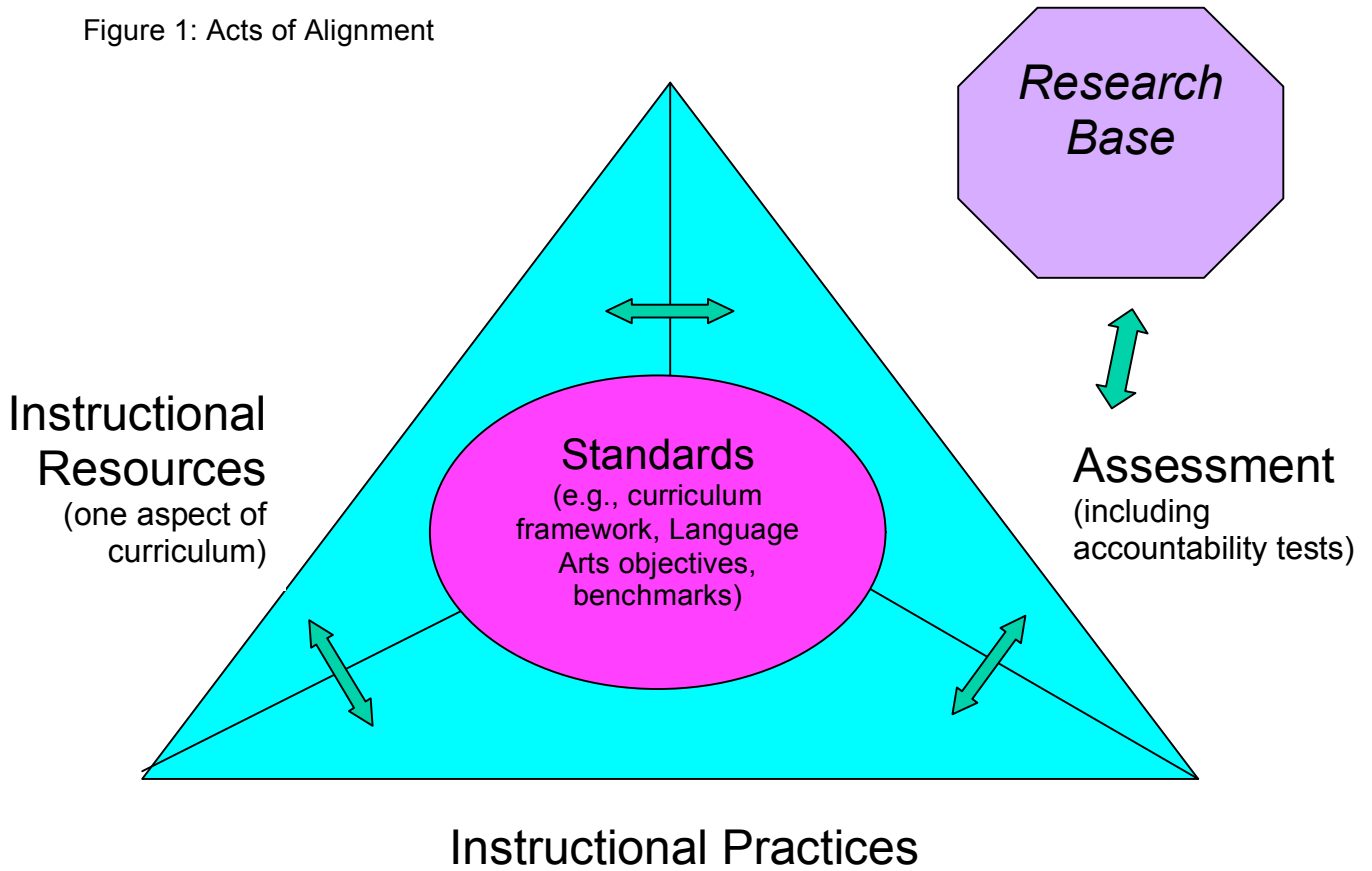


Pacific CHILD Acts of Alignment

The activity of alignment is integral to any school improvement process. It is used for formative purposes to engage teachers in activities that focus on moving all students toward grade level expectations. Figure 1 graphically configures the alignment process.

Figure 1: Acts of Alignment



The early reading assessments provided in this package are research-based. They include concepts about print, letter recognition, word identification, read and retell, and written story construction. The process of aligning standards, assessments, instructional practices, and resources begins with these assessments.

What does this mean for improving school literacy practices?

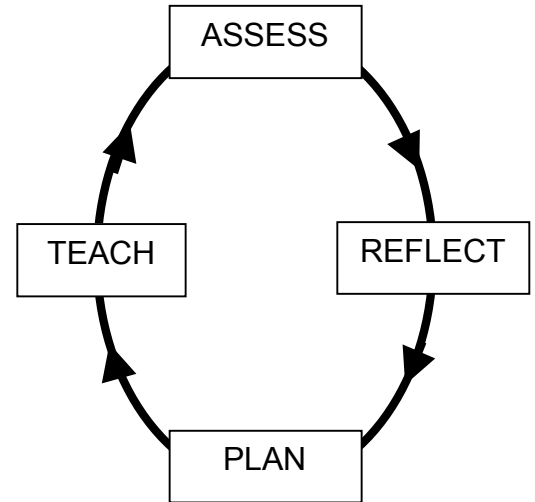
An alignment of the components of early reading creates opportunities for teachers to clarify together the purposes and functions of assessments and standards. It also creates opportunities for teachers to share their instructional ideas with each other, as they reflect on assessment and standards information. In *Schools That Work*, Allington and Cunningham (2002) remind us that two key conditions for change are: (1) opportunities for teachers to talk (dialogue, have conversations, both formally and informally) and (2) opportunities for teachers to share ideas and observe each other in their classrooms. Alignment activities have the potential to do both.



