Chapter 5 – Where are You Currently? and Where are You Going? Building and Exploring the School Improvement Roadmap

Setting out on any journey it is useful to have a roadmap. When engaging in the process of school improvement it is no different. If we do not have a defined sense of where we are currently, and a clear sense of the direction and location of where we are going, then what are we using to guide our choices and actions?

In this chapter, we will construct and then explore the school effectiveness roadmap. The purpose of this roadmap is to represent where the different intentions and performance levels of any school are located in relation to all possibilities. And on it, we will identify the locations that represent a common "pathway" onto which most schools typically fall. This roadmap provides one a means of locating where they are in terms of intent (R's) and actuality (X's and O's), offers depictions of other possible destinations, and provides routes to get from one's current location to other chosen destinations. While the reader may be tempted as they gain understanding of the roadmap to think in terms of comparisons, we encourage a focus on growth and what would be needed for setting out on a journey of improvement.

In the following chapters we will explore the various requirements and processes necessary for any school to move up the pathway depicted here within the school effectiveness roadmap. Here we will first put together the building blocks of the roadmap and then introduce some of its implications for uses.

Building Block One: Combining The Two Axes into One Matrix
The first step in constructing the school improvement roadmap is to define our geography. In this case, that is done by combining the basic foundations of the roadmap – the vertical and horizontal axes. The vertical axis as described in Chapter three is defined by higher or lower levels intention, capacity, coherence and efficiency, or "how well" our school functions. The horizontal axis as described in Chapter four is defined by the "what" and "why" of our intentions, values and practices related to the degree to which they are inspired by – trust vs. fear, connection vs. comparison, and empowerment vs. control. The result of combining the two axes is a four quadrant matrix that will function as the latitude and longitude of the roadmap and is depicted in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: Combining The Two Axes into One Matrix – the Four Leadership Styles/School Paradigms

	Empowerment Connection Trust	Control Comparison Fear
High Function Intentional Leadership	**1-Paradigm School Empowering** • Vision-Driven Facilitative Leadership • Student-Centered Classrooms • Community Climate • Mostly 1-style teaching How can we systematically promote the growth and human potential of all individually and collectively?	**2-Paradigm School Managed** • Efficiency-Driven Top-Down Leadership • Teacher-Centered Classrooms • Institutional Climate • Mostly 2-style teaching How can we effectively implement our chosen programs and practices consistently?
Low Function Reactive Leadership	**3-Paradigm School Amorphous** • Enabling Passive Leadership • Unstructured learning • Insecure Climate • Lots of 3-style teaching (but also a random combo of others) How can we provide enriching learning opportunities based on student interests?	**4-Paradigm School Bossy** • Dominating and Self-serving Leadership • Lecture and Test Teaching • Domesticating Climate • Mostly 4-style teaching How can we keep students on task and performing given the many issues that we have to deal with?

Each of the four resulting quadrants characterizes a conceptual and practical nature or "paradigm," with each defined by a somewhat predicable set of inter-related R's, X's and O's. And each paradigm will be guided by a somewhat different set of macro guiding questions which will define its agenda. Combining a reactive/dysfunctional structure with a control-based value results in what could be termed a Coercive/Bossy 4-Paradigm school environment. When an accidental/dysfunctional structure is combined with a trusting value the result is a somewhat permissive and amorphous 3-Paradigm environment. When there is a high level of function and a control-based value the result is 2-Paradigm school that is defined by structure and organization. Finally a 1-Paradigm school that combined both high intention and a trusting and connecting climate could best be characterized as empowering. All school performance quality locations tend to fall somewhere into one of these four paradigms.

Reflection: Bring to mind a school with which you are familiar. Can you place its R's and X's into one of these quadrants?

