

# School Self-Evaluation Support Materials

Support materials for the school self-evaluation team



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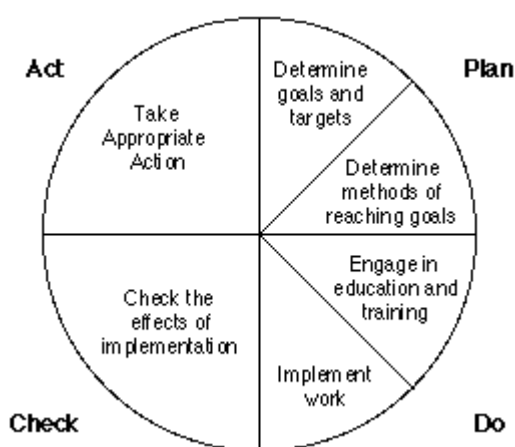
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## 1. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION (SSE)

School self-evaluation is the planned process of gaining feedback and engaging the wider school community in reflecting upon what the school is doing to improve student learning outcomes. Effective schools continually reflect on their performance in improving student learning outcomes. The school self-evaluation process is a structured way of reflecting on school targets, school planning and strategies.

## 2. PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT (PDCA) OR PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT (PDSA)

This cycle of "Plan - Do - Check - Act" or "Plan - Do - Study - Act" is also known as the Control Circle, or PDCA or PDSA. PDCA was made popular by Dr. W. Edwards Deming, who is considered by many to be the father of modern quality control. Deming is famous for improving Japanese industry and businesses through this model of quality improvement to the level they are at today.



**Figure 2: PDCA / PDSA Cycle**  
(Ref: Ishikawa, K, (Lu, DJ trans.) 1985, *What is Total Quality Control?*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.)

*The key aspect of the Do component is the skilling of staff to implement the plan.*  
<http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/dstools/process/pdca.html>

## 3. WHY DO SCHOOLS NEED TO SELF-EVALUATE?

### 1. Improvement

The purpose of evaluation is to improve what we do. It is a key element of continuous school improvement.

- It is the basis for informed planning and decision making.
- It identifies the achievements to date.
- It enables schools to decide where to go next.
- It leads to the implementation of sustained change.
- It helps to build the internal capacity of a school to change and improve.

### 2. Accountability

Through the evaluation process, schools demonstrate they are accountable for their effectiveness to the local community, the wider community and Educational Authorities.

### **3. Learning**

Evaluation is directed towards improving student learning outcomes. This requires staff learning and results in organisational improvement.

### **4. Development**

Participation in evaluation allows the school to develop knowledge and understanding of evaluation methodology. It develops the capacity to objectively analyse current practices and strategically plan for improvement.

