Core Session #1: The North Star Problem: Why Institutional Change Initiatives Stall—and How to Get Them Moving

Kate Drezek McConnell

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Working Definition: Theory of Change

A theory of change is a project-specific articulation of the underlying rationale, assumptions, and logic of a change initiative — making explicit *what* outcomes are intended, *how* and *why* the proposed activities are expected to produce those outcomes, and *what conditions* must be in place for change to occur and be sustained.

Working Definition: Theory of Change

In higher education contexts, a theory of change serves as both a planning tool and an evaluative framework, helping change agents design initiatives with intentionality, communicate their logic to stakeholders, and assess progress in meaningful ways.

Working Definition: Theory of Change

Importantly, a theory of change is most powerful when it is informed by broader change theory — that is, by empirically grounded knowledge about how institutional and organizational change actually happens.

Adapted from Andrews, T. C. (2020). Change theory and theory of change: What's the difference anyway? *International Journal of STEM Education, 7*(1), 2. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-0202-3


2ND EDITION
HOW COLLEGES CHANGE
UNDERSTANDING, LEADING, AND ENACTING CHANGE
Adrianna Kezar
ROUTLEDGE

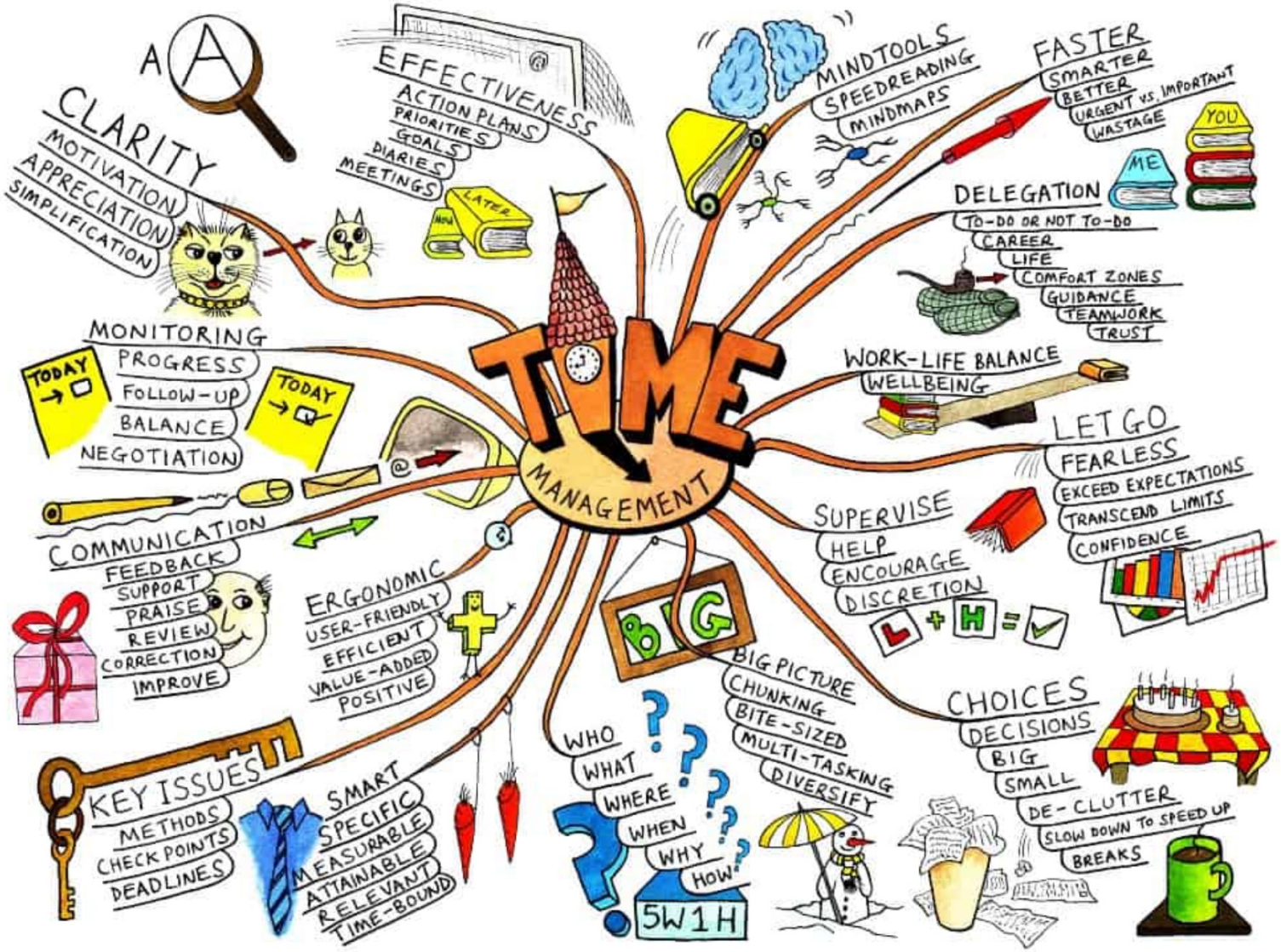
Time to Get “Out of Our Heads”: Mind Mapping a Theory of Change