What does this mean for improving instruction?

The work of alignment supports the Teaching Learning Cycle (adapted from The Learning Network), a process that uses assessment information to inform instruction. The cycle starts with assessment, then teachers are asked to reflect on the information and grade level expectations to identify the “gap” for the child (e.g., the child is compared to where he or she is to where he or she needs to be by the end of the year). The gap will vary from child to child, and for some children there will be no gap if they have already exceeded expectations. Teachers assist each child in reaching his or her potential by planning activities that meet their needs. The plan is then put into action and is constantly adjusted as the current classroom situation changes.

Figure 2: Teaching Learning Cycle



The Teaching Learning Cycle

- The teacher assesses the child, gathering evidence of what the child knows and can do.
- He or she reflects on the information while thinking about the end-of-grade expectations (standards, benchmarks, curriculum framework) for the area assessed.
- He or she plans a task that will meet the needs and interests of the child he or she has in mind, based on where the child is at the time of the assessment and end-of-year expectations.
- He or she observes the child while teaching from the plan and adjusts it as needed.

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The Alignment Process

The alignment process integrates informed instruction and accountability through a series of tables that document assessments, corresponding grade level literacy standards (benchmarks, objectives), instructional practices, and instructional resources. The alignment process here is defined by four broad stages. Each stage does not have to be completed before doing work in another. Over time, the expectations of each stage should become more locally defined and explicit.

Assessments and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entity staff documents the state-level accountability tests, their specific purpose, and aspects of each test related to reading using Table 2.• Entity staff documents local standards/expectations in language arts that align with the P-CHILD assessments for grades K–3 using the P-CHILD alignment Table 3. This table links local standards/benchmarks/objectives with specific early reading assessments. In the column <i>other early reading expectations</i>, any early reading standards not addressed by assessments should be documented.
Central office review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A focus group of central office staff review and validate Tables 2 and 3.
School conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entity staff and principal review and clarify Tables 2 and 3.• Entity staff support the principal in using Tables 2 and 3 with teachers to clarify purposes and functions of assessments and the aligned standards, and to explore their own grade-level expectations for students where there are none.• Entity staff produces Table 3 for each grade level K (1) through 3.
Action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entity staff supports the principal in using Table 3 with teachers to look at the gaps and decide on areas to address. The grade level action plans should support entity staff in their classroom work with teachers.• Entity staff and principal work with teachers to identify instructional practices and resources which align with the content of assessments and standards. These should be recorded in Table 3.• Entity staff supports teachers in using this alignment to inform literacy assessment and instructional practices in the classroom.

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Improving school literacy practices through alignment activities

Central Office Review

The following is a sample of an explanation that could be given to Central Office Staff. It is followed by guiding questions to ask Central Office Staff as needed.

We are working to align reading standards, assessments, instructional practices, and instructional resources. Would you please review with us this table on grades K–3 reading standards/objectives/benchmarks? We have been aligning the standards with the P-CHILD assessments using your curriculum documents.

The assessments were developed from evidenced-based research in early reading. We want to identify the standards that align with them. We also want to include any standards based on important local reading practices that may not align with the assessments. We would appreciate you drawing our attention to those standards.

Guiding questions:

1. Have we interpreted the standards as they were intended? Does this alignment of assessments and standards seem logical/correct to you?
2. Did we miss any standards that you think would relate to any of these assessments?
3. Are there any standards that you are using that are not linked to any of these assessments?
4. We were confused with this standard. Could you please explain to us what it means and whether you think it relates to any of the seven assessments that guide this alignment work?

School Alignment Conversations

To build capacity with the principal, help him or her think through the alignment process and its connection to school change. Use questions to guide his or her planning of how to engage school staff in cross-grade conversations about end-of-grade expectations in reading.

Guiding questions:

1. Do you think it is important for teachers to talk with each other about the reading expectations they have for students at different grade levels? Why? Why not?
2. How might you create the conditions for those conversations? What will they look like? What would you do with the information they generate?
3. How could you use the alignment information to support those conversations?
4. Discussing grade level expectations includes agreeing on cut scores for each area of reading that is assessed. How could you involve teachers in decisions of cut scores?
5. How will these discussions help create an action plan for the school?
6. How would you involve teachers in creating an action plan?
7. How might you use the alignment information and the assessment information together for school-wide discussions?



Aligning Assessment to Instruction

<i>Assessments</i>	<i>Instructional Activities</i>
Concepts About Print	Shared reading
Letter Recognition	Alphabet Linking Chart activities Letter Knowledge
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	(This assessment is not available)
Sight Word Identification	Word walls
Read and Retell	Retelling Storytelling
Written Story Construction	Shared writing Interactive writing Concept mapping

See the REL’s Early Literacy and Assessment for Learning K–3 Series for more activities related to letter recognition, sight word identification, and read and retell.

A package of assessments is available in the REL Resource Kit and includes Concepts About Print, Letter Recognition, Sight Word Identification, Read and Retell, and Written Story Construction. For a phoneme assessment, we recommend using the following resource:

Yopp, H. K. (1995). A test for assessing phoneme awareness in young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 49(1), 20–30.