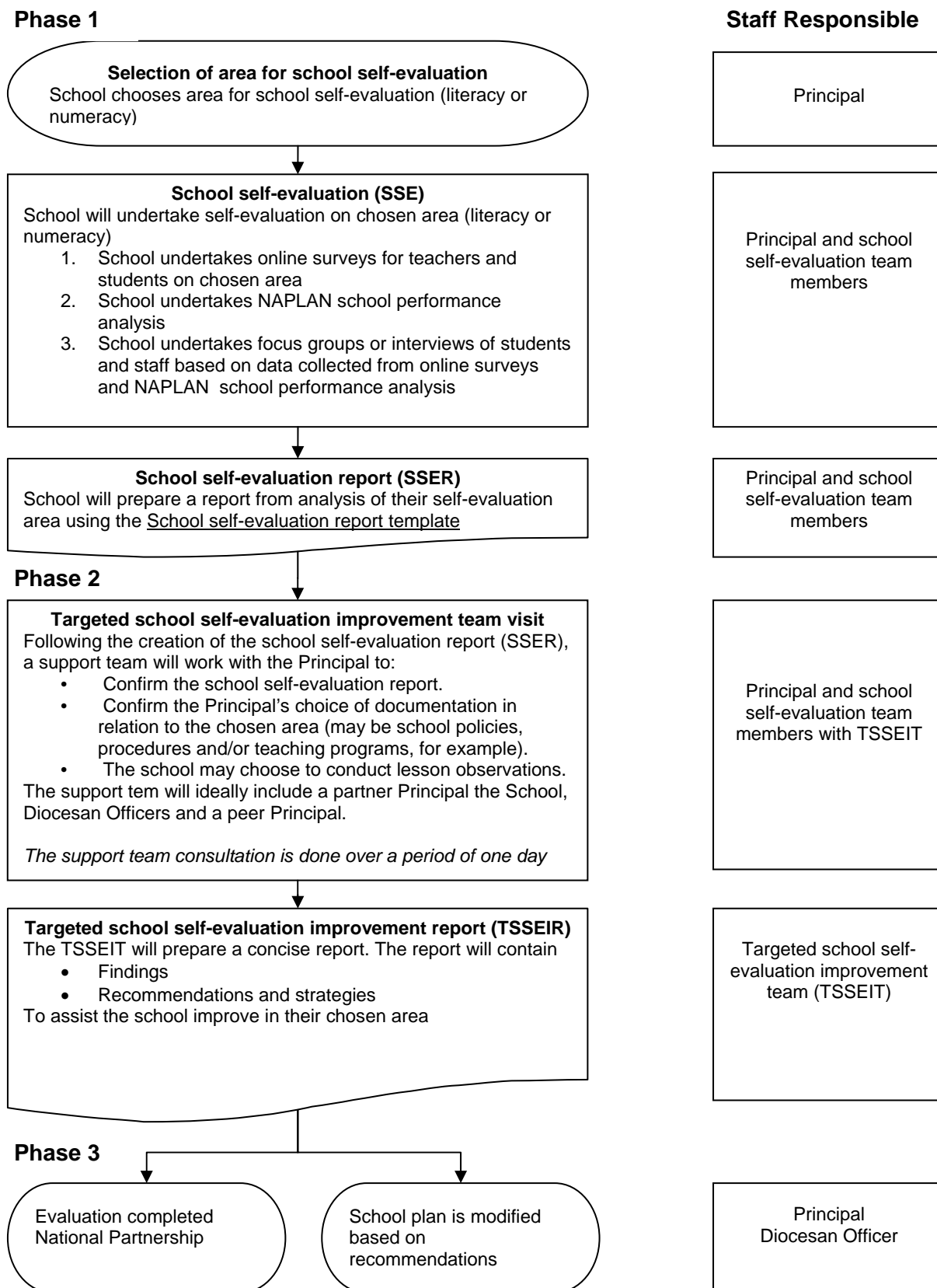
### **5. Acknowledgement**

Evaluation provides schools with the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the achievements of students, staff and the community. This can be achieved through open reporting in the annual school report and in a range of ways at the school level, including:

- school publications and newsletters
- community meetings
- Parents meetings
- School Council meetings.

## 4. PROCESS FOR SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

### Flowchart of the school self-evaluation process



## **5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION TEAM**

### **Forming the school self-evaluation team (SSET)**

The Principal needs to form the School Self Evaluation Team (SSET). In small schools the Principal is a member of the team. In larger schools a member of the school executive may be the leader of the team with input from the Principal. Other members of the SSET should include, staff, students and parents.

### **Staff**

Having staff including teachers, school administration and executive staff is essential. They provide context of the school environment to other members of the SSET. Staff members also have access to statistical data through the School Measurement and Assessment Reporting Toolkit (SMART). In a Central School it is essential that a member from the Primary department and a member from the Secondary department are on SSET.

### **Parents and Community**

While there is no requirement to have representatives from the wider school community it is logical to do so. Any parents or school community members can be invited to be on the SSET.

### **Students**

In Secondary schools student representation should be encouraged. The School Representative Council (SRC) or School Captains have the responsibility of contributing to the Annual School Report (ASR) in the student representatives' message.

### **External support**

Schools are encouraged to have an external member of the SSET. National Partnership Program Facilitators can assist schools in SSET. For some schools, particularly those with close links to other schools, a colleague Principal or another member of staff could be on the SSET.

### **Factors to consider in planning SSET meetings**

The timing of meetings may be difficult to arrange with the variety of people on the SSET. Parents may find it difficult to come to meetings during school hours. The running of a school group that meets during the day and a parent/community group that meets in the evening may overcome this. It is important that decisions are made with consultation. It may require a staff member to attend both meetings to ensure effective flow of information.

