



Specialist Schools  
and Academies Trust  
EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY

# Alignment

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## Preface

This pamphlet follows a model of development and research that has been pioneered by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. Workshops are conducted in which successful practice is reported and participants are engaged in exploring possibilities for implementation in a range of settings. The outcomes and recommendations for further work are documented in short publications that are available within weeks of these events and disseminated widely. As knowledge about good practice is accumulated, each workshop is connected to the next.

This pamphlet is the fifth in a series that has followed this pattern. The following describes the sequence over two years from mid-2004 to mid-2006 (pamphlet titles are shown in parentheses). Work began in mid-2004 with a review of developments in self-managing schools at a time when high levels of achievement were expected of all students in all settings (*Re-imagining the self-managing school*). To achieve such an outcome requires a transformation of schools. Driving the transformation is acceptance that the student is the most important unit of organisation and learning must be personalised. A series of workshops in four countries in early 2005 made clear that a 'new enterprise logic' of schools was energising change in just about every aspect of school operations (*The new enterprise logic of schools*). Three themes emerged and each was explored in more workshops from late 2005 to mid-2006. The first was that leaders in schools that had succeeded in transformation found the experience exhilarating (*Exhilarating leadership*). The second was that new approaches to the acquisition and allocation of resources were required (*Resourcing schools for the 21st century*). The third, the subject of this pamphlet, is that there is consistency and coherence about the way schools and school systems go about their work (*Alignment*). Unlike earlier efforts in educational reform, which were characterised by a multitude of misaligned piecemeal

changes, successful experience has revealed a high degree of alignment and a willingness to abandon practice that is obsolete or a barrier to progress.

This pamphlet is intended to complement two other collections, one on personalising learning by David Hargreaves, and another on the new shape of schooling, with Emma Sims, Sue Williamson and Kai Vacher joining David Hargreaves as contributing authors.

I thank the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for the opportunity to continue my contribution to the pamphlet series, and for its initiative through iNet in enabling ideas and practices described therein to be so swiftly disseminated among its affiliates around the world. In this instance, many of the ideas and self-assessment responses in the pages that follow were generated in workshops in England, organised by the Trust in April 2006 and conducted in partnership with Jim Spinks on the theme of resourcing schools for the 21st century.

The Australian College of Educators (ACE) played an important role through its invitation to conduct 19 workshops around Australia in July and August 2006 as part of its first ACE on the Road series. Some of the findings are incorporated in this pamphlet; all will appear in a subsequent report. The college contributed to the cost of analysis of responses. This work was conducted in September 2006 by Dr Julie Wee in association with Dr Jessica Harris, Director of Research at Educational Transformations. I express my appreciation to them and the hundreds of participants who shared their ideas.

Consistent with the spirit of the series, this does not mark the end of a sequence but the beginning of deeper exploration of good

practice. The pamphlet becomes a resource for another series of workshops with Jim Spinks in England in late 2006 and Australia in early 2007, when we continue our work on resourcing schools for the 21st century.

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## Chapter 1 Alignment is necessary for transformation

A school has been transformed if there has been significant, systematic and sustained change that results in high levels of achievement for all of its students. Never in the history of education has such an outcome been achieved for all schools. The good news is that it has been achieved in some. The challenge is achieving it in all.

### **Assessing progress**

Some schools can provide evidence of such a transformation by referring to data on student achievement. They will show how current high levels of achievement represent a dramatic improvement on achievement in the past, and that these high levels have been sustained. Transformation on this scale is particularly noteworthy when it has been achieved in challenging circumstances. How was such a transformation achieved? What does a school that makes a commitment to transformation need to do to achieve success? How does a school that has made such a commitment know if it is on the road to success? The purpose of this pamphlet is to offer answers to these questions and provide schools with a set of tools to map their progress along the way.

It is easy to confuse means and ends when it comes to making a claim that a school has been transformed.