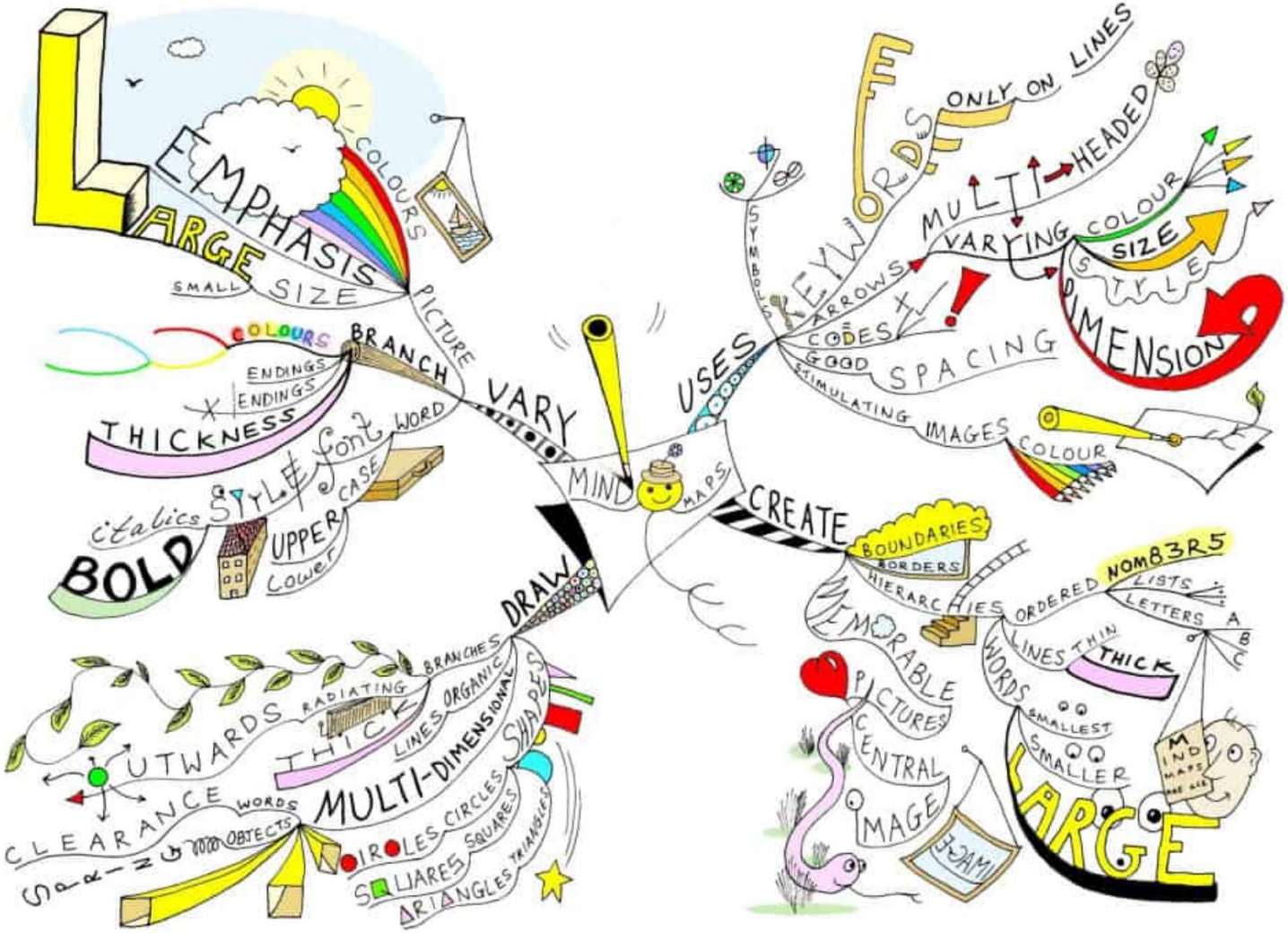
What is a mind map?