Building Block Two: Adding in the R/X to O correlation onto the Roadmap
The next step in our synthesis process is to overlay predicted quantitative performance levels onto each point on the two axes of the roadmap. To do this we need to recall the relationship between the values/R's and practices/X's and school and the outcomes/O's (explained in chapter 2). In any school there will be a strong relationship between the R's, X's (as measured by the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) and the resulting O's, as measured by student achievement and other indicators of school performance - illustrated in the correlation scatter plot of climate score and student achievement and depicted below in Figure 5.2

Figure 5.2/2.1:Scatterplot Correlation Between SCAI Rating and Student Achievement Scores
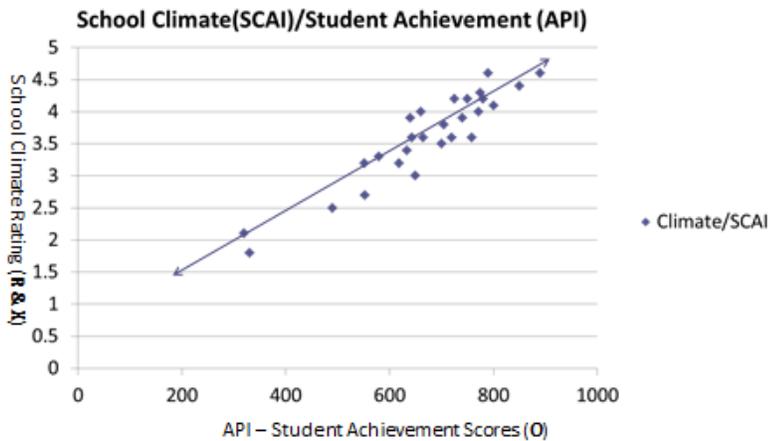
If we plot the most common location of those intersections from the scatterplot scores onto the school Paradigm matrix we find that most school's climate and performance levels fall into a common pattern. In other words, schools could be located hypothetically anywhere on the roadmap, but the vast majority of schools fall on a narrow "pathway" depicted below in figure 5.3 by the blue line. Along the line are shown points defined by first an SCAI rating between 1.0 and 5.0 and a corresponding student achievement rating between 200 and 1000.

Figure 5.3: Theoretical Pathway of School Performance Levels Using SCAI and student achievement correlation data.

	Empowering Connected Trusting			Control Comparison Fear	
High Function Intentional	**1-Paradigm Empowering** 4.7/950	4.5/900	4.2/840		**2-Paradigm Organized**
	4.5/900	4.2/850 4.0/800	4.0/800 3.7/740	3.8/750 3.4/680	3.3/660 3.0/600
Low Function Accidental			3.0/600 2.5/500 1.5/300	2.5/500 2.0/400 1.5/300	2.5/500 1.7/340 1.0/200
	3-Paradigm Enabling	2.0/400			**4-Paradigm Domesticating**

It should be noted that no matter where a school is on the roadmap the correlation between R's and X's and O's will be demonstrated. A schools' performance may be outliers from this curved theoretical pathway (the blue line), but not from the interdependent relationship between the R's and X's and its O's/outcomes that include student achievement as well as other effects such as attendance, discipline referrals, and teacher retention.

As we plot the R-X to O correlation onto the School paradigm matrix those schools defined by less intention and function tend to demonstrate lower performance. So those schools that demonstrate the 3-style or 4-style paradigm tend to score lower in achievement and climate ratings. While these schools can be very different in many regards they will share the result of low performance indictors. Those schools that demonstrate middle levels of performance tend to inhabit the 2-style classroom and school paradigm. There are rare exceptions, but when the school achievement and climate levels are in the average range they tend to be 2-paradigm school. Why this is will be explored in most detail throughout the book.