A rundown facility with an obsolete 19th or 20th century design may have been replaced by a state of the art building with all the

features deemed to be important in a school in the 21st century. There may have been a transformation in the building – but no transformation in achievement. A school may have redesigned its curriculum, intending that each student can find a pathway that matches interest and aspiration – but the opportunity for personalising learning may not be there because there is no change in pedagogy. The school may have highly qualified teachers in an academic sense (all may have master’s degrees with a specialisation in particular disciplines) – but staff continue to use the same one-approach-suits-all when it comes to styles of learning and teaching. Staff may have the knowhow to make changes to curriculum and pedagogy – but neither are valued by, or relevant to, the community the school seeks to serve.

The point we make is straightforward. There must be strength in every domain but, more important, each of these strengths must be in alignment with every other strength. To illustrate, the design of state of the art facilities must be consistent with the design of a curriculum well-suited to the times that must, in turn, be delivered through a range of pedagogical practices by professionals with the knowledge and skill to accomplish the task, with each of these consistent with the needs of society and the expectations of the community. Plans and budgets should enable this alignment. The issue to be addressed in this pamphlet is how strength can be developed in each domain and how progress in building that strength can be measured. Expressed another way, how can the school be assured it is on track for transformation?

### **Alignment**

A simple analogy is presented by Robert S Kaplan and David P Norton in *Alignment* (Kaplan and Norton, 2006). They invite us to consider rowing crews in a river race: ‘Although each shell contains strong, highly motivated athletes, the key to their success is that they row in synchronism. Imagine a shell populated by eight highly conditioned and trained rowers, but with each rower having a

different idea about how to achieve success: how many strokes per minute were optimal and which course the shell should follow, given wind direction and speed, water current, and a curvy course with multiple bridge underpasses. For eight exceptional rowers to devise and attempt to implement independent tactics would be disastrous’ (Kaplan and Norton, 2006, p1).

The same image applies to any enterprise in education and certainly to schools. These questions may be posed: does the school have ‘strong, highly motivated athletes’ (a talented team of teachers and other professionals)? Do they ‘row in synchronism’ (teachers and other professionals aligned in their efforts to secure high levels of achievement for all students)? Or is it a matter of ‘each rower having a different idea about how to achieve success’?

Like all images, the image of the rowing crew is concerned with only one facet of what it takes to achieve success, in this instance alignment. In other aspects of professional practice, a different image is more appropriate to the extent, for example, that a diversity of strengths or a high degree of artistry may be required. The image for diversity might be of players in a symphony orchestra. If creativity and improvisation are valued, the image might shift to a jazz band.

Kaplan and Norton describe a study of practice in three kinds of corporations in which they assessed five key processes:

- Mobilisation of effort to achieve change
- Capacity to translate strategy into action
- Alignment of different units in the organisation
- Motivation of employees
- Quality of governance

One kind of corporation studied belonged to the authors' 'hall of fame', being exemplars in the use of their highly regarded balanced scorecard approach. A second reported significant benefits from the approach, although they were not in the class of the 'hall of fame'. A third reported few benefits after using the approach.

The three kinds of corporation were independently ranked on the basis of their performance in the five key processes and, in each instance, the rank order was the same: 'hall of fame' performed best followed by 'high benefit' and then, last, 'low benefit'. The greatest gap in performance was for alignment of the different units in the organisation. The authors conclude that 'understanding how to create alignment in organisations is a big deal, one capable of producing significant payoffs for all kinds of enterprises' (Kaplan and Norton, 2006, p3). After alignment, the largest gap in performance was for governance.

There is little doubt that similar results would be found in the analysis of performance in many schools, in which different units are expected to work together in the implementation of strategies for success. Adopting the language of Kaplan and Norton, it is likely that schools in the 'hall of fame' as far as transformation is concerned will be strong in each of the five key organisational processes, including alignment of different units within the school. In this pamphlet we extend the concept to include alignment of the schools with what can be broadly described as societal expectations for schools.

The concept of alignment is consistent with theory on leadership and management. The distinction that John Kotter makes between the two is helpful, as summarised in table 1.