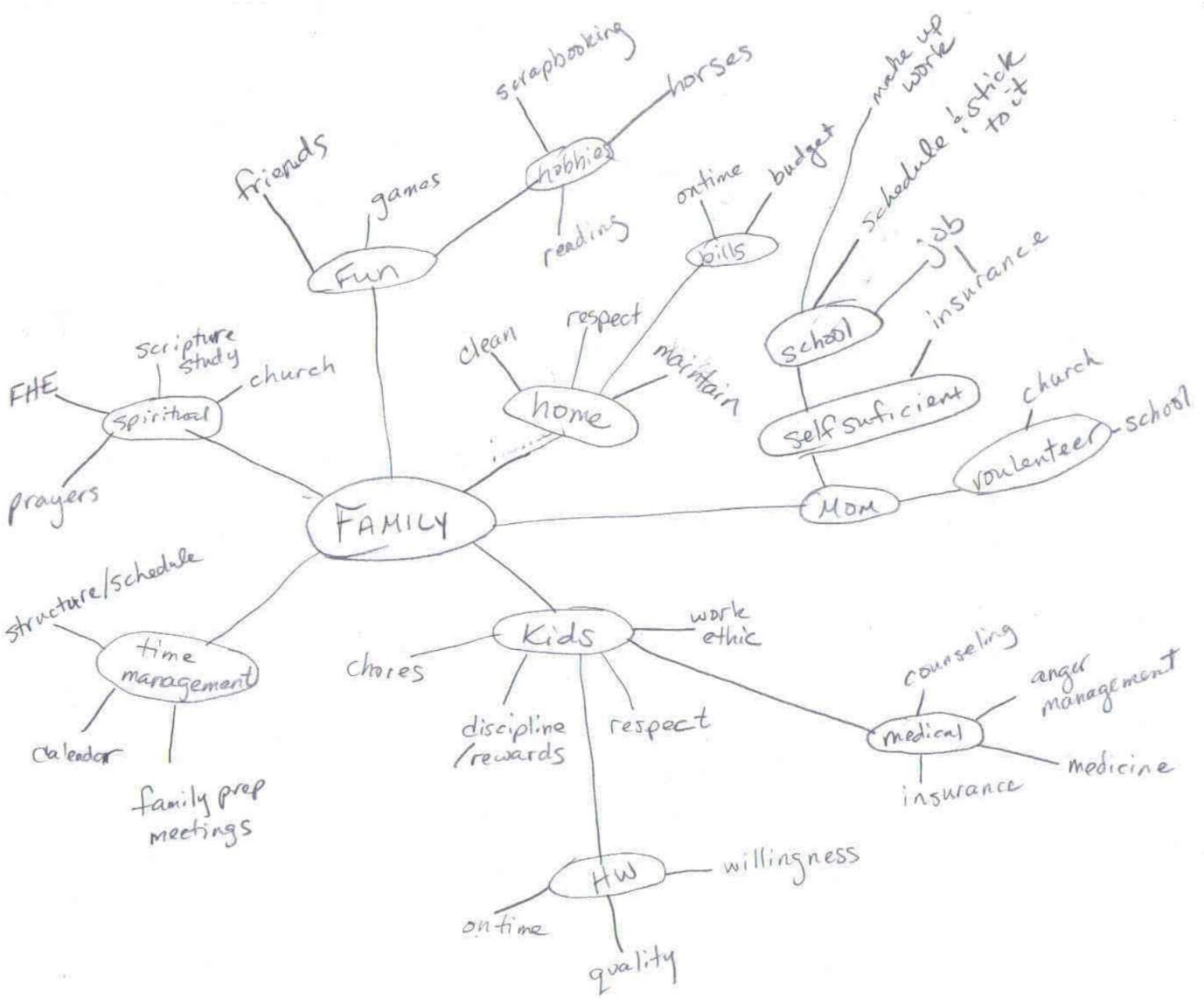
- Visual thinking tool that begins with a central concept and branches outward to capture associated ideas, questions, connections, and relationships in a non-linear, radial structure
- Unlike traditional note-taking or outlining, a mind map externalizes thinking as it happens
- Privileges association and flow over hierarchy and sequence
- How ideas relate to a central topic as understood by the person or group doing the mapping

