

Dr. Frank Smith's Advocacy Design Center Model

(Highlights from Dr. Frank Smith's ADC Study Guide)

Overview

The Advocacy Design Center model (ADC) is a tool for presenting a picture of a school. The primary purpose of the ADC process is community building; that is, strengthening the school's sense of efficacy and its capacity to be a powerful institution in its social context. The ADC process is a tool the school stakeholders can use in their discourse and effort to construct a stronger sense of community, a new school design, and a higher performing school. Good schools engage in a constant process of conversation, inquiry or self-assessment as a way of creating this shared sense who and what they are.

The "center" in this process is not a place but a series of events, activities, and exchanges that serve as a public arena in which all the stakeholders concerned about the success of the school talk about what a "good" school is all about. School leaders assume the role of helping the community come to some understanding in their value differences, so that there is a shared sense of meaning they are attempting to create and sustain. The purpose, then, of the ADC process is to combine technical expertise and professional values in a process that promotes public discourse and constructs a viable consensus among all stakeholders as they work together for a stronger school.

ADC Focus

The ADC process has a dual focus:

- (1) A focus on the school's culture or design as an institution of social context; and
- (2) A focus on inquiry or self-assessment by a core group of the school's stakeholders. Self-assessment serves as a basis for asking the essential question of leadership and planning: "what's next?"

Design Elements

Use of the advocacy design process asks participants to modify their personalized way of looking at the school and to develop a shared way of looking at the school. According to this framework, the system as a whole is an institution that incorporates four design elements:

- a system of instruction;
- a pattern of organization;
- a system of governance; and
- a system of judging or accounting for the school's accomplishments.

To establish the meaning of these elements of design and establish a useful common understanding, 29 questions are posed. The questions are designed to help people clarify and construct shared ideas and values regarding important beliefs and practices regarding:

1. how instruction is conducted in the school,
2. how people work together or how the school is organized,
3. its pattern of governance and decision-making, or how authority is used and distributed, and
4. how the school examines and accounts for its performance.

The elements of a successful autonomous school are so integrated and coherent that distinctions among the four elements are difficult to find. At the same time, features do vary somewhat from element to element so that for analytic and design purposes, differences among the elements can be discussed.

The definitions of the design elements are:

Instruction has two related aspects: work (what students do) and knowing.

Organization refers to the pattern of purposeful relations that exist among individuals within the boundaries of the school's sphere of interest.

Governance is the system by which members of the school identify problems, express preferences, and generate hypothesis about action, and make decisions about the connection between the ends they desire and the means they intend to use to achieve them: what is to be done and how.

Accountability is the process through which public knowledge about the school work is created.

Assessing the Design Elements

Approaches to problems and/or school improvement plans are embedded in the school's culture- their belief system. In addressing the need to improve student performance, schools with different types of culture generate different types of "social action theories" or explanations about what "causes" low student performance and what should be done about the low performance.

In constructing a school's social action theory, one needs to study the alignment between the "official" social action theory, often expressed in some written document such as the School

Leadership Team’s Plan, and the “walking theory” one hears and sees as one walks around the school.

Most school belief systems fall into one of three types. The three categories presented below represent the three models of schooling delineated in the 1982 work of Popkewitz, Tabachnick, and Wehlage. They also represent the scoring scale on the 29 questions in the ADC process as well as giving meaning to observations by the assessment team.

1. *Vital or Constructivist* – collaborative, reflective, inquiry-action oriented with a focus on the construction of knowledge by students and adults; public agenda is performance driven; school functions as a system of complex interests. Teacher evaluation taken seriously as a source of professional growth.

Most probable social action theory: low performance viewed as a complex matter resulting from the design of the system and/or a set of inter-related factors or the incompetence of a few individuals.

2. *Congenial or Illusory* – polite, interested in manners; words are exchanged, but critical commentary and collaboration avoided; minor non-instructional problems constitute the public agenda. Examination of student performance data and careful construction of a social action theory are unlikely. Meetings have a rehearsed quality. Teacher observation and evaluation are ritualistic, lacking substance.

Most probable social action theory: blaming the victim. Projecting the causes of low performance on the students and/or their families, while holding the school blameless. Analysis of performance seldom involves an actual study of data and is usually based on “teacher room tales”.

3. *Collection or Technical* – focus on rules’ enforcement and correct way of doing things; restricted public agenda; little if any collaboration, with emphasis on isolated individual responsibility; school functions as a collection of unrelated actors. Great variation in teacher quality informally noted, but not officially acknowledged, and considered the result of uncontrollable individual differences.

Most probable social action theory: Identification with a specific problem in a limited area of the organization with little sense of connections or interdependencies. Stated as something to be “fixed” by individuals. Data analysis is personal and cursory and not a central component of the action theory.

