanding of where we fit into the overall scheme, how we relate to other parts of the institution, why our function exists, and the value we add to the educational process. .......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5

3. Our assessment measures have clear criteria so that we know when we have met or fallen short of our outcomes. .......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5

4. Our assessment measures have a clear logical relationship to the outcomes so that we are measuring what we intend to measure. ........................................ 1 2 3 4 5

5. Our classroom outcomes clearly follow from departmental outcomes. ... 1 2 3 4 5

6. Our departmental outcomes are based on institutional outcomes. ....... 1 2 3 4 5

7. Does our school have a common language and framework for strategic thinking and planning so we can easily align to commonly understood outcomes? ...... 1 2 3 4 5

8. The gap between where we want our school to be and where it is now is understood, has clear up-to-date data to document it, and used to inform our thinking about what we need to do to close this gap. .......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5

9. The few key initiatives we have committed to have a significant impact on our chances of strategically meeting our institutional mission. ......................... 1 2 3 4 5

10. The mission, vision, core values, and outcomes we have articulated strongly influence individual and group decisions on a day-to-day basis. ......................... 1 2 3 4 5

11. The decisions of the institution are made in relationship to the mission, values, and outcomes. .......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5

12. Departmental leadership has clear understanding of the roles of others within the institution along with their outcomes. ................................. 1 2 3 4 5
Nutshells

Elements to Include in Alignment Mapping

- Identify your institution’s mission (core purpose, reason for being).
- Formulate the values you will live by (character, consistency, importance)
- Create a shared vision (determine a desired future process and state)
- Determine outcomes (institutional wide, department wide, classroom/office particular)
- Establish where they are to be measured
- Create measurements of outcomes (how do we know we are accomplishing our outcomes)
- Determine criteria (level of performance acceptable)
- Assess your current reality (assessment audit, benchmark)
- Create a shared strategic plan (high leverage initiatives to move us from where we are toward fulfilling our vision of where we should be)
- Link all decisions, daily management, and initiatives to the map
- Make changes in the strategic plan, curriculum, pedagogy, processes, and personnel based on data gathered in the process
- Manage the way people actually respond to change

Best Practices

- Design the overall alignment process with flexibility and use a variety of methods to involve the mind and heart.
- Involve as many people as possible in the process to create shared knowledge, commitment, and vision. Establishing collaborative partnerships among leaders and implementers enables ownership of the system and results.
- Strike a balance between starting with a blank sheet of paper and simply editing the old plan.
- Develop a few highly leveraged outcomes and change initiatives rather than generating an overwhelming number (overly aggressive assessment is usually conducted unevenly or incompetently or even left undone).
- Focus on a vision for the future rather than problem-solve the past.
- Establish a communication process that ensures the alignment effort is public, explicit, focused, and complete.
- Create a cultural climate where everyone’s perspective is valued, honesty is primary, and all feel safe to be open with their point of view.
What kind of logical relationships connect the mission, values, vision, and assessment outcomes to their measurements?

A Few of the Options

**Deductive:** beginning with the mission move logically through the categories (values, vision, goals, objectives, outcomes…) to the point where they are measured.

**Inductive:** beginning with the classroom and line outcomes work up through the process to the mission of the institution.

**Causal:** a direct cause and effect relationship.

- Aristotle’s:
  - Efficient cause: who will make it happen?
  - Formal cause: what end are we seeking?
  - Material cause: what will we use to accomplish it?

**Analogous Relationship:** corresponding in some particular manner, function, or characteristic.

**Contiguous Relationship:** shared border between polygons so that one leads naturally to the other and none are complete without the others.

**Seamless Relationship:** no border exists, one leads directly to the next in a linear sequence (mission-values-outcomes).

**Symbiotic Relationship:** 2 different aspect are in the same environment and mutually dependent on each other (mission that cannot ‘live’ without the values, values that cannot ‘live’ without the outcomes…)
**Argument from Sign**

Observe something and drawing conclusions. Open communication is a sign that freedom and trust are present….

What are the signs we are meeting the mission of the institution?

**Generalizations**

What is true for some members of a group is true for the rest. If some are learning, then most/all are learning. Are the values systematized so that we can place them within a single category as related to the mission?

**Parallel Case**

Reasoning on the basis of two or more cases and trusting the audience to extrapolate to the rest of the population. The business department is structured with an alignment map for assessment and doing well in the results, the English department is structured with an alignment map for assessment and doing well, therefore the Communication department that is structured the same way is probably also doing well.

Check out other schools that passed WASC standards, see how they did it and model our system after theirs.

How are the mission, vision, values, and outcomes parallel?

**Analogy**

Taking dissimilar cases and finding the common characteristics between the two. They are often figurative rather than literal references.

Is alignment mapping placing assessment within a prison or does it create the freedom of structure. Is it busy-wok or accountability?

**Dilemma**

Choice making focused on the consequences that will follow, especially when undesirable or negative results are probable no matter which choice is made.

**Relationship of People**

Who is doing the work of the institution, what position do they hold, and how are they accountable?

The organizational flow chart provides the framework for understanding what is aligned in what manner.
How should we map our or chart the relationships?

Logic Diagrams
Often used in circuit design and in teaching fundamental of Boolean Logic, circuit connections can be clearly seen as diverse parts relate to the whole.

Venn Diagrams
Overlapping populations and groups so that relationships of components can be clearly visualized.
Sequential Diagram

Used to determine the elements of precise relationships that lead deductively from one element to another, they demonstrate what parts of the mission activate which values that in turn related to outcomes…

Data Flow

Design systems and demonstrate feedback and communication loops.
Entity Relationship

Diagram the different aspects of the institution in relationship to the mission and values of the school.
Swimlane Diagram

Group areas in relation to those who perform them showing only critical elements.
Discussion Question

Where have you found the greatest discrepancy within the assessment process and products?

Where do you put things like a
• strategic plan
• academic master plan
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