Why a mind map?

- Valuable in the early stages of planning because it suspends the impulse to organize before you've finished
- Surfaces assumptions and tacit knowledge that might not emerge through linear prompting
- Identify gaps, redundancies, and unexpected connections across ideas
- Captures the full landscape of a problem or initiative before narrowing to priorities
- Creates a shared visual artifact that a group can react to, revise, and build on together


TIME MANAGEMENT
CLARITY
MOTIVATION
APPRECIATION
SIMPLIFICATION
EFFECTIVENESS
ACTION PLANS
PRIORITIES
GOALS
DIARIES
MEETINGS
NOW
LATER
MINDTOOLS
SPEEDREADING
MINDMAPS
FASTER
SMARTER
BETTER
URGENT VS. IMPORTANT
WASTAGE
YOU
ME
DELEGATION
TO-DO OR NOT TO-DO
CAREER
LIFE
COMFORT ZONES
GUIDANCE
TEAMWORK
TRUST
WORK-LIFE BALANCE
WELLBEING
LET GO
FEARLESS
EXCEED EXPECTATIONS
TRANSCEND LIMITS
CONFIDENCE
SUPERVISE
HELP
ENCOURAGE
DISCRETION
L + H =
CHOICES
DECISIONS
BIG
SMALL
DE-CLUTTER
SLOW DOWN TO SPEED UP
BREAKS
BIG PICTURE
CHUNKING
BITE-SIZED
MULTI-TASKING
DIVERSIFY
BIG
WHO
WHAT
WHERE
WHEN
WHY
HOW
5W1H
KEY ISSUES
METHODS
CHECK POINTS
DEADLINES
SMART
SPECIFIC
MEASURABLE
ATTAINABLE
RELEVANT
TIME-BOUND
ERGONOMIC
USER-FRIENDLY
EFFICIENT
VALUE-ADDED
POSITIVE
COMMUNICATION
FEEDBACK
SUPPORT
PRAISE
REVIEW
CORRECTION
IMPROVE
MONITORING
PROGRESS
FOLLOW-UP
BALANCE
NEGOTIATION
TODAY
TODAY


LARGE
EMPHASIS
COLOURS
SMALL
SIZE
PICTURE
BRANCH
COLOURS
ENDINGS
ENDINGS
THICKNESS
WORD
Font
STYLE
CASE
italics
BOLD
UPPER
Lower
VARY
USES
MIND
MAPS
KEYWORDS
ONLY ON LINES
SYMBOLS
ARROWS
MULTI-HEADED
VARYING
COLOUR
SIZE
STYLE
DIMENSION
CODES
GOOD
SPACING
STIMULATING
IMAGES
COLOUR
CREATE
BOUNDARIES
BORDERS
HIERARCHIES
ORDERED
NUMBERS
LISTS
LETTERS
A
B
C
MEMORABLE
PICTURES
CENTRAL
IMAGE
LINES
THIN
THICK
WORDS
SMALLEST
SMALLER
LARGE
MIND MAPS ARE ALL
JAM
DRAW
OUTWARDS
RADIATING
BRANCHES
THICK
LINES
ORGANIC
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL
SHAPES
CLEARANCE
WORDS
OBJECTS
IRREGULARES
CIRCLES
SQUARES
TRIANGLES