The school’s assessment team will complete extended observations, making written or taped notes of critical incidences. These are then coded using the same criteria as the 29 questions that are completed after the observations. Critical incident coding is based on

the same social action theory categories as used above. An example of Critical Incident charting:

Critical Incident	Significance	Culture	Criteria
No doors on bathrooms	Eliminates drug sales	Technical Illusory	Intervention using constructivist model

This guide is not intended to be used as an inventory of good practices. Rather, the collection of observations and question responses are to be used as a tool for “seeing” the whole school. Types of artifacts, practices, and procedures that one might observe in the different value orientations are noted and used for discussion purposes. While answering self-assessment questions, the school is both reporting on its current status, considering what might do better, and constructing plans as responses to perceived concerns.

ADC Framework:

I. What does instruction / the learning process look like?

Section A. What does it mean for students to “work”?

Q 1. What are the observed work strategies and practices?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| (1) Individual work | (5) Cooperative learning, collaboration |
| (1) Textbook questions | (5) Real work, adult applications |
| (1) Answers without explanations | (5) Public explanation/displays |

1. Situational Analysis: Our school program now
Field notes will describe observations*

*This type of data will be entered after each question. For the sake of space, it will not be represented after each question in this paper.

Our school is mostly

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2. Description of our best future:
3. What we need to know /do in order to make student work more effective.

Q2. With whom do students work? What is the logic or sequence of their work?

Teacher

(1) Individual tutor (5) Leader of public discourse

(1) Purveyor, checker (5) Coach, facilitator

With other students as

(1) Parallel workers, same jobs (5) Interdependent peers

With other adults as

(1) Sources of information (5) Interactive learners
mentors, family

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Q3. What kinds of materials and tools do students use in their work?

(1) No materials (5) Multi-source, multimedia, internet

(2) Workbooks, sheets (5) Multi-source, multimedia, internet

(1) School materials (5) Tools of adult work settings

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Q4. What are the work spaces and how are they organized?

(1) Isolated seats (5) For teams, temporary groups

(1) Non-specialized, general (5) Resource centers

(1) Traditional classroom (5) Adult work settings, labs

(1) Standardized (5) Variety of settings

Technical	1	2	3	4	5	Constructivist
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Q5. How is the classroom managed?

(1) Authoritarian adult (5) Active, collaborative

(1) Teacher enforced (5) Self-directed, curiosity

(1) Prescribed rules (5) Informal, like adult workers

(1) Public rebukes (5) Indirect control

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Q6. What are the work patterns within the class?

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|------------------------------------|--|
| (1) Short-term specified tasks | (5) Interdependent work, project tasks |
| (1) Series of school work problems | (5) Long term real work with scaffolding |

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Section B. What does it mean to “know”?

Q7. How do students create knowledge?

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| (1) Teacher acceptance, corrections | (5) With critical error analysis |
| (1) Recalling text | (5) Socially construct knowledge |
| (1) Individual subjects | (5) Integrated, problem-based, concepts |
| (1) Directed instructions | (5) Lab, applied technique in new setting |

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Q8. How are students to demonstrate their learning?

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|-------------------------------|---|
| (1) Artificial exercises | (5) Create authentic, varied, useful products |
| (1) Replication of masters | (5) Generate, display new forms |
| (1) Produce expected answers | (5) Respond to open questions |
| (1) Traditional tests, drills | (5) Demonstrate/exhibit understanding |

Technical	1	2	3	4	5	Constructivist
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Q9. How are the students’ curiosities and competencies incorporated in school work?

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|-------------------------------|---|
| (1) Not explicitly considered | (5) Student team initiated projects |
| (1) Prescribed content | (5) Talents nurtured, exhibited |
| (1) Standardized work | (5) Student initiated research projects |
| (1) Attempted homogeneity | (5) Diverse backgrounds expressed, valued |

Technical	1	2	3	4	5	Constructivist
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Q10. What order thinking skills are evident in student work?

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|---------------------------|--|
| (1) Simple recall | (5) Problem identification, divergent opinions |
| (1) Facts | (5) Understanding, concept driven |
| (1) Non-critical | (5) Creative, evaluative, critical |
| (1) Disjointed, illogical | (5) Persuasive, logical, thematic |

Technical	1	2	3	4	5	Constructivist
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Q11. How do students relate their learning to their lives in the community?

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|----------------------|---|
| (1) Private thoughts | (5) Personal experience as a focus of study |
| (1) Unlinked | (5) Contextualized, occupational link |
| (1) Impersonal text | (5) Service learning, community development |

Technical	1	2	3	4	5	Constructivist
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Q12. In what ways is student learning organized into a meaningful, sequential and coherent instructional program?

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (1) Random courses, track | (5) Coherent themes |
| (1) Separate courses | (5) Interdisciplinary units |
| (1) Annual organization | (5) Multi-year assignments, looping |
| (1) Work assigned without support | (5) Scaffolding for projects |
| (1) Unrelated field experiences | (5) Shadow-mentor-intern |
| (1) Individual classroom rules | (5) Consistent, coherent class rules |

Technical	1	2	3	4	5	Constructivist
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II. How is the school organized?

