Inspections / Quality Review/ Accountability/ School Improvement Planning

This paper is designed to bring together a number of ideas which at first sight may appear to have little connection. Quality Reviews (inspections) are often seen essentially as an instrument of external accountability and even enforcement; school and improvement planning, on the other hand, is part of a process whereby schools become more autonomous, taking control of and shaping their own destiny. In fact this paper is intended to demonstrate there are good reasons for linking the topics together, and that both serve the central aim of improving the quality of schools and raising the educational standards achieved within them. Although the paper focuses on School Review and School Improvement Planning the policies, principles and processes equally apply to District Review and District Improvement Planning.

To develop this argument, first let’s look at the British – and indeed more specifically English – system of inspection: that is conducted under the auspices of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). At the outset we need to recognize both that this system has its detractors as well as its admirers, and that many of its features are highly particular to the culture and society in which it operates, and can not be transferred to another country, with very different traditions and expectations, without adaptation. Nevertheless, there are a number of important principles underlying the Ofsted model of inspection, which can be applied in different contexts, and a number of these principles could help districts to hold school more accountable and schools to more effectively plan their own improvement.

To begin with, it is important to see the English school inspection system as one part of what central government (The Department for Children, Schools and Families) conceives as a national accountability framework for education. The thinking is that schools should, as far as possible, be free, within a strong central organizing structure, to exercise the greatest possible delegation of financial resources. This enables them, through controlling their budgets, to make decisions on items such as staffing, staff development, accommodation and learning materials and to focus on providing educational programs that focus sharply on the needs of each individual learner. Educational literature around the world refers usually refers this concept as either ‘site-based management’ or ‘local management of schools’ which in turn is frequently linked to the concept of ‘autonomy in exchange for accountability’.

The accountability framework in England consists of five elements:

• The National Curriculum, which establishes which subjects should be studied throughout compulsory schooling, together with programs of study
• National assessment at the end of each of the Key Stages of compulsory schooling - at the ages of 7,11,14 and 16 – leading to published ‘performance tables’
• Performance management of principals, teachers and other staff
• Target-setting for each local education authority and each school
• The regular school and district inspection system, under Ofsted’s management.

Through these elements, it is hoped that all those with a key interest in the quality of education – national and local government, school staff, parents, students and the wider community – will have a strong base of information about how schools, and students within them, are doing. This information can then serve as a stimulus to promoting higher standards, providing the intelligence on which informed choices can be made – for example, by parents when choosing schools: they are able to study the performance tables and read the reports from recent inspections, all of which are published on the Ofsted website.
Inspection, then, sits alongside a number of other government initiatives. But
inspection itself is not a static concept, and it has evolved greatly over its long
history. (The first inspectors, known as Her Majesty's Inspectors, or HMI, were
appointed in 1840, and the full-time members of Ofsted's inspectorate are still known
as HMI, over 160 years later.)

For most of these years, a relatively small number of HMI inspected England's
schools occasionally and without published reports. The big change came in 1992,
with the creation by the then government of a new non-ministerial department,
Ofsted, under a newly appointed Chief Inspector (known as Her Majesty's Chief
Inspector or HMCI). The government at that time was placing a strong emphasis on
the idea of a 'Parents' Charter', which would give greater and clearer rights, choices
and information to all parents about schooling in their area. It felt that a key element
of providing that information was that each school should be inspected once every
four years, so that parents would always have a relatively up-to-date picture of the
school's children were attending or might attend. In order to carry out these
inspections, the principle of competitive tender was to be used so that companies of
inspectors, whether from the private or the public sector, would bid for work to
Ofsted, which would let contracts, establish a Framework for inspection, and quality
assure the work of all inspectors, using its own full-time inspectors, the HMI.

Much information was thus made available to parents. However, it quickly became
apparent that another important source of data would now be available: that on the
national picture and on different regions of the country, which would now provide
information on, for example, the quality of teaching in all of the thousands of lessons
seen by inspectors each year. The Chief Inspector (HMCI) was to publish an Annual
Report to parliament which contained summaries of all of the data and judgments
collected, and hence provided an overview of quality and standards in education
across the whole country. This could be examined each year, and significant trends
monitored, with the results from inspection placed next to those from performance
tables, to provide a fuller picture.

