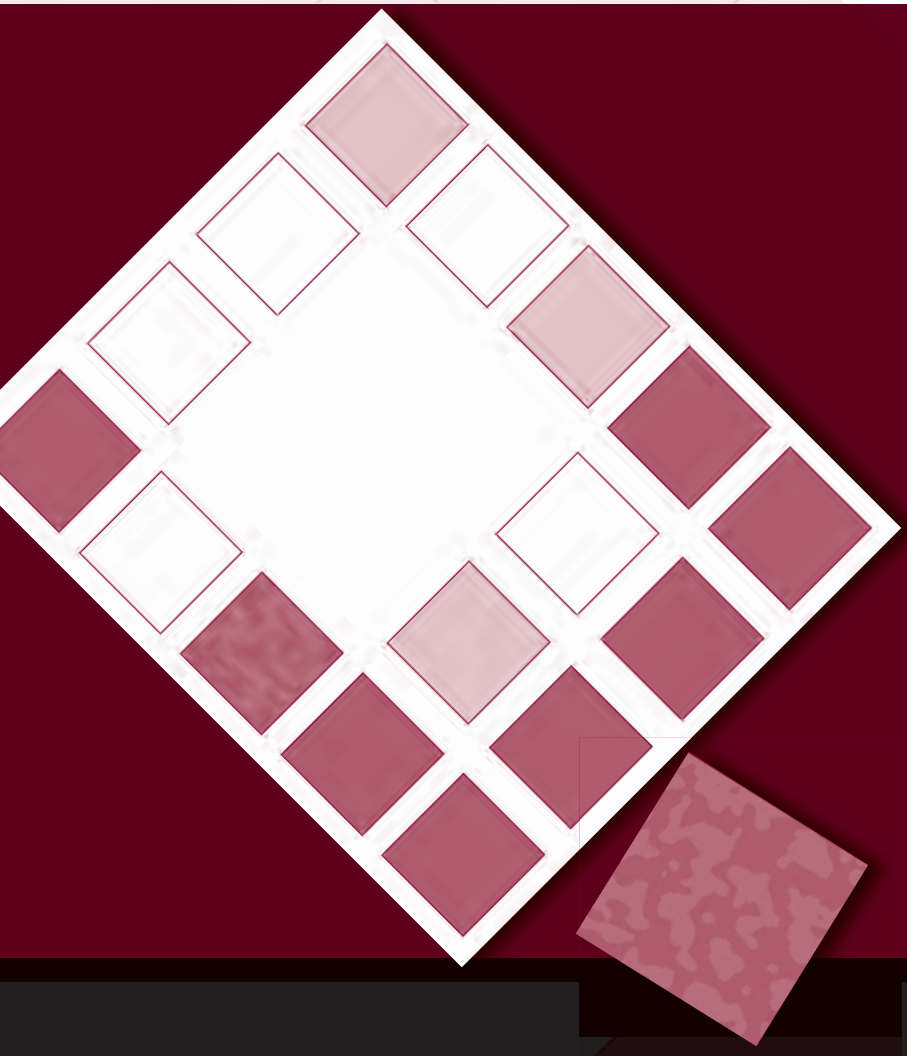
Department of
Education
and Training

The School Improvement and Accountability Framework



TITLE: School improvement and accountability framework

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Introduction

Review of the School Accountability Framework

The *School Accountability Framework* (2002) and supplementary documentation, including the *School Review Framework* (2005), were extensively reviewed in 2006 and 2007. The review had three main components:

- an independent, external evaluation of the 2002 *School Accountability Framework*
- investigation of international and national practices and trends relating to school accountability
- stakeholder consultation relating to the findings of the evaluation, international and national research and possible future directions.

The key findings from the three components of the review have guided the development of the *School Improvement and Accountability Policy* and this supporting framework.

Purpose

The purpose of the School Improvement and Accountability Framework is to support the *School Improvement and Accountability Policy* by describing the conceptual model that underpins the policy and offering advice about implementation that is more integrated and holistic.

The *School Improvement and Accountability Framework* directly supports and is integral to the *Classroom First Strategy and the Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011*.

Support for the School Improvement and Accountability Policy

The *School Improvement and Accountability Policy* and this framework address the same three fundamental accountability questions:

- What are we seeking to achieve?
- How well are we doing?
- How can we improve?