Adding a Few Final Building Blocks to the Roadmap
In the final synthesis of the roadmap we add some more descriptors that help define each location (see figure 5.5). First, terms representing common X's (taken from the SCAI data, and conceptual framework) are plotted on the roadmap. These terms such as praise, reward, social contract, and community represent both what is commonly valued as well as what is commonly practiced at schools located at that particular region of the roadmap. Second, the levels of perception (LOPs, Figure 5.4) are included and located at points that represent where a dominance of a particular quality of thinking tends to lead. For

Figure 5.4: Levels of Perception
The field of Perceptual Control Theory offers us a useful window into how any organism organizes their thinking. At any one time we are using higher or lower thinking mechanisms or levels o perception (LOPs). The basic four levels are:

- **System**
- **Principle**
- **Program**
- **Sensory/Reactive**

A school like any organism can be seen as using higher or lower LOPs more regularly. Higher LOPs such as being systemic and principle-driven relate to higher levels of awareness and expanded use of one's perceptual capacity. Moreover, we are able relate the dominant use of each of the LOPs to various locations on the roadmap.

sensory/reactive thinking that is the lower region, and for system and principle thinking that is the higher region. Finally a low (L), middle (M) and high (H) location are identified reflecting the curve of the pathway and three general level locations that can be used as short-hand for the infinite points on the roadmap.

Figure 5.5: Complete School Improvement Theoretical Roadmap with Pathway pattern reflected
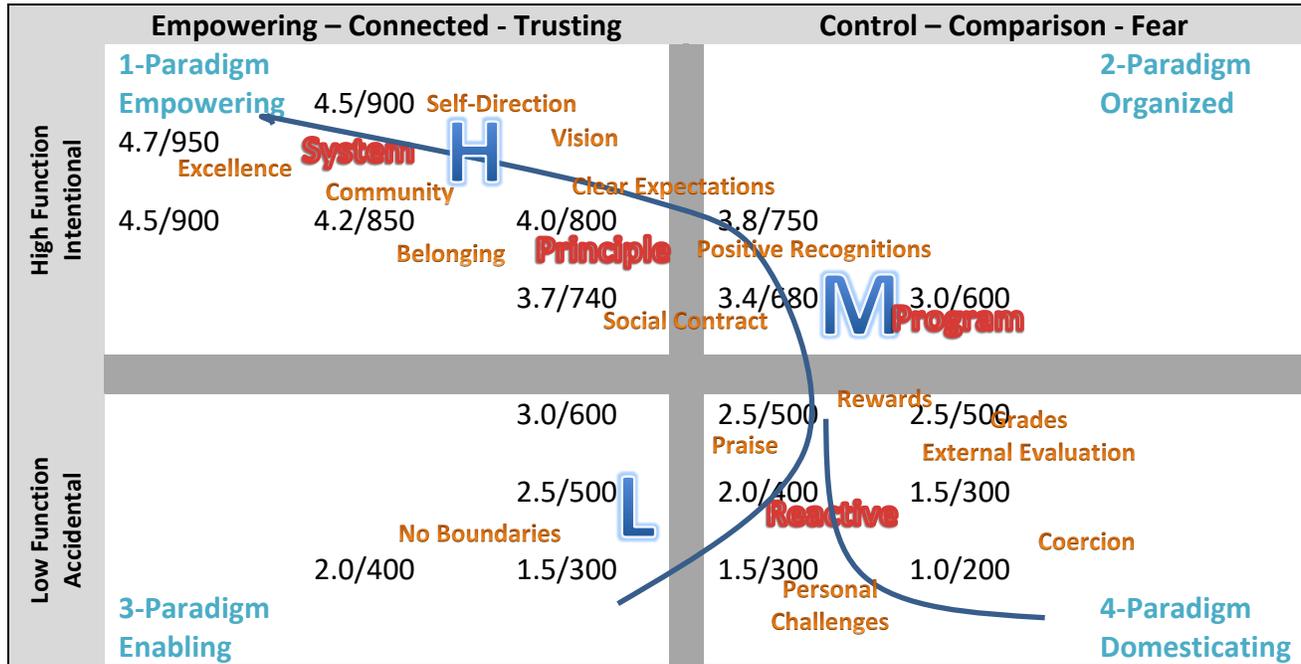
The overall synthesis of all building blocks produces a theoretical as well as practical roadmap with which to locate the function and performance level of any school. We will refer to this model throughout the remainder of the book as we operationalize the practical process of school improvement or "moving up the pathway."

