SCHOOL PEER REVIEW

Overview 2018

INTRODUCTION

School peer reviews, in the context of the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SAESC), have been designed with the intent to bring about continuous development, change and improvement in the quality of the teaching and learning in member schools.

Why are school peer reviews of value to the SAESC?

The SAESC determined to use peer reviews to improve student learning by:

- ✓ Collaborating and supporting participating schools.
- ✓ Sharing and developing best practices in all areas of the school.
- ✓ Identifying areas for growth and improvement.
- ✓ Providing a framework to support the school's internal development and growth.

This would be achieved through a systematic review of schools across four domains:

- ✓ Leadership and Management
- ✓ Teaching and Learning
- ✓ Culture and Climate
- ✓ School and Community

In each of these domains, sub-domains were identified and criteria within each sub-domain clearly articulate the benchmark towards which schools should strive in their journey for continuous improvement.

> "*The purpose is to encourage groups of schools to work together to hold each other accountable for leading or creating schools that transform the lives of students by preparing them for academic success and life. Rather than a potentially punitive assessment, a peer review focuses on self-reflection and school improvement. This process creates a safe environment for a school to understand its own strengths and weaknesses and identify strategies, with the support of colleagues from other institutions, to drive gains in student achievement.*"

School peer reviews should aim to achieve the following goals, through the fair and systematic collection of evidence in each of the domains AND through ongoing, sustained dialogue and reflection amongst the reviewers and with key members of the school management team:

- ✓ Assess the school's quality of teaching and learning
- ✓ Assess the effectiveness of the school's operations
- ✓ Document what the school does well to be shared with others
- ✓ Identify what kind of ongoing support the school and school leader need
- ✓ Identify actionable plan for school improvement
- ✓ Develop a culture of continuous learning at the school and among groups of schools.

Benefits to schools participating in this process are significant, both for those under review and for those volunteering members to participate as reviewers. For the schools under review, preparing for the review encourages schools to think reflectively and honestly about their teaching and learning practices and the schools' operations, and through the process, enables the school to

identify areas of strength and weakness and create a school improvement plan which further builds upon the strengths and addresses the weaknesses. For individuals participating as school peer review team members, not only does this build and strengthen the collaborative partnership between individuals from schools within the community, but it also enables a sharper focus on their own schools' performance against the criteria within the instrument.

Key Steps in the Review Process

Each school peer review will typically move through three phases:

1. Pre-Review Planning and Preparation
2. On-site Review Implementation
3. Post-Review Feedback and Follow-Up

For each participant in the review, the roles and responsibilities change throughout these phases, and the time demands vary from participant to participant. In this next section, a flow-chart of required activities will be outlined and estimates of time that need to be committed by each participant will be provided.

PRE-REVIEW PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Confirmation of schedule of school peer reviews - by school (with identified team leads, coaches and team members) and with individual team members

- Preparation of school staff by school lead (purpose, nature and structure of the review, the instrument itself, the team make-up, timetable, the self-evaluation questionnaire)

- Correspondence between team lead, project manager and school lead on logistics, documents needed by school for planning purposes (e.g. timetables, staff lists, school map) and self-evaluation questionnaire

- Follow-up on self-evaluation questionnaire and distribution of this (and any other supporting documentation) to review team members

- Set-up of all documentation required for evidence-based review by the school as per checklist to be provided

- Photocopying and preparation of all templates for the review team members (classroom observation sheets, meeting notes sheets, code of conduct, schedules and school maps, key words, evidence record sheet)

- Preparation of hard-copy file and portfolio for evidence collected at school

ON-SITE REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION

- Team lead and team members arrive at school for pre-review training and briefing session (see lesson plan)

- School head introduced to team, given an orientation to the programme for the review (as communicated by email in the schedule) and then provided with an opportunity to talk to the self- evaluation questionnaire

- Lesson plan for Pre-Review Training and video calibration exercise undertaken with the team, followed by confirmation of schedule (particular attention to be paid to coverage in terms of staff numbers and focus areas)

- Start both mornings with early pre-review briefings, and an in-classroom calibration exercise and join any/all whole-school events to orientate to school and possible introductions

- Follow the agreed upon schedule - both in terms of classroom visits AND meetings/ discussion sessions with staff, students and parents. Important to remember check-ins with team lead AND with team members

- Work-in-progress debate on precise praise, areas for improvement and big rocks should conclude Day One with intention to look at these areas with more focus and clarity on Day Two

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PRE-REVIEW PLANNING AND PREPARATION

(as above)

ON-SITE REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION

(as above)

POST-REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION AND FEEDBACK

- Provide verbal feedback to school management team, and have agreed timeframes for completion of report

- Ensure all paper-based documentation is filed - with all classroom observation sheets and meeting notes sheets filed in lever arch file with schedule of visits (updated as amended) AND any other supporting documents and evidence provided by the school (school lead to keep file and/or portfolio folder)

- De-brief key pointers with the team members before final closure of review

- Use evidence-based templates for the criteria to work through and strengthen points raised and noted as precise praise and areas for improvement

- Circulate draft report to all team members within three weeks post-review

- Finalise report and send to school lead within four weeks of the review, with some suggested recommendations and post-review interventions/suggestions

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SUGGESTED TIME FRAMES FOR SPR STAGES

Pre-review preparation (14-20 hours)

- Staff sessions on instrument itself (work-through and self- analysis): 5-6 hours
- Meetings and briefing with other school stakeholders (SGB/BOG, parents etc): 2-3 hours
- Preparation of self-evaluation questionnaire: 2- 3 hours
- Supporting documentation preparation (as per letter and checklist): 4-6 hours
- Logistical arrangements (accommodation, IT infrastructure, catering): 1-2 hours

While review team is on-site (8-14 hours)

- In-classroom lesson observations of all staff over two days (8-10 hours)
- Teacher focus groups and interviews (2-3 hours) through a sample selection
- School leader check-in and de-briefing with team leads (at least 3 check-ins of min 1 hour each)
- Verbal close-out report from review team (1-2 hours)

Feedback and follow-up post review (15- 5 hours +++)

- School head de-brief with whole staff (2-3 hours)
- School head feedback to SGB/BOG (1-2 hours)
- Development of school improvement plan based on written report once received (8- 0 hours)
- Check-ins with review team lead (once per quarter over 12 month period)
- Implementation of school improvement plan

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Supporting Documents for the School Peer Review Process

The links below will take you to these documents.

1	Purpose and Domains of the SPR	SPR1 Purpose and Domains
2	Roles and Responsibilities of the SPR Team	SPR 2 Roles and Responsibilities
3	Code of Conduct for Reviewers	SPR 3 Code of Conduct
4	Conversation Starters	SPR 4 Conversation starters
5	School Self Evaluation Form	SPR 5 School Self Evaluation
6	Notes for Team Lead	SPR 6 Notes for Team Lead
7	Teacher Subject File Checklist	SPR 7 Teacher Subject File Checklist
8	Student Academic Material Checklist	SPR 8 Student Academic Material Checklist
9	Classroom Observation Notes	SPR 9 Classroom Observation Notes
10	Meeting Review Notes	SPR 10 Meeting Review Notes
11	SPR Evidence Checklist	SPR 11 Evidence Checklist
12	Report Template	SPR 12 Report Template
13	Generic Schedule	SPR 13 Generic Schedule

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