Both the policy and the framework are constructed using the same set of principles that seek to ensure that school improvement and accountability is:

- coherent and manageable for schools
- improvement focused
- able to engender community confidence in public schools

- linked to Performance Management
- situated within a wider accountability and compliance context
- reciprocal, such that governments, central office, district offices, parents and students all share a responsibility to provide the means, context and support for schools to maximise student outcomes.

School Improvement and Accountability Policy

Principals are accountable to the Director Schools for the performance of their school and teachers are accountable to the principal for the progress of their students.

Principals, in collaboration with school staff are required to undertake self-assessment that results in judgements about the standards of student achievement and the effectiveness of school processes in maximising student achievement.

Principals, in collaboration with school staff are required to undertake school planning processes that include the development of a School Plan, operational planning and classroom planning.

Principals, in collaboration with school staff are required to publish annually a School Report that describes the school's performance and report on legislative and designated policy and program requirements.

Principals, in collaboration with school staff are required to participate in and actively respond to school review processes including Standards Reviews and, as required, reviews conducted by the Expert Review Group.

The *School Improvement and Accountability Policy* can be viewed, downloaded or printed from the Our Policies link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au.

The School Improvement and Accountability Framework – conceptual model

The *School Improvement and Accountability Framework* is structured around the following conceptual model.

Components of the School Improvement and Accountability Framework

Conceptual model

The conceptual model that underpins the School Improvement and Accountability Framework has five components.

Successful students are at the core of school improvement and accountability with all other components connected to and focused on the standards of student achievement.

The **school improvement cycle**, where schools assess their performance, plan for improvement and act on their plans, is a continuous process that is central to effective school improvement and accountability.

School **operations** include both pre-requisites for successful students – teaching and learning environment; and enablers of successful students – resources, leadership and relationships.

Arising from these components, schools **report** at particular points in time about their performance.

Schools also participate in **school review** processes that evaluate school effectiveness and provide feedback on how schools might improve their performance.

Successful students

The standards of student achievement, both academic and non-academic, are the central focus of school improvement and accountability. Schools are expected to seek continuous improvement of student achievement and are accountable for their effectiveness in doing so.

While schools cannot be held accountable for contextual factors that are outside their control, they are expected to demonstrate that every effort has been made to overcome contextual factors so that students receive the highest quality educational instruction.

All school operations and processes must ultimately be evaluated in relation to their impact on student achievement.

Data on academic student achievement comes from two sources - teacher judgements and systemic testing. It is expected that schools will use both.

For teacher judgements to be used with confidence it is important that these judgements are consistent, both within and between schools. Reference to teacher judgements should be accompanied by information about the mechanisms and processes undertaken to ensure consistency.

State and national test data is most effectively used to identify cohort trends and characteristics, to moderate teacher judgements, to guide classroom planning and to gain an overview of school performance.

Non-academic achievement relates to the development of appropriate behaviour, including social and emotional learning and the adoption of the core shared values described in the *Curriculum Framework*.

Students with intellectual disabilities

It is understood that for some students with intellectual disabilities, mapping their performance and progress in the same ways as for other students may not be meaningful.

It is important nevertheless, that the performance and progress of all students should be monitored, recorded and reported.

Personalised learning plans are developed in consultation with parents/caregivers and set learning goals appropriate to the student's needs. Therefore, judgements about the standards of student achievement, both academic and non-academic, may be measured by the extent to which goals in personalised learning plans are achieved.

For personalised learning plans to be the basis of judgements about student achievement they must be endorsed by the principal as appropriate to the needs of the student; achievable but sufficiently challenging to maximise student achievement; and consistent with acknowledged good practice.

Further information on the following topics will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *academic student achievement*
- *non-academic student achievement*
- *value-adding.*

School improvement cycle

The school improvement cycle has three components. Schools:

- **assess** data and other evidence related to student achievement and school operations;
- **plan** to improve the standards of student achievement; and
- **act** to implement planned strategies.

Because the school improvement cycle is an ongoing process, the three components should be seen as dynamic and interactive. While assessment leads logically to planning and planning logically to implementation, continuous self-assessment recognises that the act of implementation may cause planning decisions to be modified and may re-focus self-assessment questions.