Reflection – Where would you place your school's level of function and performance on the school effectiveness roadmap – from what you see in the Figure?

Some Implications of the Roadmap To Consider Going Forward
1. If we threw a conceptual dart onto the map above, we could reliably infer the likely R's, X's, and O's for a school from that location – i.e., what they are doing and trying to do.
2. There are an infinite number of locations on the roadmap, and each school is unique. But any two schools that share a particular location on the conceptual map will share many fundamental similarities.
3. Schools at two distinct location are inherently going to be using different R's and X's.
4. The move up the pathway to the highest levels requires a "left hand turn" toward the 1-Paradigm quadrant of the matrix.
5. No amount of R's and X's that define the lower quadrants will result in higher quadrant O's. In other words, no amount of program fidelity, 2-Paradigm leadership, and/or teacher centered teaching will result in 1-Paradigm results.

Exploring Schools at Three Common Levels Along the Pathway
Schools at different points on the pathway – low. middle and high – will be defined by common qualities (See Appendix 5A). The primary reason for this is that the R's that are dominant for that level reflect specific intentions and guiding questions to that level . As a result the X's and O's will reflect those dominant intentions. As we explore each broad level, consider the ways in which the "how well" of the vertical axis, and the "what" and "why" of the horizontal axis define each.

Schools that Exhibit Low function and Performance
When we examine schools that function and perform at the lower levels (below 2.6/5 SCAI ratings and below 30%tile academic performance) we see common qualities. First, there is typically a lack of function. Function is when things operate the way that we intend. In low performing schools, there tends to be an accidental and/or reactive quality to the R's and the X's. Elements such as capacity, coherence and shared values tend to be less evidenced.

As we have discussed we can accomplish low function with either a 3-Paradigm enabling/reactive, or a 4-paradigm dominating/domesticating brand of operations. In the 3-Paradigm school, students are usually on their own to navigate a chaotic and amorphous environment. Given this lack of structure students learn to cope and adapt to the "social Darwinism" and low expectation with a short-term self-interest mindset. Leadership in the 3-Paradigm school tends toward the laissez faire. In contrast the 4-Paradigm schools which have many prison-like qualities place a lot of attention on promoting compliance from students who are perceived to be untrustworthy. In these schools students view the adults as the opposition and must choose between conformity and rebellion. Four-Paradigm leadership tends to be top-down and authoritarian. However, the mast of the time a low functioning school will be a combination of the R's and X's of both the 3- and 4-Paradigm to create a very uneven and accidental set of R's and X's. The net effect being a set of R's defined by an absence of vision, and X's defined by convenience for the adults, and O's that reflect more little psychology of success. Leadership tends to be defined by the putting out of fires and risk prevention strategies. A process for moving up from this low level of performance will be explored in detail in chapter eleven of this book.

Examining the Common Middle Function and Performance School and Why They Tend to Hit a Plateau on Roadmap
Most schools function at the middle level on the pathway (between 2.7/5-3.5/5 SCAI ratings and 30%tile-70%tile academic performance). Why is this? We will devote a great deal of attention to that question as we explore how to move up and over on the pathway from this location throughout the remaining chapter and specifically in Chapter 12, but the short answer seems to be that it is the easiest location on the map to operationalize, execute, and to defend to others. Most of us went to middle functioning schools and we bring those references into our assumptions about what is both necessary as well as possible. And it is just easier to translate R's into X's in a teacher-centered 2- Paradigm school than in a school with student-centered approach. The 2-Paradigm school destination appears less risky, and more predictable. It is complicated, but does not require complex thinking. Most middle function schools contain teachers whose classrooms could be characterized by each of the 4 styles - with the majority falling into a 2- Paradigm teacher-centered approach.