However, information about individual schools was not something which government
itself felt it could ignore, since the results from the first years of inspection plainly
revealed a small minority of schools which were not providing education of a good
quality for their pupils. The incoming government felt that it gave an important signal
to schools and to parents that schools which came out of inspection poorly were not
simply to be left as they were, but would be required to improve. Hence it introduced
legislation which meant that all weak or failing schools identified through inspection
must be subject to a specific set of follow-up measures. Where schools were placed
in these 'special measures', they had, in effect, either to improve or to close. This
new regime of course gave inspection more 'teeth', but also did much to introduce an
element of anxiety and even in some cases fear of inspection which was difficult for
Ofsted to manage throughout the latter half of the 1990s.

Even now, opinions are mixed about the effects of the 'special measures'
designation. On the one hand, it seemed to stigmatize schools and make it seem that
for some schools at least inspection was a punitive activity. On the other, there were
soon a large number of 'success stories' of schools which, having been placed in
special measures, worked hard and successfully to remedy the weaknesses and
were therefore able to have the measures removed. To be taken out of special
measures was a cause of much rejoicing, and tales started to reach the ears of those
running Ofsted about wild celebratory parties and even of heads hugging inspectors
with tears of relief running down their faces. There is a close link between this and
the topic of school improvement planning, since schools placed in special measures
had to produce a clear action plan to deal with the deficiencies revealed in their report, and the success of many of these schools’ efforts began to sensitize government to what a powerful tool for school improvement a good, clear and focused school plan could be, especially where it was subject to effective means of checking on the progress being made (or, alas, in some schools, not being made).

The DCSF has more recently developed a Children’s plan which has five guiding principles:

- Government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families
- All children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them
- Children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life
- Services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries
- It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.

The contribution of inspection to school improvement was therefore always seen as an important part of the purposes of inspection. Indeed, when Ofsted was created, a group of senior staff deliberated for a long time on a short statement to summarize the purposes of Ofsted, and they agreed on the line ‘Improvement through Inspection’. Not that inspection itself caused improvement – one of the senior HMI used to say that ‘nothing ever improves simply by being looked at’. But when the findings of inspection were properly and sensitively used, they could help schools with their own planning on how to improve.

Through its history, Ofsted has therefore sought to establish a number of basic principles to govern how inspection should be carried out if it is indeed to perform the function of contributing to school improvement rather than simple recording what it sees or, worse, being some kind of big stick with which to beat schools. These principles include the following:

**Inspection:**
- Is there to act in the interest of the children/young people
- Is evaluative and diagnostic, assessing quality and compliance
- Invites and takes into account self-evaluation
- Takes into account the distinctive character of the school
- Should include clear and helpful feedback, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

So: how do inspectors work, and what is it they inspect? The basic element in the English inspection system is the observation of lessons by a trained inspector who makes judgments of quality and standards by comparing what he or she sees against national standards and the age and aptitude of the pupils. In the U.S. we have enhanced this aspect by ensuring that when reviewers undertake lesson observations they are accompanied by a member of the school’s administrative team. The foci of inspection in England were laid down by statute, as follows. Ofsted is to inspect:

- The **quality of education** provided by the school
- The **educational standards achieved** in the school
- The **quality of leadership** in, and management of, the school, including whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed efficiently; and
- The **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** of pupils at the school.
The focus on quality and standards, and on how leadership, teaching and resources contribute to these, has been a constant in the Ofsted system, and indeed builds firmly on the HMI tradition that preceded it. However, in other respects, inspection has changed, and is continuing to change since the early days of Ofsted, especially in the following ways:

- Less inspection
- A focus on essentials
- Highlighting success
- Building on schools’ self-evaluation and planning documents
- Taking account of the views of pupils
- Response to the school’s own characteristics and priorities, within a common framework

Thus the inspection is tailored to match the needs, performance and characteristics of the school:
- The shape and emphasis of the inspection are discussed with the school in advance, with the initial, pre-inspection contact between the head of the school and the lead inspector seen as a vital stage in the process.
- Ofsted reduced the number of inspector days considerably, by enhancing the role of self-assessment, therefore saved a considerable amount of public expenditure, in line with the government’s targets for efficiency savings.
- There is no attempt to conduct a systematic sample of all subjects and courses. Instead, inspection is now seen as more like a ‘health check’ of a school, focusing on a few key questions about its effectiveness.
- Inspectors therefore focus on:
  - How well pupils achieve: the standards they reach and the progress they make
  - The quality of teaching and learning
  - Leadership at all levels within the school
  - Any other factors that have a bearing on pupils’ achievements.