FAMILY
Fun
friends
games
hobbies
scrapbooking
horses
reading
spiritual
FHE
scripture study
church
prayers
home
clean
respect
maintain
bills
on time
budget
school
make up work
schedule & stick to it
job
insurance
self sufficient
church
volunteer
school
MOM
time management
structure/schedule
calendar
family prep meetings
Kids
chores
work ethic
discipline /rewards
respect
HW
willingness
on time
quality
medical
counseling
anger management
medicine
insurance

Activity: Theory of Change Mind Map

To externalize your current — and possibly implicit — theory of change for your assessment change initiative, using the working definition as a framework for your brain dump.

Time: 15-20 minutes individual mapping; 10 minutes small group share-out

Materials: Large paper or whiteboard space (or a digital tool such as Miro, Mural, or even a blank Google Doc if working virtually); markers or pens

RECAP— What Is a Mind Map?

A visual thinking tool that starts with a central idea and branches outward to capture associated thoughts, questions, and connections — in any order, without judgment.

The goal: get it out of your head and onto the page.

Your Task

Write your initiative or project in the center of your page and circle it.

Then build four branches — one for each element of a theory of change.

15 minutes. No editing. No evaluating. Just map.

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The Four "Branches"

1. Outcomes – What changes are you trying to make?
2. Causal Logic – What's Your "If/Then"? What activities lead to those outcomes?
3. Assumptions – What has to be true for your logic to hold?
4. What needs to be in place for change to last?

Next Steps

Annotate your map:

*** = Solid and well-developed

??? = Uncertain, underdeveloped, or “the quiet part we haven’t said out loud” yet

!!! = What surprised you

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Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

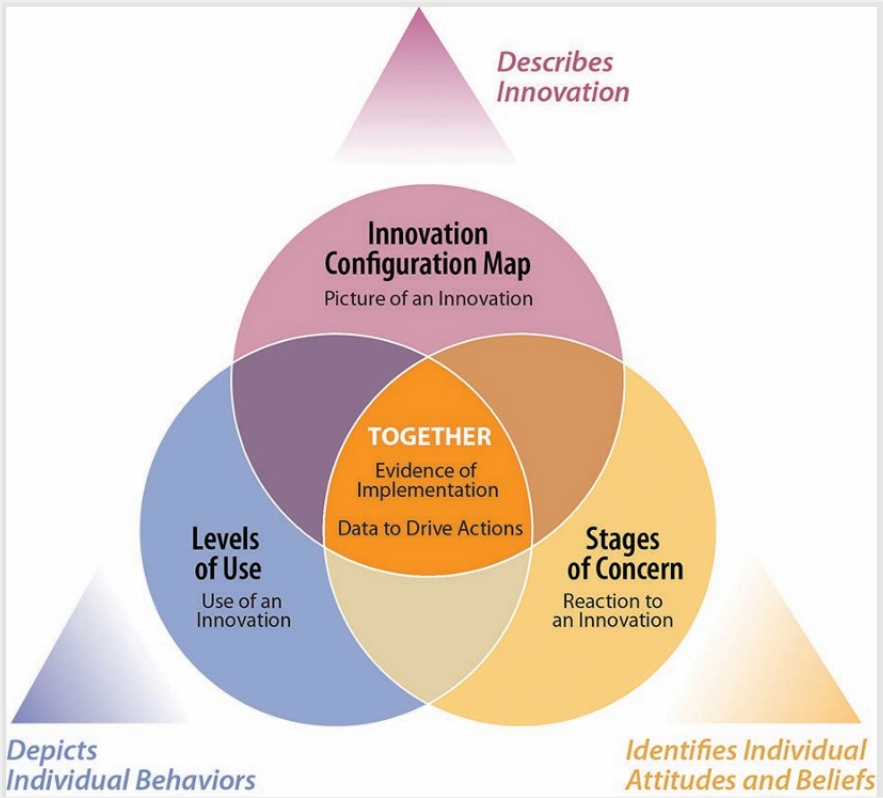


CBAM:

- Conceptual framework that provides tools and techniques for facilitating and assessing the implementation of new innovations or reform initiatives.