The middle function school tends to value consistency classroom order, and common standards. Solutions usually imply the implementation of a program. So there are most often guiding R's that are well articulated, and capacity is promoted through an effective use of standards based planning and data-driven decisions. But consistency is not always coherence. And organizational standards are not sufficient when building human capacity.

In the classroom the focus on applied behavioral strategies and external accountability tend to limit the growth of both teachers and students beyond this moderate level (Shindler, 2018). When control is the goal, anything that "works" is usually deemed acceptable. So all manner of X's are endorsed as long as they get results, no matter their underlying and/or long-term R's. Therefore those who are attempting to be 1-Paradigm teachers, find it a challenge, when their peers are in many cases undermining their efforts and the administration does value what they are trying to build. Two-Paradigm teaching, on the other hand, is affirmed and so there is no incentive in the system to grow beyond that approach.

Nevertheless, this level of function is usually characterized by a solid level of order and instruction that is aligned with standards and assessments – so it encourages satisfactory results.

Other default tendencies of a middle level of function include relatively collegial relationships (low capacity, but high comfort), and a compliance-based authority in and out of the classroom (low capacity, low empowerment, but high coherence) that provides a source of organizational stability. The focus of the middle level school tends to be much more on the positive and possess higher expectations for students than the lower function school. As a result of those more clear and positive R's, the X's tend to promote more student engagement and skill development than the lower performing locations, and as a result the O/outcomes reflect that higher level of function and focus on the positive.

As we have discussed, one of the findings of our research (Shindler et al, 2016; 2018) and an implication of the R-X-O roadmap (school improvement axiom #6) is that actions or X's predict outcomes or O's. One of the ways that we see this manifest itself is the case of the 2-Paradigm school improvement trajectory. If the school had been in the lower quadrants we see the implementation of 2-Paradigm R's and X's improving the various outcome measures including SCAI and achievement. This is usually due to the school doing a better job with vertical axis qualities (capacity, efficiency, intention and coherence). But once the school reaches that level on the roadmap they tend to hit a ceiling and plateau. And if they were already at that location to begin their improvement effort they find that they tend to have flat results on indicators of improvement. The reason for this ceiling is complex in many ways but boils down to the laws of organizational improvement – paraphrasing Albert Einstein – a school cannot solve its problems on the same level of consciousness at which they were created. In the terminology of the roadmap – a school cannot expect to obtain 1-Paradigm outcomes using 2-Paradigm R's and X's. Watching schools disregard the research and the reasoning and run into this ceiling is frustrating for everyone involved. A school in the lower region of the roadmap may need to aim for the middle location on its path to improvement. And a 2-Paradigm may be the goal for some schools. But as we explore the various paths up the roadmap, it is possible to set out a trajectory that "cuts the corner" and embraces 1-Paradigm R's early on and seeks to cultivate "plateau-free" X's that can be developed without limiting the school's, teachers', and students' growth.

High Level Function and Performance Schools and Why We Need to Make the Shift Left to Reach that Location

Much of the remaining discussion of the book will explore how schools can move up to the highest levels of function and performance (above 3.6/5 SCAI ratings and above 70%tile academic performance). And we will devote all of Chapter 12 to that purpose. The high functioning 1-Paradigm school represents the most natural and satisfying condition for working and learning. Hence, while it is not easy to create, it is very easy to appreciate once we have tasted it. And in reality, all schools have high function and performance potential innately within them. Yet, almost all schools function far below their potential. On the one hand, it is true that there are enormous challenges and factors in place that keep schools from moving higher, but on the other hand most of what is limiting the growth of schools involves self-limiting R's that result in a

1-Paradigm is a more "Natural Condition."
The 1-Paradigm School and the 1-Style classroom are inherently more satisfying because they allow us to function in a condition that is natural and satisfying. We can feel a condition as more or less natural in our bodies, In those that are natural we feel ease and joy. Yet, in most normal situations we spend a lot of effort contorting ourselves into the perceived demands of the situation.