The emphasis on evaluating leadership and management reflects a long-standing conviction by inspectors that the quality of those who lead schools is one of the most critical factors in a school’s success. It is perhaps worth dwelling briefly on the distinction between leading and managing a school. There is, of course, a strong overlap between the two concepts. However, the development of a theory and language of management over recent years has perhaps tended to downplay the importance of the ‘human’ factor in giving schools direction. Hence inspectors will seek to evaluate such factors as the following, considering the extent to which:
- Leaders provide clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school, with a relentless focus on pupils’ achievement
- Schools’ strategic and development planning reflect the goals and priorities which have been set
- Leaders inspire, motivate and influence staff and pupils
- Leaders create effective teams
- Leadership of the teaching and of the curriculum is knowledgeable and innovative
- Leaders are committed to running an inclusive and equitable school, in which each individual matters
- Leaders provide good role models for other staff and pupils.

Focusing on such leadership qualities does not detract from the importance of the processes of good (effective and efficient) management.
These include:

- Rigorous **self-evaluation** and use of its findings
- Regular **monitoring and review** of performance data, leading to appropriate action
- Thorough, sensitive **performance management** of all staff
- Commitment to **staff development**, with strong strategies for induction and professional development
- Skilled management practices in **recruiting, retaining and deploying staff**
- Management of **financial and other resources** in a way which helps the school to achieve its aims
- A focus on **best value**.

The above examples of the features of leadership and management are the focus of an Ofsted-style inspection because these relate extremely closely to the purposes and practice of school improvement planning (SIP).

Since 2002 Cambridge Education has applied the principles of Inspection to develop School and District Quality Reviews in the US which promote school and district improvement planning. We customize our model to match the requirements of the individual client. For example, our first US client was the KIPP Charter Schools and initially they very much wanted a stand-alone external School Inspection. Within two years this evolved into a School Review and Improvement Planning process with peer reviewers forming part of the review team led by a Cambridge Education consultant who subsequently worked with the school to assist them to develop a comprehensive School Improvement Plan. In Indiana the review teams not only include state personnel they also include representatives of the local community. Another example of the customization of the reviews and inspection process is that in the criteria developed in Indiana focus on readiness of the school to improve.

There have been various attempts to define the nature of SIP. The following are based on documentation from various parts of the United Kingdom:

School improvement planning is a process of review and development by the individual school. Its key purposes are:

- To improve the quality of learning and teaching, enhancing pupils’ experiences and raising their standards of attainment
- To help schools set clear goals, decide how to work towards these and check their success in achieving them.

To elaborate on these purposes, sets of key principles have been established, and it is interesting to note the extent to which a typical list of these overlaps with the central principles for inspection:

School improvement planning should:
• Consist of a systematic whole-school evaluation which identifies strengths and areas for improvement
• Be based on the best available internal and external evidence about these strengths and areas for improvement, including inspection reports and the views of members of the school themselves (head, staff, pupils)
• Incorporate views of others concerned with the school, including school governors, parents and the wider community
• Set clear priorities for improvement
• Maintain its focus on improving educational quality.

At the heart of such an approach is a school’s capacity to **undertake effective self-evaluation**. Central to this has been a far more general acceptance that **observation of lessons by trained observers** can be a real benefit to a school’s understanding of how well it is doing, not an intrusive piece of ‘espionage’ which threatens the autonomy of the teacher within his or her classroom. There are also a number of other factors which are proving crucial:

- Far more widespread understanding by principals and teachers of the nature of **effective self-evaluation**
- Improved **training in leadership and management**, not only for principals but for other staff with such responsibilities
- More, and more available, **data and information** on which schools can base their monitoring and evaluation
- Better use of such information, especially through the development of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**, to analyze assessment data and other performance measures, and to compare a school’s results with those from comparable institutions and with local and national trends
- Growing use of a range of **external performance indicators** and criteria, including inspection but also national and international quality schemes.

Through our work in North Carolina we have assisted Charlotte-Mecklenburg to develop a Cycle of Continuous School Improvement.