**Table 1: Alignment in leadership and management (based on Kotter, 1990)**

MANAGEMENT	LEADERSHIP
Planning and budgeting	Establishing direction
Organising and staffing	Aligning people
Controlling and problem-solving	Motivating and inspiring
Producing a degree of predictability	Achieving change

Leadership involves those activities in the right column of table 1. It is important to note that it involves the actions of more than one person; there may be many leaders. Leadership is, or should be, 'distributed' in most organisations (Harris, 2005). Leadership calls for establishing the direction of the enterprise and then ensuring that all who work in it are aligned in their efforts. The image of the rowing crew offered by Kaplan and Norton may be invoked, or clichés such as 'all singing from the same songsheet'. Leadership involves motivating and inspiring those who are engaged in the endeavour to achieve change. If no change occurs, either none was expected, in which case no leadership was required, or there was a failure in leadership. It goes without saying, especially in education, that the desired change should have moral purpose. In this pamphlet, moral purpose is evident in the view of transformation that has been adopted: high levels of achievement for all students in all settings, thus contributing to the wellbeing of the student and society.

Management processes are aligned with these elements in leadership. If leadership involves establishing direction, then moving in that direction calls for planning and the preparation of a budget. If people are to be aligned, then an important aspect of management is securing the best people for the task (staffing) and getting some structure in the operation (organising). A measure of control is required in matters such as implementation of the budget.

Problems will arise and these must be resolved to keep the enterprise on track. While change with moral purpose is desired, those who work in the organisation generally yearn for stability and predictability in the way they go about it.

### **The journey so far**

The importance of alignment emerged in workshops that led to the first three pamphlets in this series (Caldwell, 2004, 2005, 2006a) which were brought together in the book entitled *Re-imagining educational leadership* (Caldwell, 2006b). The first of these pamphlets resulted from a review, conducted in 2004, of practice in self-managing schools over the last two decades. It was found that the best practice of self-management had gone far beyond what was originally envisaged, and that a new image of the self-managing school was emerging. The main elements of this image were explored in nine workshops over nine weeks in four countries (Australia, Chile, England and New Zealand) in early 2005.

It was evident that something quite profound was occurring in schools where change on the scale of transformation had taken place. It was not just a new culture, a new curriculum, a new pedagogy, a new professionalism or a new system of schools. It was all of these, but a new 'logic' seemed to energise the enterprise. The concept of 'new enterprise logic' coined by Zuboff and Maxmin (2004) was adopted, and its elements were described and illustrated in the second pamphlet. It was observed that those who led the transformation of their schools seemed to be exhilarated by the experience, and the notion of 'exhilarating leadership' was explored in five more workshops conducted in two states of Australia (Queensland and Victoria) at the end of 2005, resulting in the third pamphlet.

The key elements in the new enterprise logic of schools are as follows:

- The student is the most important unit of organisation – not the classroom, not the school, and not the school system
- Schools cannot achieve expectations for transformation by acting alone or operating in a line of support from the centre of a school system to the level of the school, classroom or student. The success of a school depends on its capacity to join networks to share knowledge, address problems and pool resources
- Leadership is distributed across schools in networks as well as within schools
- Networks involve individuals, agencies, institutions and organisations across public and private sectors in educational and non-educational settings. Personnel and other resources are allocated to energise and sustain them
- New approaches to resource allocation are required under these conditions. These take account of developments in personalising learning and the networking of expertise and support
- Intellectual and social capital are as important as other forms of capital

Four workshops were conducted in England (Birmingham, Darlington, London and Manchester) in early 2006 to explore new approaches to resource allocation (the fifth element in the list above). Two pamphlets provided a framework for these events *Resourcing schools for the 21st century: Part 1: Principles* (Caldwell, 2006c) and *Part 2: Models* (Spinks, 2006). The two authors conducted the workshops together, with the first part of each based on Part 1 and the second on Part 2.