Natural Condition	Normal Condition
Our basic needs for Power, Freedom, Belonging, Fun are met.	We cope and manage our day so that we can find satisfaction in other ways

long list of X's that seem necessary in a narrow view but when viewed more broadly are not effectively leading to the outcomes we would most desire.

High functioning schools will always be by nature vision-driven. Most of the time that means a purposeful effort made by leadership to cultivate collective R's including an alive vision. An alive collective vision means that there is systematic collaboration among members of the school (high levels of intention, capacity and coherence). Questions of how to best execute this R/vision guide the development of the X's. The resulting "professional learning community" represents the intersection of high capacity, trust and connection. A climate of trust is foundational to the high functioning school. Leadership trusts that teachers will find a way to operationalize the R's into high quality practices, and teachers trust that students will actualize their potentials if they are given the contexts for doing so.

In the highest performing schools, classrooms are defined by mostly 1-Paradigm teachers who are trying to create communities of self-responsible learners. Instruction is defined by inquiry, cooperation and active learning. As you examine the notion of a success psychology, you will recognize that a school will be high functioning to the degree that they are intentional about creating a psychology of success within the school, each classroom, and the individual within the school.

Creating the 1-Paradigm school requires embracing the complexity of an evolving system. The leadership skills and practices required to facilitate a vision-driven empowering organism are vast and challenging, so the goal of this book is to identify and operationalize them as well as possible, but the success of any effort to create the 1-Paradigm school will relate mostly to how well the adults ask and are guided by the right questions and references. The fastest way to become a 1-Paradigm school is to want to be a 1-Paradigm school.

Reflection – After taking part in the activity, either on your own or as a faculty of creating lists of those practices (X's) that either promote or undermine a psychology of success (POS), use that list to rate your school. Note how predictive it is. If what you are doing currently is mostly from the promoting POS column, you will likely have a high functioning school, if what you do is mostly from the POS undermining (i.e., psychology of failure promoting) your level of function and performance will reflect it. See Exercise in Appendix X of the book.

"But what about my school? It's the exception to the model."
Most educators upon seeing this theoretical roadmap presented recognize its validity as well as its usefulness to explain schools. But we do encounter those who question the validity and soundness of the model, or feel like their school proves that there are exceptions. Possibly, but not very likely.

First, there are those who feel inclined to defend the need for their school to operate from the right side of the quadrant. What we would say to those educators is that we have not found a high performing school that did not score highly on the SCAI. A high score reflects a student centered, high trust, high collaboration environment. All schools that take a very teacher-centered stimulus and response, external, programmatic approach fall in the middle levels on the SCAI and in all other areas of performance, and therefore on the roadmap. The reason for this will be explored more fully as we discuss how to move from a middle to high functioning school in Chapter 12.

Second, we hear people say that their school has a certain set of R's/intentions and their achievement does not match on this conceptual model. What we can say to this assertion is that again SCAI rating (i.e., R and X) and O's like student achievement always correlate. Neighborhood income will affect that relationship somewhat, but much less than one would expect. So what we usually find is that once that person collects data from their school they find that the correlation is present. What made things appear misaligned usually comes from the reputation of the school being an inaccurate depiction of the true R's and X's at the school. In the school that is high performing and has a reputation for being very teacher-centered and hierarchical, what we find when we survey

the students is that they feel like the school has a clear vision, they feel respected by their teachers, the faculty collaborate, there is a sense of community, students do a lot of cooperative projects and are given a lot of ownership of their learning. Get the point. They are doing 1-paradigm X's, so the reality is that they really do value 1-paradigm R's.