External support members may be too far away to attend meetings. The use of technology such as videoconferencing, email or teleconferencing may be of assistance..

### **The Evaluation Process**

The evaluation process needs to be:

- manageable within existing resources
- specific, achievable and sustainable
- collaboratively developed
- participative
- cyclical to embrace all key elements of the curriculum, school policies, practices and processes.

The evaluation process includes:

- the rationale for undertaking the evaluation
- the focus areas for the evaluation
- the collection of benchmark data which provides an opportunity to measure the success of program initiatives
- the use of relevant quantitative and qualitative data

- the use of a range of tools
- triangulation by using a variety of sources
- the aggregation, disaggregation, synthesis and analysis of data.

The outcome of the evaluation includes:

- a set of findings and conclusions
- a set of recommendations
- improvement targets which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-framed
- a succinct report identifying background, findings and future directions
- an action plan for implementation.

The action plan for conducting a school self-evaluation will either modify the school improvement plan or be a focused action plan around a particular area within the school that requires improvement.

### **Evaluations tools used in the school self-evaluation**

The following is a list of tools that will be used by the school self-evaluation team and the targeted school self-evaluation improvement team.

The key feature of using a variety of tools in the collection of data is that it can be used in triangulation to allow valid findings and conclusions to be drawn. For example just looking at the Higher School Certificate results at the end of the year does not allow you to draw conclusions except what the performance was in statistical terms. Closer examination of what was occurring in individual classrooms gives more information on the data.

When using tools for evaluations the mechanism needs to be representative of what is being evaluated. For example surveying the best two students in a class does not necessarily build an accurate picture of what is occurring.

**Table 1: School self-evaluation tools**

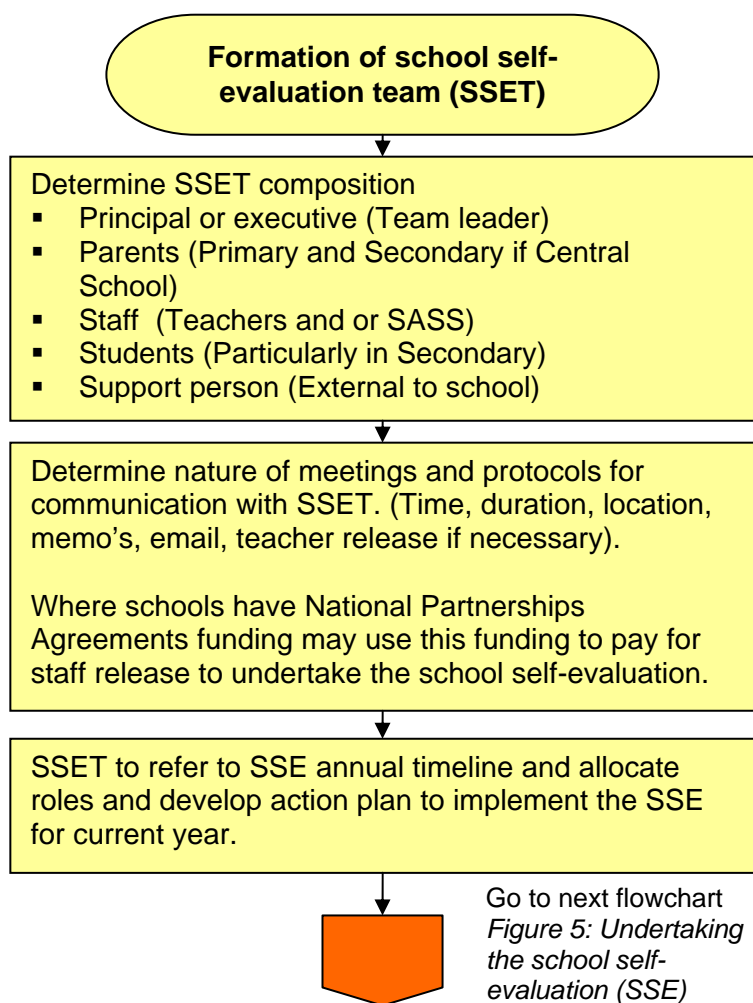
<b>Tool</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Surveys</b>	<b>Focus Groups</b>
<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is collected orally, either in person or over the telephone.</li> <li>• Allows respondents to supply information about a pre-determined set of questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows respondents to supply information about a clearly delineated set of questions.</li> <li>• Normally conducted using a written format that may also be used for face-to-face or telephone interviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A facilitator leads a group discussion involving up to six participants who represent particular school groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Essential Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows the opportunity to further clarify the intent or meaning of particular questions.</li> <li>• Allows the opportunity for additional probing questions, thus gathering a more detailed response.</li> <li>• Best suited to the gathering of qualitative data.</li> <li>• Interview responses are read back to the interviewee for clarification and verification at the end of the interview (avoids possible misinterpretation or interviewer bias).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best designed to collect and analyse information quantitatively (number of responses to items).</li> <li>• Most useful when characterised by closed questions.</li> <li>• A four-point Likert scale is the most useful approach (e.g. strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) because it leads respondents to make a decision about the issue in question, rather than commonly selecting 'middle ground' (regression to the mean e.g. 'unsure' or 'don't know') .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a skilled facilitator to pursue emerging themes in the course of the group discussion.</li> <li>• Participants need to be put at ease to ensure the free flow of information.</li> <li>• A predetermined set of questions is normal practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When conducted in a one-on-one setting a richer and more meaningful set of information may be collected.</li> <li>• Allows for flexibility and open-ended responses.</li> <li>• Allows for individual or group responses (via interaction) to a set of questions.</li> <li>• Allows for the collection of contextual information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for the collection of very large amounts of information.</li> <li>• Are relatively easy to collate and analyse using a software tool such as Excel.</li> <li>• Allows for anonymous responses.</li> <li>• Allows for objective analysis as opposed to subjective analysis.</li> <li>• Useful for gathering data from a representative sample of respondents.</li> </ul> <p>CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time effective, as they allow numerous opinions to emerge in a short period of time.</li> <li>• Group interaction stimulates more information than is possible through individual interviews.</li> <li>• Allows for the testing and clarification of ideas and issues raised by other members within the group.</li> </ul>

