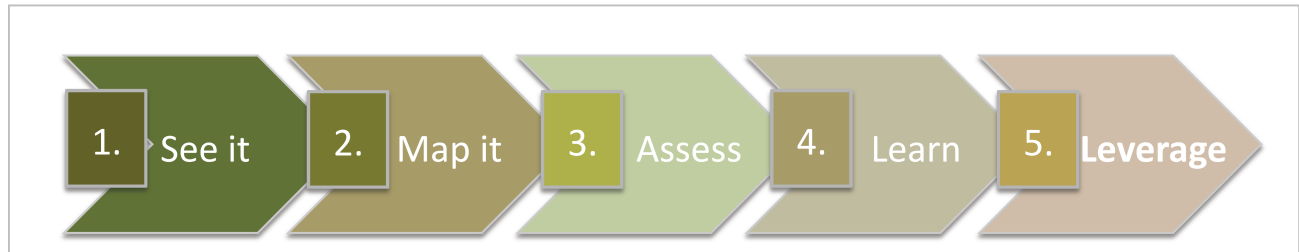


Polarity Mapping Process

A common, ongoing issue in schools is ability grouping. Too much ability grouping often results in cliques, labeling of students in negative ways, and other negative results of focusing on this pole. However, there are downsides to *never* using ability grouping as well. Try mapping this issue with your colleagues.



1. See It

Ask the group to think about the four key identifiers of polarities and whether they apply to using homogeneous or heterogeneous grouping of students.

1. Is it ongoing?
2. Are the alternatives interdependent?
3. Over time, are both poles/solutions needed?
4. If we focus on only one upside, will we eventually undermine our greater purpose statement (GPS)?

2. Map It

Ideally, client takes Step II. The TypeCoach Type Verifier and other tools that provide strengths/blind spots information may also be used. Only Step I results are reviewed at this stage in coaching.

1. Create four “stations” that will represent the upside and downside of each of the poles: Ability Grouping AND Heterogeneous Grouping. Place four pieces of flip chart paper and a marker at each station. Post signs that mark each station as one of the following:
 - a. Positive results of Ability Grouping
 - b. Negative results of over-focusing on Ability Grouping to the neglect of Heterogeneous Grouping
 - c. Positive results of Heterogeneous Grouping
 - d. Negative results of over-focusing on Heterogeneous Grouping to the neglect of Ability Grouping
2. Divide participants into four small groups of approximately 2-6 people. Let them know that they will work as a group at each station to brainstorm the values and fears each represents. Assign each group to a starting station.

3. Give each group five minutes at each station to write down their ideas of the values or fears of the pole assigned at that station. Make sure each group starts on a fresh sheet of flip chart paper without looking at the writings of the other groups.
4. When all groups have been at all four stations, have each group combine the results onto one piece of chart paper to summarize the ideas for that station. *OR* for the last rotation, have the groups at each station draw an image that captures the information generated on the flip charts at that station.
5. Post the four charts on a wall so that they form the four quadrants of a polarity map. This step is especially effective when you plan to continue the process to include creating sample Early Warning Signs and Action Steps.

3.

Assess

Ask participants to consider how well their school or organization is currently leveraging this polarity. There are two quick methods, as well as the formal PACT® surveys that can be created online.

1. Participants can individually complete a “quickwrite”. How well are they handling this polarity? Are they moving toward the upside or downside of a pole? Are they in a virtuous or vicious cycle? Give them a couple of minutes and then ask for brief comments about their reflections.
2. Have each person indicate how well they or their organization are leveraging this polarity. You can do this by:
 - a. If the posters now form the quadrants of a polarity map, remind them of the spiraling arrow that runs up and down the middle. Are they close to their GPS or closer to their deeper fear? Somewhere in the middle? Each person can mark the appropriate spot with a marker or a sticker.
 - b. If you have used rope or tape to mark an infinity loop on the floor, have each person stand along the spiraling arrow to indicate their position.

4.

Learn

Before moving on to Leveraging, consider what you have learned from assessing. Common questions include:

1. What can you discern about current and past actions?
2. How might the schools or organizations represented move forward?
3. How well are we handling this polarity?
4. How did we get where we are?
5. What worked/didn't work in the past?
6. What policies or strategies, present/past, have addressed this polarity? How well?

5.

Leverage

This step is the key to stopping the pendulum swings on polarities. Remember, polarities are unsolvable. The downside of one pole is often seen as a “problem” with the upside of the other pole as a “solution.” The time spent leveraging—identifying early warning signs and action steps—is key to channeling the energy being lost to debates and changes in policies toward mutually agreeable, productive actions and plans.

1. Ask for early warning signs that would help a teacher, a school, or an organization realize that is moving toward over-focused on one of these poles. These are the “canary in the mine” indicators. Sometimes, appointing a person to sound the alarm creates trust that the warning signs will be taken seriously.
2. Brainstorm possible action steps a teacher or a school could take to benefit from the positive results of each pole. Sometimes, an action step leverages *both* poles; these are called “high-leverage” action steps.