To foster an effective school improvement cycle, schools need to answer the following questions:

- What are our students achieving (both academic and non-academic)?
- Are these achievements good enough (given our context)?
- What areas should be the focus for improvement?
- What will we do to improve in these focus areas?
- How will we know if we have been effective in improving student achievement?

School self assessment

Self-assessment is fundamental to establishing an effective school improvement cycle. Schools should reflect on and evaluate their performance in order to plan for and enact improvement. They are required to undertake self-assessment that results in verifiable judgements about student achievement.

Schools assess using a systematic, continuous and comprehensive process that focuses on student performance and progress. This involves gathering and analysing data and other evidence and making judgements about the standards of student achievement and the effectiveness of school processes and operations.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *School self-assessment.*

School planning

Schools plan by making evidence-driven decisions about the actions required to maximise student achievement. Schools should consider:

- What could be done to address the identified need?
- What does education research tell us about effective ways of addressing the identified need?
- Which strategies can be realistically implemented in our school context?

School planning responds to student and community needs, addresses policy requirements, accommodates departmental imperatives and engages all school staff.

The **School Plan** is a public document that provides a direction-setting, strategic overview for the school. This plan must be developed in consultation with the School Council and typically spans a number of years.

School Plans should be succinct, but must include objectives, priorities, improvement targets, major strategies (particularly whole-school strategies), resources, reference to systemic policies and directions, evaluation measures and a timeframe, including a provision for annual review.

In addition, School Plans may include beliefs and values and non-priority areas to be sustained.

Schools are expected to operationalise their School Plan in ways that best suit the school's context. Schools typically do this by developing, for example, learning area, faculty, sub-school or project plans. Such plans are internal to the school and detail how the School Plan will be implemented in that school year.

Classroom planning is the responsibility of teachers and should be aligned to school planning. This is monitored through performance management.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *School Planning.*

Action/implementation

Schools act by executing their plan. They are accountable for ensuring that plans are implemented and then evaluated for their effectiveness in terms of student achievement.

It is not sufficient for schools to report that a planned strategy was implemented. A process of reflection, review and evaluation is expected so that schools can judge the effectiveness of the implementation strategies.

It is recognised that some strategies may take longer to show improved student achievement than the typical school planning cycle. In such cases, the strategy should continue to be monitored for its effect on student achievement. To do this, schools may need to develop specific milestones that would provide interim evidence that the strategy is on course and should be continued. These milestones might be derived from system endorsed tools such as *First Steps*, Literacy and Numeracy Net, ESL/ESD Progress Map, K/PP Profile or from teacher developed or commercial tools.

School operations

School operations are those processes and procedures that enable the standards of student achievement to improve.

There are five areas of focus for effective school operations:

- teaching
- learning environment
- leadership
- resources
- relationships.

Schools are expected to monitor the effectiveness of these areas in relation to student achievement.

High quality **teaching** is a pre-requisite for improving student achievement. It is therefore the responsibility of schools, with system support, to develop teachers with a purposeful pedagogy that challenges but supports students and connects to their experience, stage of development and background.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *Quality teaching.*

A **learning environment** that is safe, caring and inclusive is also a pre-requisite for improving the standards of student achievement. It is the responsibility of schools, with system support, to establish a learning environment where students feel safe, where student behaviour is well managed, where pastoral care programs promote student wellbeing and where attendance, retention and engagement are priorities.

Attendance and behaviour data (including suspension and exclusion data) will be important indicators of the health of the learning environment.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *Effective learning environment.*

School **leadership** is an important enabler of improved student achievement. Leaders who focus on teacher pedagogy and practice are likely to have the greatest impact on student achievement. By encouraging expert teachers to operate collaboratively and share their skills and understandings, good school leaders nurture, develop and expand quality teaching in the school.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *Effective leadership.*

The strategic deployment of school **resources** is another important enabler of improved student achievement. This will be measured by the extent to which resources are targeted, through school improvement planning, to maximise student achievement.

It is expected that school resources are managed in accordance with legislative and policy imperatives. This is subject to audit processes and reports identifying deficiencies will be addressed through performance management.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *Compliance with financial legislation and policy.*

Building strong internal and external **relationships** is another enabler of improved student achievement.