<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interviewer needs to be skilled and consistent to ensure unbiased results.</li> <li>• Time consuming.</li> <li>• Resource (personnel) intensive.</li> <li>• Success of data collection via interview can be influenced by the interpersonal skills of the interviewer.</li> <li>• Interpretation and recording of information by the interviewer may be subject to bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less useful for collecting and analysing qualitative information (written responses).</li> <li>• Less useful when gathering information using open questions.</li> <li>• Some surveys may require the same individual to administer them e.g. if surveying students in class, a consistent message of introduction to the students to be surveyed is required to avoid bias.</li> <li>• The appropriateness of certain questions needs to be tested in relation to the target groups being surveyed e.g. some questions may be unsuitable for younger students.</li> <li>• Does not allow for the collection of unanticipated information or issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The success of the interaction may be dependent on the personalities within the group; some contributions may be difficult to glean from particular individuals.</li> <li>• The skill level required of the facilitator is paramount to the success of the process.</li> <li>• Copious amounts of information result from this process and may be difficult to succinctly summarise.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally developed sets of interview questions for particular evaluations.</li> <li>• School program review interview questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of School Life (QSL) – a student and parent questionnaire designed to gather perceptions regarding particular features of a school.</li> <li>• School Map – a student, staff and parent survey tool designed to gather perceptions in the key areas of learning, teaching, planning, management, leadership and culture.</li> <li>• Snapshot – a collection of survey tools across all aspects of schooling that can be used “as is”, or may be modified for local purposes.</li> <li>• State, district and school-generated tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming techniques.</li> <li>• Nominal group techniques etc.</li> <li>• Locally developed sets of questions for particular evaluations.</li> <li>• School program review questions.</li> </ul>

