

ARCS Assessments

Using Assessments of *Professional Interactions* and *Organizational Capacity* to Drive Continuous Improvement

What if your district or school used a survey that could assess how well you are doing *and* directly inform your strategy for moving forward?

The ARCS Assessments:

Are designed to pinpoint how a school can use existing capacities, expertise, and structures to engage in continuous improvement.

Measure and benchmark your school's organizational capacity against similar, high-performing districts and schools.

Measure the frequency and content of professional interactions in your school and produce a visual network map of how individuals work with each other, and for what purpose(s).

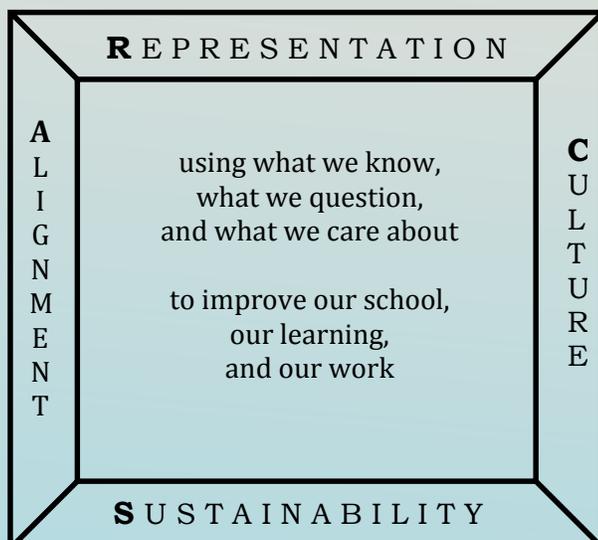
Questions Addressed by the Assessments

- How are professionals in our school interacting and working together as a community to improve teaching and learning?
- What are we, as professional educators, talking about and working on, and how does our focus compare to high performing schools?
- What is the organizational capacity of our school individually, in groups, and as a school—to engage in continuous and sustainable improvement?

ARCS Versus Traditional Surveys

Traditional surveys are helpful in identifying areas of need or deficiencies in a school, such as inconsistent instructional strategies or insufficient use of data to drive instructional decisions. They cannot directly help schools figure out how to fully leverage existing capacity, expertise, and structures (e.g., grade-level or department meetings) to dramatically improve teaching and learning for all students, as ARCS Assessments do.

The Underlying Framework of the ARCS Assessments



The *ARCS Framework for sustainable school improvement* lies at the heart of the ARCS Assessments. Grounded in many years of research and practice with over hundreds of schools, this framework is a simple and profound set of principles and practices for thinking and acting as an individual, a group and an organization.

Structured around four core elements - **Alignment**, **Representation**, **Culture**, and **Sustainability** - ARCS provides schools with the language, tools and processes necessary to engage all stakeholders in actions focused on continuous improvement. Strength-focused and comprehensive, ARCS enables schools to enhance those existing structures, norms, and **dispositions** that contribute to lasting improvement while limiting or removing those that do not. Organizations that implement ARCS become robust, responsible and resilient.

How Are the Assessments Administered?

The *ARCS Assessments* are administered annually to school-level professional staff, including administrators, teachers, counselors, instructional coaches, and teachers' aides. The Assessments are comprised of three related assessments:

1. An assessment of *professional interactions*, focusing on the frequency, content, and perceived usefulness of various types of interactions. This portion of the survey asks respondents to provide their own name and the names of co-workers to ascertain the linkages and relationships among staff.
2. An assessment of *school culture and individual dispositions*, focusing on the relationship between how individuals value and practice a set of activities correlated with high performing organizations, and the extent to which the school values and provides conditions for individuals to engage in these activities.
3. An assessment of *organizational capacity* to engage in continuous improvement.

The three assessments are administered online and together take approximately 25 minutes to complete. They can be completed for each school, for district structures, or for the districts at large.

What Goes to Districts and Schools?

Upon request, Learner-Centered Initiatives works directly with leaders to translate data from the ARCS Assessments into actionable strategy. Districts and schools receive customized reports containing:

A network map depicting the frequency and directionality of interactions in the school, identifying key hubs (e.g., high frequency connectors) and isolates (e.g., grades or portions of the school that are not fully connected with others vertically or horizontally).

A detailed analysis comparing school and individual values and practices, pinpointing key activities that are (or are not) fully supported and/or utilized by professionals.

A standard measure of organizational capacity aligned with the ARCS framework that be used to document a school's progress over time and compare to benchmarks set by

How are schools using information provided by the ARCS Assessments?

Learner-Centered Initiatives is actively working with districts and schools to use the ARCS assessments to support continuous school improvement.

- * In Hunterdon School District, we used ARCS assessments to inform school-wide strategic planning.
- * In the East Syracuse Minoa Public Schools, we have used ARCS assessment to monitor the district-wide pursuit of the vision and mission, and to assess the alignment of perspectives between teachers and administrators across schools.
- * In the Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics, we used the survey to identify and leverage formal and informal leaders throughout the school.

The ARCS Assessments are administered through a joint partnership between *Learner-Centered Initiatives* and *INSTLL, LLC*, a research and policy consulting firm in Baltimore, MD with expertise in survey analysis and district and school improvement. The ARCS survey was developed in conjunction with *Communities for Learning: Leading lasting change®*, a non-profit organization that supports and disseminates research to help educational communities, become self-sustaining, self-improving, learning organizations empowered to lead deep and lasting change..

For additional information, please contact:

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