Effective internal relationships between staff members and between staff and students are important in supporting improved student achievement because they facilitate the alignment of school goals and the capacity to enact whole-school approaches and consistent practice.

Public schools are part of the community in which they are located and because they provide a crucial service to that community it is both a requirement and advantageous for schools to build a strong relationship with their community capable of responding to local needs and shaping a sense of pride in the school.

Community relationships are not limited to parents. Local government, business, other educational institutions, and government and non-government agencies can all be important partners with schools.

Further information on the following topic will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *Effective relationships.*

School reporting

The *School Improvement and Accountability Policy* requires that schools publish annually a School Report that describes the school's performance and report on legislative and designated policy and program requirements.

The **School Report** provides the community with information about school performance. It gives parents and other members of the community a clear sense of how students in the school are progressing and what is being done to maximise student achievement.

It is recognised that the School Report may also serve as a vehicle for promoting the school. This will influence the design and presentation but should not subvert the primary purpose, which is to report on school performance.

The School Report should be succinct and written with a clear sense of communicating with the local community. It must include contextualised information about student achievement, progress on identified priorities, the school budget, Australian Government reporting requirements; and highlights of the school year.

Information already posted on *Schools Online*, such as the school overview, student number trends, school priorities and programs may be referred to but need not be included in the School Report.

The School Report is published in a form best suited to the parents and the local community. It is also submitted for electronic publication on *Schools Online.*

It is also recognised that parents will judge the quality of education through a range of interactions with the school. These include both formal and informal communications, and activities such as parent nights, assemblies, open days, fetes and school involvement in community events and activities.

Of the various interactions between parents and teachers, the ways that information about the progress of their children is communicated is an important element of accountability. This includes student reports and the promptness with which poor performance or poor behaviour is communicated and addressed.

The *Reporting Requirements of Schools* is a collation of legislative, policy and program reporting requirements in each school year. It includes mandated reporting requirements arising from Australian Government and State legislation, departmental policies and procedures and key departmental programs.

All listed *Reporting Requirements of Schools* are components of school accountability and may become the subject of performance management for school principals.

Further information on the following topics will be made progressively available, through the Evaluation and Accountability link on the Department of Education and Training website at det.wa.edu.au :

- *School Reports*
- *Reporting Requirements of Schools*
- *Australian Government reporting requirements.*

School Review

The Directors Schools and the Expert Review Group are responsible for reviewing schools.

Directors Schools are expected to develop a close professional relationship with their schools through a range of interactions. The most formal of these are principals' performance management and the conduct of a Standards Review.

Standards Review

The Standards Review is one part of a suite of activity around quality assurance for schools. The other elements are: the school's self assessment; school planning; the annual School Report; performance management of principals; and meeting legislative and policy compliance requirements including audit, *Reporting Requirements of Schools* and compliance surveys.

The Standards Review will focus on standards of student achievement - academic and non-academic.

The Standards Review will require schools to present to their Director Schools evidence, analysis and judgements related to the standards of student achievement. This includes longitudinal, comparative and sub-group data from system testing and other school-generated information on student achievement.

As part of the self-assessment process, each school will make a judgement about whether the level of academic and non-academic performance is up to expectations given their particular context.

The fundamental question for a Standards Review is whether the standards being achieved by the students in the school are acceptable or not.

There are two possible outcomes of a Standards Review:

- The Director Schools is satisfied that the standards of student achievement are within or above the range of reasonable expectation given the context of the school. In such instances the Director Schools will negotiate the timing of the next Standards Review with the principal.
- The Director Schools has concerns about the standards of student achievement given the school context. In such instances the Director Schools will undertake further investigation to establish whether that concern is justified and what support and intervention, if any, is required.

The key accountability questions for the *Standards Review* are:

- Does the school have comprehensive data on student achievement?
- Have the data been analysed appropriately?
- Are school judgements about the standards of student achievement reasonable and verifiable?
- Are the standards of student achievement good enough?

Directors Schools will, through a range of other professional interactions, also work with schools to answer to the following accountability questions.

- Are planned strategies appropriate to the identified need?
- Does the School Plan have an evaluation component that will allow the school to judge the effectiveness of strategies?
- Does the school have in place reporting processes, including a School Report, that effectively communicate school accountability?
- Is the school improvement cycle embedded in school practice?