One reason for the increasing evidence of successful practice in SIP is that what was initially considerable skepticism about the value of such a process has given way, more and more, to an appreciation of the potential benefits.
These include:

- A greater sense of coherence in the improvements in teaching and learning
- More confidence and skill in identifying strengths and weaknesses
- The value of setting clear priorities and not simply a long 'shopping list' of desired improvements
- Better coordination of the different elements which contribute to effective learning, such as: teaching, the curriculum, pastoral provision, staffing, staff development and deployment, use of finances and resources and accommodation
- Opportunities to develop leadership at all levels
- Improved communication, with a common ‘language’ for discussing change, throughout the school
- Personal and professional development opportunities for staff, especially those responsible for leading on aspects of the SIP.

Such benefits are all the more likely if the school has the clearest possible sense of what success will look like, in terms of the quality of the school. Evidence from inspection, research and other sources has suggested a basic list of factors which make for a good school. These include:

- Effective leadership at all levels
- Committed teachers with a shared vision for the school
- Realistically high expectations among the teachers, pupils and parents
- A high quality of learning and teaching
- A clear focus on the learning experiences of the pupils and the standards which they attain
- A well-developed system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision
- A climate of aiming for continuous improvement, through effective self-evaluation and development planning
- An awareness of the need for staff to update their professional expertise through well-focused staff development.

School improvement planning is therefore most likely to be effective when:

- The school is effectively led
- The staff have analyzed carefully their strengths and weaknesses
- The SIP has the agreement and commitment of all staff
- All those involved know clearly what is expected of them to implement the SIP effectively
- The school sets priorities which focus on what its aims and purposes are, taking account of the availability of resources
- The issues selected as priorities are central to the quality of education and of pupils’ learning experiences and standards
- The school sets targets for improvement which are clear and realistic, but also challenging (not too easy), capable of being measured, and having sensible timescales and deadlines
- It is fully understood how the school’s success in achieving its aims is to be determined (“clear success criteria”)
- Procedures for monitoring, implementation and evaluation are established firmly at different levels: for the whole school, for different age-groups, for each subject, department and course, for individual teachers and students.

In addition to effective leadership (but inseparable from it) is the question of the full inclusion of staff – teachers and other supporting staff. Since the centre of the process is the quality of teaching and learning, staff should:
- Understand the planning process
- Have a sense of ‘ownership’ of it
- Focus securely on pupils’ attainments and experiences, and hence on the vital contribution of classroom practice
- Engage in appropriate professional development
- Be prepared if necessary to change their approaches to teaching and learning.

The School Improvement Planning Process includes:

Whole School Review

Identification of Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Acknowledging/maintaining the strengths

Defining priority areas for improvement

Creating a School Improvement Plan based on the identified priorities

Action planning, including monitoring and evaluating, to address the areas for improvement and bring about improvements in learning and teaching.

The action planning process should include the:

- Improvement intended in learning outcomes
- Action to be taken to cause the improvement
- Strategies for monitoring and evaluating the implementation and the intended improvements
- Success criteria to be used to evaluate improvement
- Staff who will be involved
- The time the process will take;
- The resources required, including staff development needs.
It follows from the above approach that an effective plan will include the following elements:

- Priorities and targets
- A timescale for each aspect of the plan
- Costings
- Training implications
- Success criteria
- Named staff with responsibilities.

One document giving guidance on planning rightly stressed that there is a great danger that plans become too long, too cumbersome and too complicated: “A school improvement plan need not be an extensive document. Indeed, some schools have found that the more extensive the plan, the further it may remain from day-to-day practice in the classroom; yet it is the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom, and the pupils’ attainments, which should lie at the heart of every school’s improvement plan.”

It is clearly helpful to have in mind a sense of the essential stages in any plan, and the following list corresponds with approaches widely adopted:

**Review:**
*How well are we doing? What are our strengths and areas for improvement?*

**Identifying priority areas for improvement:**
*What are our priorities for improvement? What do we need to achieve?*

**Action Planning:**
*What must we do to bring about the desired improvements?*

**Implementation:**
*How do we carry out the plan to bring about these improvements?*

**Evaluation:**
*How do we measure success?*

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that some of the key questions for all those undertaking accountability – inspection – reviews and improvement are concerned with the sources of *expertise, support* and *facilitation* which can be of greatest value in ensuring that this is a process characterized by *rigor*, informed by *evidence* and maintaining the sharpest possible focus on *what works in practice*. It is right that many of these sources must be internal to the school: if not, then that overworked but still vital concept of ‘ownership’ will be in jeopardy: over-dependence on those outside the school can be a recipe for disaster. But so can over-dependence on the school’s internal resources.