These and earlier workshops were designed to explore new concepts and generate ideas, drawing on the knowledge and experience of participants. The session based on Part 1 introduced the concept of alignment, thus adding the sixth element (intellectual capital and social capital are as important as other forms of capital) to the principles of resource allocation that should be addressed in element 5 (new approaches to resource allocation). The concept of governance was also explored. Two self-assessment instruments on intellectual capital and governance were administered during the workshops, and participants explored a protocol for the design and assessment of social capital.

A model of ‘alignment for transformation’ took shape in these workshops. It was refined and tested in 19 one-day workshops, conducted in every state and territory in Australia in mid-2006. These were organised by the Australian College of Educators (ACE) and presented in association with iNet Australia. ACE is the largest of the professional associations of educators in Australia. The theme of the workshops was re-imagining educational leadership, drawing on the book of that title, the Australian edition of which was published at the start of the series. Particular attention was given to current and preferred roles of leaders, the model for alignment, and two elements in the model related to intellectual and social capital. The self-assessment instrument on intellectual capital was administered.

The model has thus been explored in 23 workshops in two countries. This pamphlet describes and illustrates it, and reports the findings of surveys on intellectual capital and governance. New ideas on intellectual capital are introduced. The pamphlet provides a framework for more workshops, and forms part of *Resourcing schools for the 21st century* (Caldwell and Spinks, 2007, forthcoming).

### Alignment for transformation model (ATM)

The student is the heart of the model. This is as it should be, given that the purpose of transformation is to secure high levels of achievement for all students in all settings. Four domains are included, and there must be alignment within and among these. Above all, there must be alignment with the interests of students and the goal of transformation. Four kinds of capital constitute the domains: intellectual capital, social capital, spiritual capital and financial capital. Securing alignment between these different types of capital calls for outstanding governance. The entire enterprise must succeed in a context of change – local, national and international. The stakes are high. If schools are transformed in the sense considered here, it opens up an era of unprecedented opportunity for learners and learning. This is a global challenge.

The alignment for transformation model (ATM) is illustrated in figure 1. The following are brief descriptions of the four kinds of capital along with a definition of governance.

***Intellectual capital*** refers to the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school, all of whom should be – and remain – at the forefront of knowledge and skill. We prefer the concept of ‘talent force’ to ‘workforce’.

***Social capital*** refers to the strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks involving the school, parents, community, business and industry – indeed, all individuals, agencies, organisations and institutions that have the potential to support and, where appropriate, be supported by the school.

***Spiritual capital*** refers to the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning. For some schools, spiritual capital has a foundation in religion. In others, spiritual capital may refer to ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community.

**Financial capital** refers to the monetary resources available to support the school as it seeks to achieve transformation, securing high levels of achievement for all of its students. It is acknowledged that some schools are in more challenging circumstances than others, so the notion of needs-based funding is embraced.

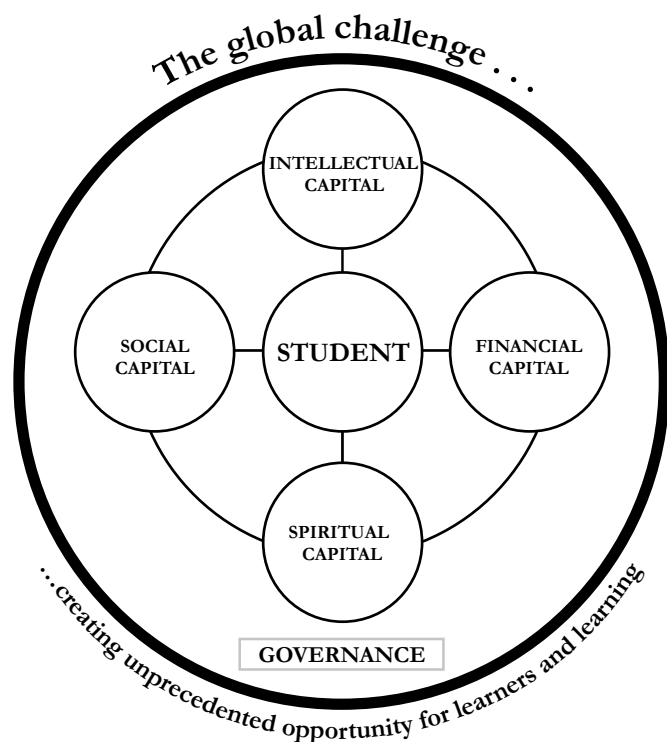


Figure 1: The alignment for transformation model (ATM)

**Governance** is concerned with the interaction of the formal decision-making processes in the school and civil society.