The other example is the very uncommon school that perceives itself as a 1-paradigm school, but scores in the average range on the SCAI. And when they look on the roadmap they see that their student achievement scores are not near where they would be predicted. They tend to be project-based, and emphasize collaboration and self-discovery and have a 1-Paradigm mission statement. But, again, the problem is not the model. When those folks survey their school what they commonly find is that there is a lack of vision, students do not feel challenged, students are not given the skills to work together and typically the assessment X's in place are very weak and lack intention. In contrast, all of these qualities are positively present in the high functioning 1-paradigm school. While this school sees itself as a 1-paradigm school, what they have created is in fact more of a 3-paradigm school.

Conclusion

All schools in my experience speak of improvement. But most change little from year to year. Much of the explanation for why schools experience stagnant growth is that when asked what they are trying to improve they offer mostly O's. Outcomes are not the real problem, references and practices are. If R's and X's don't change neither will the O's. And when we talk about getting better, what does "better" mean? To get somewhere more desirable than where we are, we first need to have a meaningful understanding of where we are and why. We need to understand the reasons why we are at our current location. Next we need to have a meaningful understanding of what it will take to get to where we want to be. We need a roadmap. In the next two chapters we will explore how we can use the roadmap to promote two indispensable qualities – trust and vision. No effort can succeed without them.

Exercise 1:

In your group or on your own, reflect on why these various elements tend to occur together at various points in the effectiveness continuum.

	Level - High	Level - Middle	Level - Low
System	Intentional	Semi-intentional	Accidental
Ethos	Sound vision translated into effective practice	Good intentions translated into practices that "work."	Practices defined by the relative self-interest of faculty and staff
Effect on Students	Liberating Experience changes students for the better	Perpetuating Experience has a mixed effect on students	Domesticating Experience has a net negative effect on students
Level of Perception	System/Principle	Program	Sensory
Goal	Community and Self Responsibility	Order and Engagement	Obedience (or lacks a clear goal)
Psychology	Promotes a Psychology of Success	Promotes a Mixed Psychology	Promotes a Psychology of Failure

Exercise 2: Roadmap Locations Reflected in SCAI items

As you examine the items from any of the versions of the SCAI you will see at least some reflection of the High, Middle and Low levels of the Improvement Roadmap. Below are three survey item examples. In the first, a high level response represents a school which has an R related to showing physical evidence of whose school it is – the students. At lower levels walls tend to include more comparative material. In the next item from the teacher relations scale, the simple act of collaboration indicates both an intention for high function and a value for connecting personally and professionally. In lower function schools teachers are more on their own and see one another within the lens of comparison, and adequacy and inadequacy. In the final example from the discipline and management scale, in high level schools practice is intended to lead to increased levels of self-direction. In lower level schools the goal is usually defined by domestication in some form.

1. Physical Appearance

High	high-middle	middle	middle-low	low
1.e----------5---------------------- 4 ----------------------- 3 ----------------------- 2 --------------------- 1 -------------------				
Current student work is displayed to show pride and ownership by students.	Few and/or only top performances are displayed.		Decades-old trophies and athletic records in dusty cases.	

2. Faculty Relations

High	high-middle	middle	middle-low	low
2.a----------5---------------------- 4 ----------------------- 3 ----------------------- 2 --------------------- 1 -------------------				
Faculty members commonly collaborate on matters of teaching.	Most faculty members are congenial to one another, and occasionally collaborate.		Typically faculty members view one another competitively.	
5.i----------5---------------------- 4 ----------------------- 3 ----------------------- 2 --------------------- 1 -------------------				
Management strategies consistently promote increased student self-direction over time.	Management strategies promote acceptable levels of classroom control over time, but are mostly teacher-centered.		Management strategies result in mixed results: some classes seem to improve over time, while others seem to decline.	

Reflection: Where would you rate your school? Does the rating correspond to your previous assessment of your current location on the overall roadmap?

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