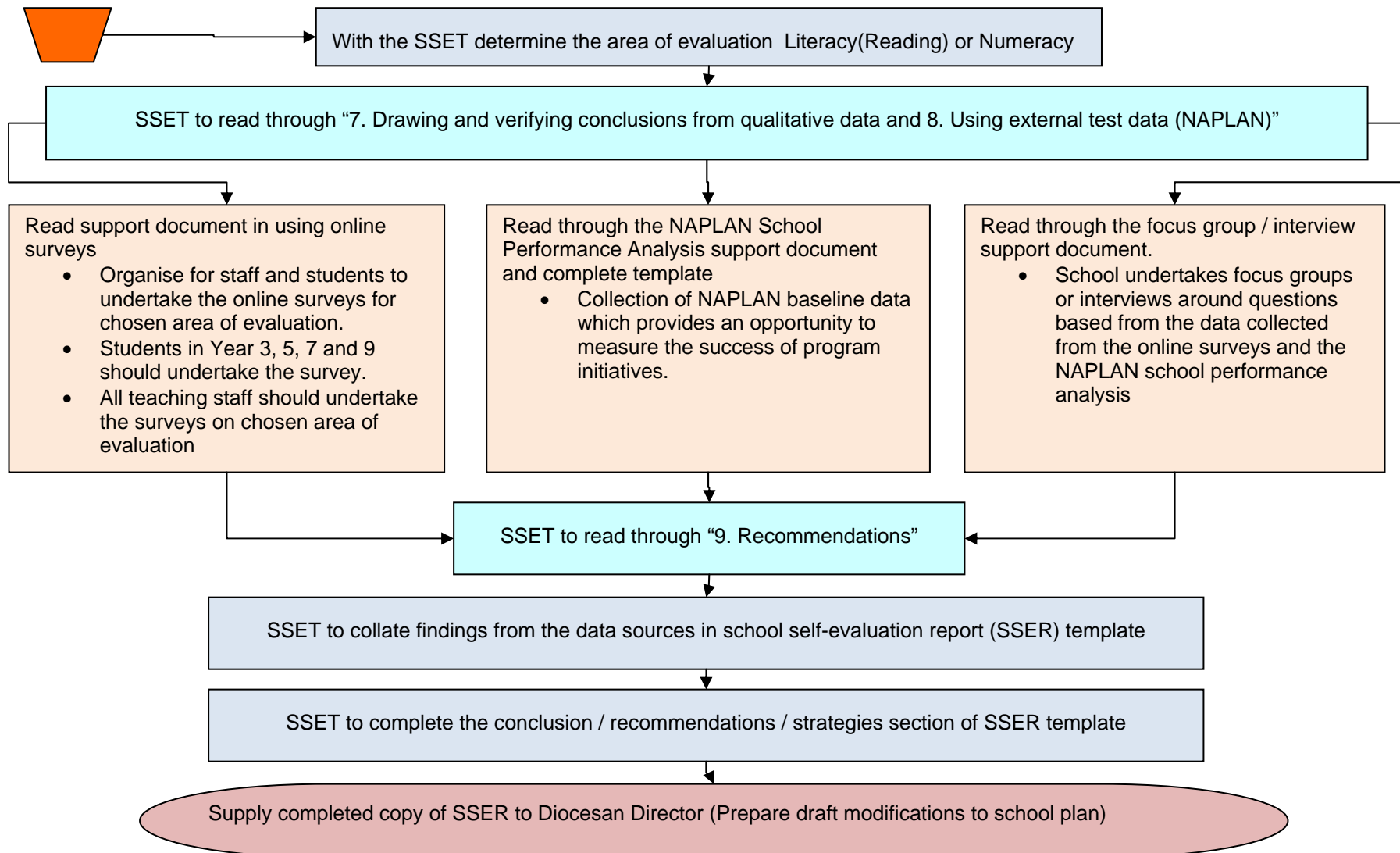
<b>Tool</b>	<b>Document Analysis</b>	<b>Using Existing Data (NAPLAN data)</b>	<b>Observations</b>
<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information in school documents provides a rich source of evidence about the status of policies, programs and practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools are rich with data that is readily available.</li> <li>Consideration should be given to examining data from the academic, welfare, and learning and teaching areas, as well as across-school sets and parent / community viewpoints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observations can occur in many settings within the school depending on the focus of the evaluation e.g. classrooms, playground, assemblies, staff meetings.</li> <li>The process employed may vary depending on the purpose e.g. informal, formal or clinical.</li> </ul>
<b>Essential Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The themes have been identified.</li> <li>The evaluator has sound understanding of the context and analysis process.</li> <li>The evaluator has had opportunity to verify the accuracy of documents.</li> <li>There needs to be a clear set of prompts against which the document may be evaluated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of bias.</li> <li>Collected from a range of sources.</li> <li>Multiple indicators and trend data.</li> <li>The evaluator must be skilled in analysis and interpretation.</li> <li>Requires well-developed information management systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atmosphere of trust.</li> <li>Collegiality.</li> <li>Agreed/negotiated purpose and focus for the observation.</li> <li>Agreed follow-up procedures e.g. feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Useful for analysing written communication.</li> <li>Corroborate evidence from other sources.</li> <li>Provides access to retrospective information about a program.</li> <li>Process is portable and time efficient.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is readily accessible.</li> <li>The data is familiar.</li> <li>State and national comparisons may be available.</li> <li>It can be easily augmented with contextual information from key school personnel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for the direct confirmation of "practice in action".</li> <li>Allows for the validation of program intention and student achievement.</li> <li>Provides opportunities for professional appraisal.</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May reflect the views of the author alone.</li> <li>May be out of date.</li> <li>May be inaccurate.</li> <li>May be atypical.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A tendency to rationalise or externalise the data beyond the school's focus of control (e.g. 'What would you expect from that group of students?').</li> <li>Not accepting what the data may indicate.</li> <li>Over-analysis of data sets beyond the intended purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those being observed can feel uncomfortable if the purpose of the activity is not clarified/negotiated.</li> <li>Time consuming.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies, teaching programs and registers, school planning and policy, school newsletters, and annual school reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic sources, student welfare records, hours of student study, attendance records, hours of part-time student work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson observation sheets.</li> <li>Clinical checklists.</li> <li>Tally sheets.</li> <li>Videos and tape recorders</li> </ul>