Where improvement planning goes wrong, it is often because those implementing the plan are not as well informed as they need to be on the *best practice to emulate*. This can result in a blinkered isolationism; and it can lead to a failure to set sufficiently challenging targets, perpetuating a climate of *low expectation* and *impoverished aspiration*. Too many schools and too many teachers within them still set standards which are insufficiently demanding. They may well do this for what they may see as worthy motives: to avoid pitching their work unrealistically high, and to make proper allowance for educational disadvantage. But such legitimate concerns can deflate teachers’ expectations, for example because they lack the *vision* – and the *evidence* – of what similar pupils in other schools can achieve.
One of the special privileges of the work of an inspector, especially one with a geographically wide-ranging remit, is the opportunity to see at first-hand what really works – often in ways which might run quite counter to the inspector’s own expectations and preferred methods. Another is the ability to set appropriately demanding standards by comparing what is achieved by different pupils in different schools: to benchmark standards. A third is the subtle but by no means mysterious set of skills required to undertake effective classroom observation. And finally it is the opportunity – indeed, the need – to take the overview, by looking at how all the parts inter-relate and evaluating the impact of leadership, at all levels, on the progress of the learners. This is a skill set which, I would argue, is not required only by inspectors. The process of school improvement planning, as described above, seems to me to make it equally imperative for administrators and, to a perhaps less developed degree, for all staff in a school.

Effective school improvement planning is marked by vision and by intelligent use of evidence. Close partnership is needed between those in the school and sources of external advice – perhaps especially from those who have worked in a variety of schools and localities. Cambridge Education has found that, when a member of the external review team works directly with a school, immediately after the review, to provide support and challenge to the school leadership team, the resulting school improvement plan tends to be far more relevant and is focused on the four or five key actions which will actively promote student learning and attainment. This can ensure that schools are not excessively independent, ignoring the value of external support, nor too dependent on others for the planning to be rooted in the school’s own culture. Instead, there should be a healthy form of inter-dependence in which professional partners together take forward their planning. They will need to do so with rigorous, sensitive methods of evaluation and a clear-sighted and far-sighted sense of what they wish to achieve, how to achieve it, and how to know that they have done so.
## School Quality Review Models

1. Freestanding Quality Review

| Self-evaluation form | Day 1 On-site Review | Day 2 On-site Review | School Report within 20 days |

2. Quality Review and student survey

| Tripod student and staff survey | Self-evaluation form | Day 1 On-site Review | Day 2 On-site Review | School Report within 20 days |

3. Quality Review and School Improvement Action Planning Day

| Self-evaluation form | Day 1 On-site Review | Day 2 On-site Review | Day 3 School Improvement Action Planning | School Report within 20 days |

4. Quality Review and student survey School Improvement Action Planning Day

| Tripod student and staff survey | Self-evaluation form | Day 1 On-site Review | Day 2 On-site Review | Day 3 School Improvement Action Planning | School Report within 20 days |

5. Quality Reviews and Comprehensive School Improvement Program

| Tripod student and staff survey | Self-evaluation form | Day 1 On-site Review | Day 2 On-site Review | Day 3 School Improvement Action Planning | School Report within 20 days | 20-30 days | CSIP Intervention with 1:1 coach |

## District Quality Review Models

**Stage 1.** School Quality Reviews – sample number of district schools (ideally minimum of 6 schools 3 elementary 2 middle 1 high school)

**Stage 2.** District Review – review team (usually at least 3 consultants for week)

**Stage 3.** Meta-analysis report key findings and recommendations
# Appendix B: Sample Quality Review Criteria

## Indiana State Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL RATING</th>
<th>Finding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Unacceptable</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Poor</td>
<td>Minimal evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Fair</td>
<td>Present, though limited and/or inconsistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Acceptable</td>
<td>Routine and consistent</td>
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</table>

## 1 Readiness to Learn

### 1.1: Safety, Discipline, and Engagement

**Is the school culture environment safe and conducive to learning?**

- **1.1a** students are effectively encouraged to behave well, relate well to others and to have positive attitudes toward learning.
- **1.1b** classrooms and hallways provide an attractive and stimulating environment that fosters high academic and personal expectations.
- **1.1c** school routines and rules are implemented consistently and communicated clearly to students, parents and staff.
- **1.1d** the school has effective measures for promoting good attendance and eliminating truancy and tardiness.