The latter comprises the network of mutually supporting relationships with government, business, industry, other services in the public and private sectors, community, home, and voluntary agencies and institutions.

### Why capital?

The choice of ‘capital’ to describe the domains to be aligned warrants an explanation. After all, a major purpose of the pamphlet is to provide a set of tools to help the school assess its progress to transformation. The reader might be expecting an extended list of indicators on curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment, and data on outcomes. These are important but whether a high level of performance in each can be attained depends on the resources at the school’s disposal. That is why the concept of capital is helpful.

Capital has several meanings that are relevant in this context. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, capital refers to ‘accumulated goods devoted to the production of other goods’, or ‘a store of useful assets or advantages’. Intellectual capital, for example, may be viewed as ‘accumulated goods’ (‘the level of knowledge and skill of professionals working in or for the school’) devoted to the ‘production of other goods’ (state-of-the-art curriculum and pedagogy leading to ‘high levels of achievement for all students’). High levels of capital in each of the four domains constitute ‘a store of useful assets or advantages’. This pamphlet describes how capital can be accumulated in each domain and how progress can be assessed.

### Overview

This chapter has introduced the concept of alignment and illustrated the alignment for transformation model.

Chapter 2 makes the case that a ‘grand alignment’ is long overdue in education.

Chapter 3 is concerned with intellectual capital. It advocates a shift from a workforce approach to a talent force approach, and presents the case for radical outsourcing. A self-assessment instrument will help schools determine their performance in the critically important area of knowledge management. Benchmarks are from 23 workshops in England and Australia.

Chapter 4 deals with governance. The focus is an instrument that will help schools assess their performance in this domain, which has a strong connection with the concept of social capital. Another instrument, which focuses on resources, is also described. Benchmarks from four workshops in England are included. Financial capital is an important consideration in building intellectual capital and ensuring good governance.

Chapter 5 gives a summary to shape the work of schools seeking to enhance their progress towards transformation by securing more powerful alignment. An important part of this chapter is a description of a preferred role for school leaders which is more closely aligned with capacities for transformation than is currently the norm. This addresses a deep concern reported in chapter 2 on serious misalignment in the current role.

The three self-assessment instruments are contained in the annex (Self-assessment 1: intellectual capital; Self-assessment 2: governance; and Self-assessment 3: resources). These can be completed on an individual or team basis and are recommended as a starting point for analysing a school's capacity for alignment.

## Chapter 2

### It's time for a new 'grand alignment'

Scientists coined the term 'grand alignment' to refer to an event that occurs about every 20 years, when all planets are in alignment on the same side of the sun. It is often the subject of scaremongering, with alarming predictions of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis, if not the end of civilisation as we know it. The event passes without discernible impact.

Expectations for many reforms in education, which occur every decade or so, are similar. Some would argue that, like the grand alignment in astronomy, these are recurring events that have no significant impact or leave little of lasting value. It is no wonder that many in the education profession are cynical about change.

There is, however, an important difference between astronomy and education. Alignment in the former has no impact. Alignment in the latter can have powerful impact, but it has rarely occurred. Failure in educational reform is to a large degree the failure to achieve alignment.

#### **The last grand alignment**

A case can be made that there has been no grand alignment in education since the late 19th century. At that time, everything from school design to curriculum to the organisation of schools and school systems was based on a factory model. This aligned well with the needs of the manufacturing sector during and after the



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