- Underlying premise of CBAM is implementing a new initiative requires more than the provision of materials, resources, and training

- It requires the understanding that each person involved will respond to the new initiative with unique attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, each person will use a new program differently.



Three Dimensions of CBAM

Stages of Concern:

- Based on a key understanding—for a new program to succeed, it is critical to address the concerns of the people charged with implementing it.
- Faculty and staff may respond to change in many ways, from stress and anxiety to cynicism and burnout.
- Through the Stages of Concern process, leaders can identify staff concerns and provide targeted support to help individuals cope and focus on the task at hand.

Stage of Concern	Typical Statement
0: Unconcerned	“I think I heard something about it, but I'm too busy right now with other priorities to be concerned about it.”
1: Informational	“This seems interesting, and I would like to know more about it.”
2: Personal	“I'm concerned about the changes I'll need to make in my routines.”
3: Management	“I'm concerned about how much time it takes to get ready to teach with this new approach.”
4: Consequence	“How will this new approach affect my students?”
5: Collaboration	“I'm looking forward to sharing some ideas about it with other teachers.”
6: Refocusing	“I have some ideas about something that would work even better.”



Levels of Use:

- Levels of Use tool consists of eight behavioral profiles that describe the actions that educators engage in as they become more familiar with and skilled in using a practice or adopting a change.

- Faculty and staff may respond to change in many ways, from stress and anxiety to cynicism and burnout.

- Through the Stages of Concern process, leaders can identify staff concerns and provide targeted support to help individuals cope and focus on the task at hand.

Level	Typical Statement
Nonuse	“I’ve heard about it but, honestly, I have too many other things to do right now.”
Orientation	“I’m looking at materials pertaining to the innovation and considering using it sometime in the future.”
Preparation	“I’ve attended the workshop and I’ve set aside time every week for studying the materials.”
Mechanical Use	“Most of my time is spent organizing materials and keeping things going as smoothly as possible every day.”
Routine Use	“This year it has worked out beautifully. I’m sure there will be a few changes next year, but basically I will use it the same way I did this year.”
Refinement	“I recently developed a more detailed assessment instrument to gain more specific information from students to see where I need to change my use of the innovation.”
Integration	“Not everyone has all the skills needed to use the program so that it has the greatest impact on student learning. I‘ve been working with another teacher for 2 years, and recently a third teacher began working with us.”
Renewal	“I am still interested in the program and using it with modifications. Frankly, I’m reading, talking, and even doing a little research to see whether some other approach might be better for the students.”



Innovation Configurations

- Provides clear, specific, and shared descriptions of what a new program or practice should look like;
- Focuses on the key components of a program or practice;
- Describes variations for each component of a new program in terms of the actions and behaviors that are ideal, acceptable, and unacceptable;
- Differs from rubrics in that Innovation Configurations describe rather than rate a new practice;
- Produces flexible documents that can change as the use of a new program or practice matures; and
- Helps those who are new to campus understand program expectations.

