

## The Alignment Examination Tool

The Alignment Examination Tool is part of a gap analysis process that is extremely useful in helping a district (or school) leadership team compare conditions and practices in their district (or school) to those in high-performing districts and schools.

With the help of facilitators, the process requires leaders to explore predictions and assumptions about the subject under examination (most frequently, but not exclusively, student performance data) and then to identify what “pops out” of actual data when it is placed before them in an understandable format. The differences in existing conditions in one’s own district or schools and those in high-performing systems help participants analyze the gaps that prevent them from reaching full potential.

The gap analysis process also requires leaders to discuss research-based articles that acknowledge the essential linkage between alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state or local standards, and student achievement.

A full description of the process, as well as facilitator tools that enable the process, are available as online resources in *Getting Serious About the System: A Fieldbook for District and School Leaders* (<https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/getting-serious-about-the-system/book236762>) (Please see the note on how to access these following the Table of Contents in the book.) Among the resources, the Alignment Examination Tool is organized around state standards, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and resources and provides a process for open dialogue on the district’s or school’s current status in these important areas.

With the continued help of facilitators, the outcome of the process is development of informed consensus on one or more areas of highest concern and then problem statements that focus the district and school improvement efforts. Once this is done, participants review research and best practices directly related to the problem statement and formulate a description of an ideal state for their district or school once the identified problem is solved. They also examine their past and present improvement plans to determine how well previous and current efforts have addressed the identified problem.