**Do students feel secure and inspired to learn?**

- **1.1e** a robust core program ensures that students develop key learning and personal skills.
- **1.1f** the school provides a well-rounded curriculum and enrichment activities add interest and relevance.
- **1.1g** career education and personal goal setting are used to raise student aspirations and motivation.

### 1.2: Action Against Adversity

**Does the school directly address students’ poverty-driven deficits?**

- **1.2a** the school knows and understands the personal as well as academic needs of the students in order to address the effects of students’ poverty head-on.
- **1.2b** the school addresses the needs of families so that they can better support student learning.
- **1.2c** The school develops students’ skills, behaviors and values that enable them to effectively advocate for themselves.

### 1.3: Close Student-Adult Relationships

**Do students have positive and enduring mentor/teacher relationships?**

- **1.3a** the school works with parents to build positive relationships and to engage them as partners in their children’s learning.
- **1.3b** the school is successful in implementing a variety of strategies specifically designed to promote a sense of connection between students and adults.
### 2 Readiness to Teach

#### 2.1: Shared Responsibility for Achievement

**Does the school have a strong organizational culture, characterized by trust, respect and mutual responsibility?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>1-Unacceptable</th>
<th>2-Poor</th>
<th>3-Fair</th>
<th>4-Acceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1a</strong> the principal ensures that there is a strong accountability for student achievement throughout the school</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>Minimal evidence</td>
<td>Present, though limited and/or inconsistent</td>
<td>Routine and consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1b</strong> the staff feel deep accountability and a missionary zeal for student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.1c</strong> a shared commitment to a vision of the school which includes challenging goals for all students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.1d</strong> the school corporation drives the accountability agenda.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.2: Personalization of Instruction

**Are diagnostic assessments used frequently and accurately to inform instructional decisions and promote student learning?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3-Fair</th>
<th>4-Acceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2a</strong> the school utilizes a coherent system to provide detailed tracking and analysis of assessment results.</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>Minimal evidence</td>
<td>Present, though limited and/or inconsistent</td>
<td>Routine and consistent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.2b</strong> teachers use data gathered from multiple assessments to plan instruction and activities that match the learning needs of students.</td>
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<td><strong>2.2c</strong> teachers give feedback to students, involve them in the assessment of their work and in the setting of achievement goals.</td>
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<td><strong>2.2d</strong> the schedule is used flexibly to ensure that individual student needs are met effectively.</td>
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<td><strong>2.2e</strong> the overall impact of planning, instruction and assessment leads to effective student learning.</td>
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#### 2.3: Professional Teaching Culture

**Does the professional culture promote faculty and staff participation, collaboration and training to enhance student learning?**

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3a</strong> the faculty works together, incessantly and naturally to help each other improve their practice.</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>Minimal evidence</td>
<td>Present, though limited and/or inconsistent</td>
<td>Routine and consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3b</strong> the principal uses classroom observation and the analysis of learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning.</td>
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<td><strong>2.3c</strong> professional development is job-embedded and directly linked to changing instructional practice in order to improve student achievement.</td>
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### SCHOOL RATING

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</tr>
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</table>

### 3 Resource Authority

#### 3.1: Resource Authority

**Does the principal have the freedom to make streamlined, mission-driven decisions regarding people, time, money, and program?**

- **3.1a** the principal has the authority to select and assign staff to positions in the school without regard to seniority.
- **3.1b** the school has developed adequate human resource systems.
- **3.1c** the principal has the authority to implement controversial yet innovative practices.
- **3.1d** the school corporation enables the principal to have the freedom to make decisions.

#### 3.2: Resource Ingenuity

**Is the principal adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships?**

- **3.2a** external partnerships have been strategically developed to engender academic improvement.
- **3.2b** the community is encouraged to participate in the decision making and improvement work of the school.
- **3.2c** the principal promotes resourcefulness and ingenuity in order to meet student needs.
- **3.2d** the school corporation has district-wide structures and strategies to maximize external resources.