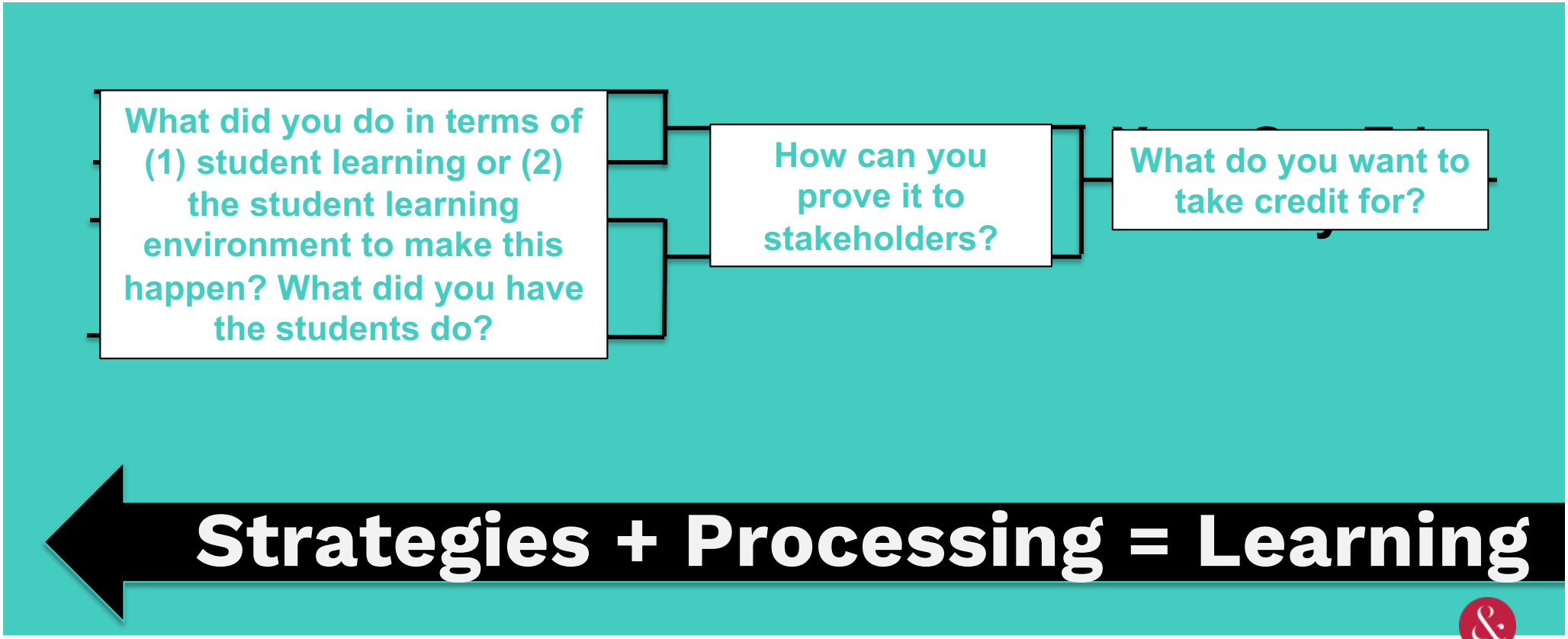


Backwards Design

Backwards design.