## 6. THE SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND ITS COMPONENT PARTS

*Figure 1: Establishing and organising the school self-evaluation team (SSET)*



**Figure 2: Undertaking the school self-evaluation (SSE)**



## 7. DRAWING AND VERIFYING CONCLUSIONS FROM QUALITATIVE DATA

Listed below are rules of thumb for drawing conclusions from qualitative data collected during school self evaluations. (*The list is adapted from Miles and Huberman "Qualitative Data Analysis" 1994*)

1. Start with a quick scan of the evidence to see what 'jumps out'. Then verify, revise, or confirm that impression through a more careful review.
2. Apply a number of data analysis tactics. Among the most useful in the analysis of qualitative data are:
  - **Noting patterns and themes:** These are recurring themes that pull together many separate pieces of data. It may be useful to group evidence according to theme. It is important to realise that evidence may be applicable to one or more themes in the analysis and may have a bearing on various parts of an evaluation. It is possible that an observer external to the immediate evaluation team may bring a different interpretation to the analysis of information.
  - **Making contrasts and comparisons:** Comparison is a classic way to test a conclusion. Contrasts can be drawn or comparisons made between sets of information that are known to differ in some important respect. Responses of parents, students and teachers can be compared and contrasted. Differences can be noted within those groups, such as among executive, ancillary and teaching staff and boy/girl or younger/older students.  
When conflicting information appears it is often helpful to compare and understand the sources of different data.
  - **Clustering:** Clustering is a process of grouping and then conceptualising information that has similar patterns or characteristics. Clustering is frequently called 'categorising'. At one level information can be clustered around the key terms of reference (the questions to be answered) for the evaluation, but care needs to be taken to ensure that predetermined clusters or categories do not hide other themes or clusters of information. Clusters are not mutually exclusive.
  - **Counting:** Although the qualitative method goes beyond *how much* of something to describe its essential qualities, a lot of counting goes on. The number of times something occurs or is reported says something about how important or how significant an item is.  
Checking numbers is particularly important to see quickly what is in a large amount of data, to verify a hunch or hypothesis, or to protect against bias.
3. As conclusions form it is often useful to write them down for further consideration. The process of writing adds to clarity of thought and should lead to further analysis.
4. First conclusions need to be checked against other information, evidence and evaluation data.
5. Initial conclusions need to be verified and checked. There are many tactics for verifying initial impressions and conclusions:
  - **Follow-up surprises:** This means that if an initial conclusion is outside the range of what is expected there is a need to investigate why that has happened. It could lead to a revision of assumptions that may have been taken for granted.
  - **Triangulation:** In qualitative methodology common forms of triangulation are by data source (parents, staff, students) and by method (interview, document analysis, observation, survey etc.).  
Within the data source there is a need to be aware of the differences and variations that exist (e.g. teaching and ancillary staff; executive and non-executive staff; older or younger students; boys and girls; parents of different socio-economic levels).
  - **Making if-then tests:** If the conclusion is correct then something else should be evident. This is a good test between rhetoric and reality. If an innovation is working then the results should be evident. For example, if it is concluded that the