#### 3.3: Agility in the Face of Turbulence

**Is the principal flexible and inventive in responding to conflicts and challenges?**

- **3.3a** the principal has the capacity to ensure school improvement.
- **3.3b** the principal provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.
- **3.3c** decisions are made, and plans developed on the basis of rigorous monitoring and evaluation.
- **3.3d** key faculty members have the capacity to support the work that is needed.
- **3.3e** the principal reshapes and incorporates local projects and special initiatives to meet students' needs.
- **3.3f** the school corporation has the capacity to drive school improvement initiatives.
- **3.3g** the school corporation supports and enables flexibility and inventiveness within the school.

### RATING DESCRIPTION

Using the School Quality Rubric, the school is rated on a 1-4 scale in each of the three domains. The scale is described below:

1. **Red= Unacceptable** The school shows no attempt to meet the standard
2. **Orange= Poor** The school has made minimal progress towards the standard
3. **Yellow= Fair** The school is making progress towards the standard
4. **Green= Acceptable** The school meets the standard

The goal is that the school receive a rating of 4 (GREEN) for the school to be considered as performing that element to an acceptable level. The 4 rating indicates the school meets the standard.
### A Coherent District Evaluation Framework

The following sample District Evaluation framework, which is based on our work in US and the UK, has six main strands with 18 sub-criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Securing Positive Outcomes for Students</th>
<th>Support for Student Learning</th>
<th>Leadership and Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Academic Achievement</td>
<td>Learning and teaching</td>
<td>Vision and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Academic Progress</td>
<td>The Curriculum</td>
<td>Strategic Action Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Personal Development</td>
<td>Assessments</td>
<td>District Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of Human and Fiscal Resources</td>
<td>Operational Systems</td>
<td>Engages Stakeholders and evaluates their Satisfaction with its work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Information Technology &amp; Data Support</td>
<td>Internal Stakeholder Engagement and Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal Resources</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>External Stakeholder Engagement and Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Political and policy alignment and engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example of how we work with clients to adapt and modify this generic framework is the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction – Comprehensive Needs Analysis – District Dimensions Framework.
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction - Comprehensive Needs Analysis - District Dimensions

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment has been designed to analyze district level information framed by five over-arching dimensions. Guiding questions address 16 supporting sub-dimensions and are designed to facilitate the identification of root causes in areas where a district program may have identified needs. The district team must review artifacts and other supporting evidence to provide an accurate narrative analysis addressing each sub-dimension. The dimensions, sub-dimensions, and samples of supporting evidence are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Sub-dimension</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Excellence and Alignment</td>
<td>1. High expectations for all staff and students</td>
<td>• District comprehensive plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Curriculum and instructional alignment</td>
<td>• Agendas and minutes of leadership meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Systems supporting student success</td>
<td>• District calendar, schedules and policies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Press/articles on local education politics</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Capacity</td>
<td>4. Strategic Planning, Mission, &amp; Vision</td>
<td>• Interviews with district leaderships / principals / board members / staff interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Distributed leadership and collaboration</td>
<td>• Staff retention rates for the past 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Monitoring Instruction in Schools</td>
<td>• School board minutes / district calendar, schedules and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Agendas and minutes from administrative meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Press/articles on local education politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Capacity</td>
<td>7. Central office staff capacity</td>
<td>• Professional development schedule/list / organizational Chart</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Consistency and sustainability of district-wide</td>
<td>• Mentorship programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professional development</td>
<td>• Administrator/staff interviews</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Principal evaluation forms</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Central office classified vs. certified personnel</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Longevity of principals and central office staff by specific assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and Operational Effectiveness</td>
<td>9. Talent recruitment and retention: Central</td>
<td>• District recruitment plan / DSSF plan and spend / District plan regarding data analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>office staff</td>
<td>• Personnel support programs / mentoring programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Talent recruitment and retention: Principals</td>
<td>• Interviews with school and district personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Talent recruitment and retention: Teachers</td>
<td>• Incentives for teachers and administrators to work in underperforming schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Resource allocation to schools</td>
<td>• Student assignment plans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. Student assignment policies and protocol</td>
<td>• District pay scales and policies / Teacher supplement charts and extra-pay policies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Facilities and technology</td>
<td>• Schedule/spend for school repairs / Use of modular classrooms</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• List of available instructional technology options</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families and Community</td>
<td>15. Parent engagement</td>
<td>• List of after-school programs and partners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Community engagement</td>
<td>• Parent organizations, activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• District plan, policies for parent involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• District plan, policies for partnerships with community businesses and non-profit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Website</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Internal interviews</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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