Q13. How does the school group or place students, thereby controlling access to instruction and services? Who makes these decisions?

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| (1) Categorical, pull outs, age graded | (5) Inclusive, multi-age |
| (1) Specialist teams assign | (5) Teacher-based, parents engaged |
| (1) Special entry tests, criteria | (5) Self-advocate, declared interest |
| (1) Probable destiny tracks | (5) Common core with special courses |
| (1) Traditional, high stakes test | (5) On-going evaluation & grouping |

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Q14. How are the facilities and school time used? What is the flow & cycle of activities?

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) Rigid schedule | (5) Flexible schedules |
| (1) Segmented blocks | (5) Large, enriched blocks |
| (1) Assigned standard spaces | (5) Activity spaces, open schedule |
| (1) Standard classrooms | (5) Adult work settings |
| (1) Formal, official spaces | (5) Informal gatherings |
| (1) Study center, limited access | (5) Open multimedia center |
| (1) Regular school day, week | (5) Extended day, week, weekends |

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Q15. How are students organized for their school career and what continuity is provided?

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|--|---------------------------------|
| (1) Random groups, annually constituted | (5) Continuing cohort |
| (1) Individually selected courses | (5) Core studies for all |
| (1) Teacher determined grade level content | (5) Reference to core standards |
| (1) No identity grouping | (5) Family/Advisory groups |

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Q16. How do adults relate to each other in the context of the school?

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|---|--|
| (1) "My job" orientation/work to contract | (5) Broadened roles, sense of community |
| (1) Separated by specializations | (5) Integration of instructional/support teams |
| (1) Socially detached, seniority | (5) Partners/mentors integrated |

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Q17. What do staffing patterns look like for the educational program within the school?

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Professionally inexperienced | (5) Collaborative planning |
| (1) Non-certified | (5) Co-located, school based |
| (1) Grade level teams | (5) Family engagement |
| (1) Collection of individuals | (5) Seeks resources, grants |
| (1) Disproportionate teacher support | (5) Active, sustained, advocacy |

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Q18. How do external agencies and families relate to the school?

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Loosely linked by referrals | (5) Collaborative planning |
| (1) Detached external services | (5) Co-located, school based |
| (1) Low, formal parental involvement | (5) Family engagement |
| (1) Passive recipients of allocation | (5) Seeks resources, grants |
| (1) Reluctant partners | (5) Active, sustained, advocacy |

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III. How is the school governed?

Q19. How is the school governance system representative of the stakeholders? Who plans and/or implements the school model or design?

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|------------------------------------|---|
| (1) School employees only | (5) Inclusive of community-based agents |
| (1) Central office, administrators | (5) Core group, team, working committee |
| (1) Expert planners | (5) Stakeholders, advocates |

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Q20. What commitment do stakeholder partners make to the program? What do they bring to the table?

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| (1) Sporadic participation | (5) Generate civic capacity |
| (1) Goodwill, advice | (5) Field experiences, mentors, access, jobs, teacher support |
| (1) Decision protection | (5) Active engagement |

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Q21. Who controls development or training of participants, e.g. student leadership, parent training, staff development?

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Centralized authority | (5) Core teams, groups |
| (1) Officials, employees | (5) School council, parents |
| (1) School determined | (5) Collaborative efforts |

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Q22. Who participates in inquiring into the school design or model's success?

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|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) External experts | (5) Core group, teacher researchers |
| (1) Official assessors | (5) Continuous action research |
| (1) Designated persons | (5) Open through digital media |

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Q23. How is authority distributed among the participants? How are decisions made? Who has veto power?

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) Elected elites by vote | (5) Stakeholder consensus |
| (1) One governing unit | (5) Linked, consultative units |
| (1) According to contract | (5) Informal and informative |
| (1) Seniority, cliques | (5) Constructive participation |

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IV. How does the school account for education?

Q24. How will this school design or model make the school community better for all the adults as well as for all children? What will it do to build civic capacity and a sense of community?

- (1) Narrow scope of claimed impact (5) Broad focus on civic capacity, social capital
 (1) Official standard data sources (5) Process visualization/interpretation
 (1) Isolated services and agencies (5) Integrated, collaborative efforts

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Q25. How does the school account for adult growth?

- (1) Limited official expertise (5) Developing learning organizations
 (1) Process accounting (5) Engage in action research
 (1) Legal supervision (5) Collaborative work, interdependency
 (1) Inactivity to protest (5) Indicators of family satisfaction/welfare

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Q26. How will the unit monitor the quality of daily life?

- (1) Informal random talk (5) Organized family-style advisories
 (1) Individual responses (5) Focus groups, forums
 (1) Student protests (5) Organized student assessments

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