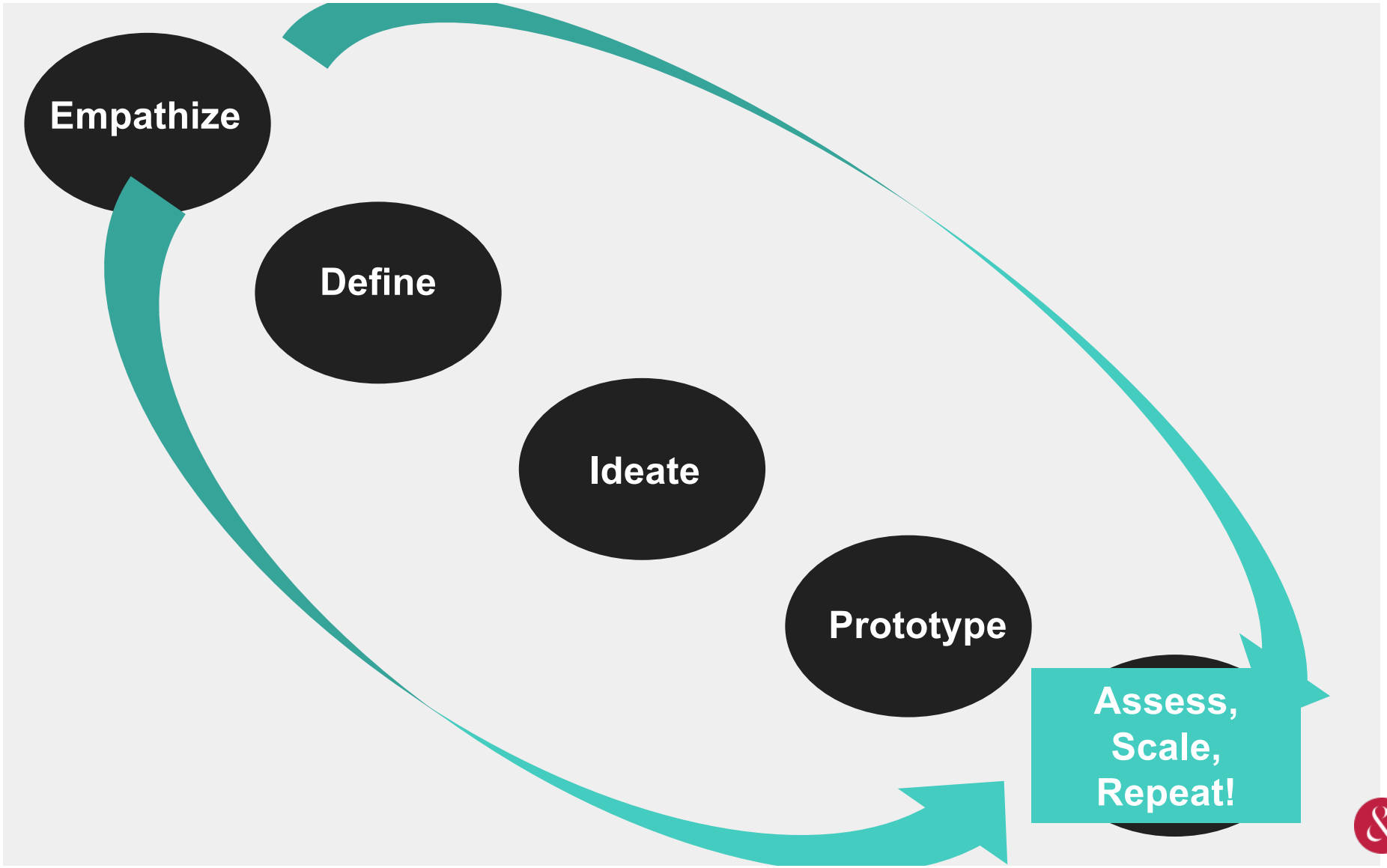


Backwards design.

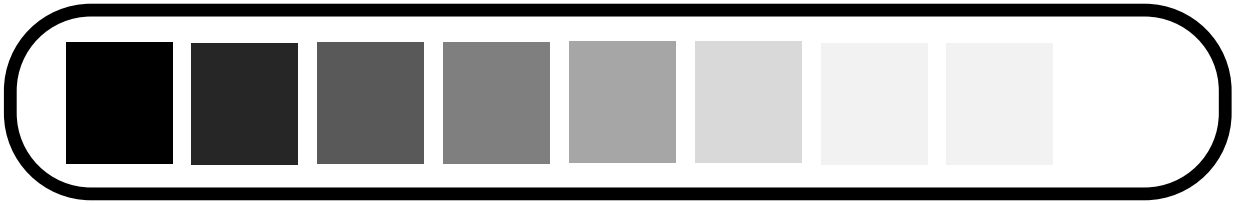


Design thinking.




Empathize
Define
Ideate
Prototype
Assess,
Scale,
Repeat!

LOADING . . .



EMPATHY

Teaching-Learning-Assessment (TLA) Framework

AAC&U's Teaching-Learning-Assessment (TLA) Framework is a web-based tool designed to help institutions strengthen teaching and learning (*within guided pathways*).

The TLA Framework guides campuses through an intentional, five-phase process to examine, implement, and enhance teaching, learning, and assessment practices that support higher levels of student learning.