The Expert Review Group

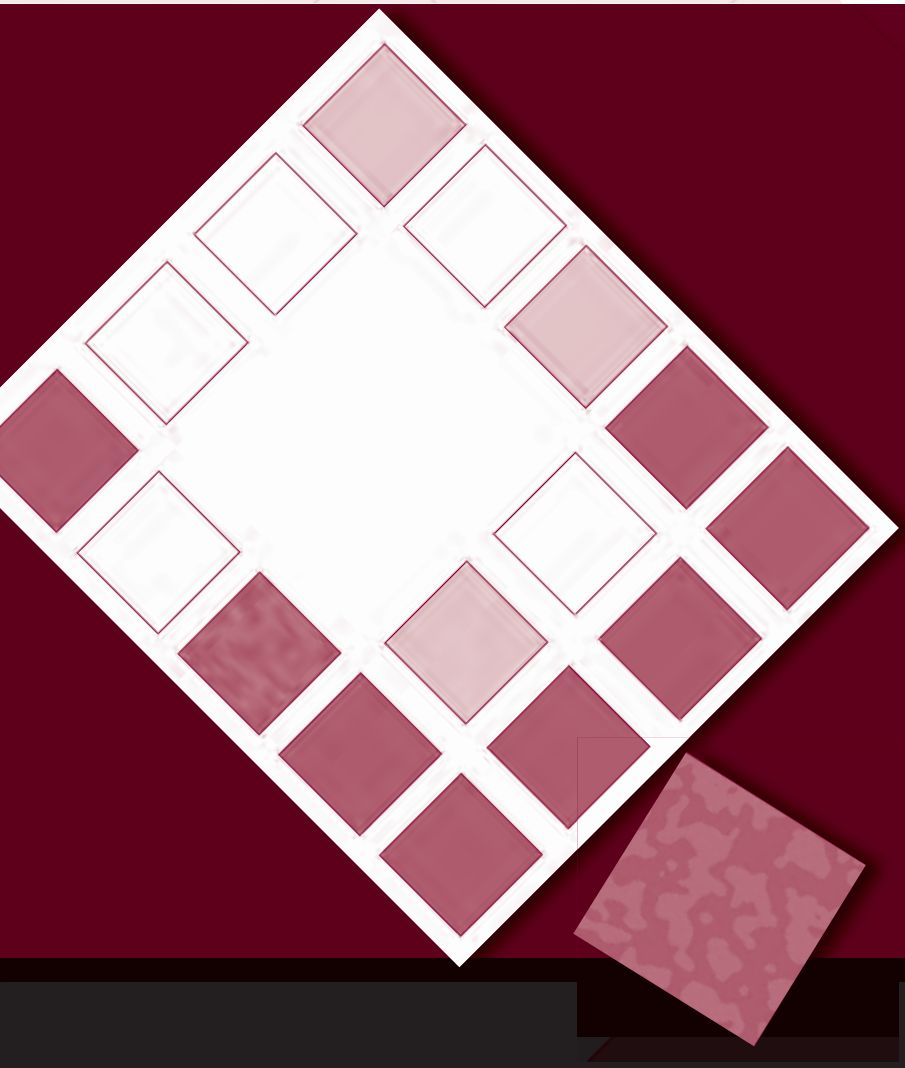
The Expert Review Group is responsible to the Director General for conducting four types of school review:

- identified schools whose performance raises concern
- validation reviews of the Standards Review process
- schools with identified areas of exemplary practice
- reviews of schools at the direction of the Minister or Director General.

For identified schools whose performance raises concern, in addition to a focus on the standards of student achievement, the review team, under the leadership of the Expert Review Group, will closely interrogate the effectiveness of school self-assessment and improvement processes and school operations.

The review team will develop a review report which outlines their findings and provides a set of prescribed improvement strategies. Findings of the review will be discussed with the school principal and Director Schools prior to finalisation. The report will be presented to the Director General for approval and a summary of the report will be made publicly available.

Directors Schools will be responsible for approving the school's intervention plans, in line with the Expert Review Group strategies, then supporting and monitoring the success of the implementation of these intervention plans.



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