

Tool 6

On-Site School Review Overview

Interest in a school review grows from a curiosity about how effectively a school or district is currently functioning and a desire to use that information to take the next steps to improve performance. A school review provides school administrators and staff with comprehensive information in three key areas:

1. What has high-quality research identified as essential elements of effective schools?
2. How can we tell the extent to which those characteristics and traits are present in our school?
3. What are the next steps for our school to take in becoming a more effective school?

The On-Site School Review Process

Figure 1 shows the main steps of the on-site school review process.

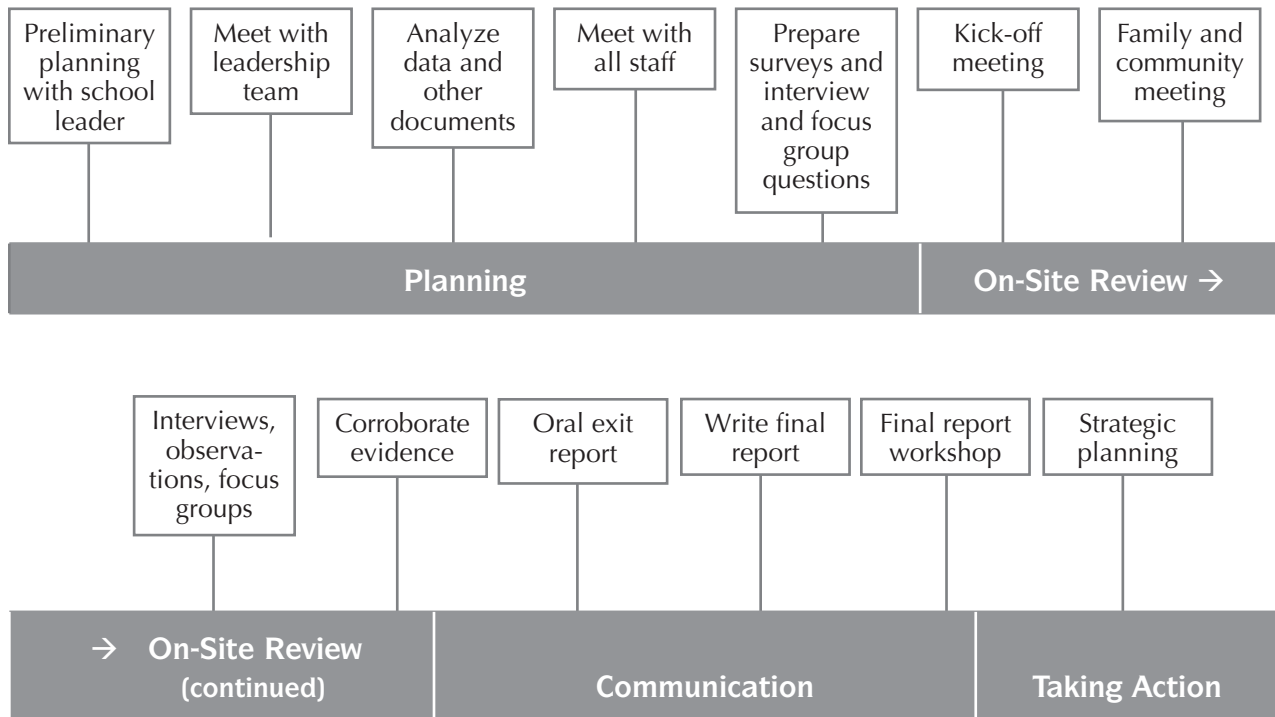


Figure 1: The major milestones of the on-site school review process.

The Effectiveness Indicators

The 10 Effectiveness Indicators have emerged from studies of schools in which all groups of students are performing at high levels. They are used to create a detailed picture of what an effective school looks like.

1. Written Curriculum
2. Instructional Program
3. Student Assessment
4. School Leadership
5. Strategic Planning
6. Professional Development
7. Student Connectedness, Engagement, and Readiness
8. School Environment
9. Family and Community Involvement
10. District Support

The Tools

The review team uses a variety of tools to collect and validate evidence, to communicate the results of the on-site review, and to plan for school improvement.

- Data analysis
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Student, parent, teacher, and staff surveys
- Document review
- Curriculum analysis
- Student work analysis
- Classroom observation
- Strategic planning
- Professional development

The Rubrics

The rubrics (scoring guides) are the basic tool of the school review process. They provide a systematic way to determine the extent to which each characteristic of each effectiveness indicator is, or is not, in place within a school. Table 1 is an example of the rubric for one characteristic.

Communication

Communication between the review team and the school is well-planned and ongoing. Planning for the review consists of selecting the effectiveness indicators, setting the schedule, communicating with staff members, and administering the surveys. A kick-off meeting is held with the staff on the first day of the on-site visit. Every day during the on-site visit, the team leader meets with the principal. The visit concludes with an all-staff exit briefing.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning begins with an all-staff inservice to discuss the results of the final report, including data, commentary on the effectiveness indicator review, and recommendations. A second inservice involves examining current instructional practices and deciding on the most important actions to affect the school. The third inservice results in a strategic plan that sets goals, establishes the time line, and identifies current and needed resources.

Table 1: Rubric for Characteristic 1A

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum		
		Low Performing	Effective	High Performing
1A. The written curriculum is aligned to state standards or the standards of national disciplinary organizations.	1A1. Extent of written curriculum	Some or all classes for which there are state standards lack written curriculum.	There is written curriculum for all subjects and classes for which there are state standards.	There is written curriculum for all subjects and classes.
	1A2. Alignment to content of standards	The written curriculum is not aligned to the content of state standards.	The written curriculum is aligned to the content of state standards.	The written curriculum is aligned to the content of state standards in those subjects for which there are state standards and the content of the standards of national disciplinary organizations for other subjects.
	1A3. Alignment to cognitive demands of standards	The written curriculum is not aligned to the cognitive demands of state standards.	The written curriculum is aligned to the cognitive demands of state standards.	The written curriculum is aligned to or exceeds the cognitive demands of state standards in those subjects for which there are state standards and the cognitive demands of the standards of national disciplinary organizations for other subjects.