- school has good communication structures, then there should be evidence that parents, staff and subjects are well informed.
- **Check out rival explanations:** There is a danger in that seeking to confirm emerging hypothesis evidence pointing to a rival point of view is neglected. It is advisable to hold onto a number of rival explanations until one becomes increasingly more compelling.  
Bias is possible by making early decisions. Ensure that there is sufficient evidence for a full understanding of the issue.
  - Find representative exemplars: If it is not possible to find genuinely representative exemplars of conclusions then the conclusions may be faulty.
6. Ensure that conclusions are meaningful. Analysis needs to go beyond a descriptive synthesis of the data. It is important that conclusions have a conceptual significance. Data which is verifiable but which has little meaning is of little use in evaluations and improvement plans. It is essential that factual information be interpreted to imply, indicate or chart future directions in planning and improvement.

## 8. PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW WHEN ANALYSING EXTERNAL TEST DATA (NAPLAN)

The following guidelines must be observed when analysing external test data for school self-evaluation:

1. **The avoidance of harm to schools or individuals**  
This is the fundamental principle guiding the use of all data. Information should not be used to identify individual students, staff members or schools in any public forum. In using student performance data, the emphasis must be placed on supporting the school through a developmental process and improving student outcomes.
2. **The right to information**  
Provided that the information about a school is **accurate and relevant**, it should be made available for use as a tool to contribute to the understanding of practices and processes operating within the school. Within the context of the Regulation, it may form the basis of discussions between members of the school executive and staff, the school education director and the school principal, or the school self-evaluation team.
3. **A consideration of contextualisation**  
Indicators which are strongly affected by extrinsic/contextual factors (such as student intake characteristics) should only be considered alongside relevant contextual information. For example, a consideration of examination or test score results needs to include indicators of 'raw' results as well as those which have been adjusted for student intake characteristics. Such an analysis should include other relevant school contextual factors, such as student demographics, mobility, attendance, geographical isolation, ethnic characteristics and socioeconomic status of the local community.
4. **The use of multiple indicators**  
Multiple indicators need to be used when considering school performance. Differences between classes and faculties within schools are typically large, as are differences between various groups of students within a school. For this reason, a range of indicators should be employed in order to adequately represent the complexity of a school's operations. Where it is possible to provide indicators for a number of years, the time trends will provide further valuable insight. It is dangerous to consider one piece of information, such as a data set, graph or table, in isolation from other information and attempt to draw conclusions. Ideally, performance indicators should be discussed along with:
  - contextual information (see point 3)
  - the perceptions and understandings of staff, students and parents
  - the achievements of the school.

## 5. An acknowledgement of the limitations of statistical measures being used

Details of statistical techniques, the purpose of each indicator, uncertainty due to choice of measurement and the number of students included in an analysis, should all be presented and considered with each indicator.

As the term indicator suggests, the data does not provide answers or solutions to a school's issues and problems. Indicators should be used to help identify issues and to initiate inquiry and discussion.

## 6. Data Analysis Maxims

- No judgements without context
- No excuses without reflection
- Data raises more questions than provides answers
- Raw data is a piece of the puzzle
- The more pieces, the more reliable the picture
- Be cautious of generalisations for small cohorts (especially if under 10 students)
- Don't over-interpret the evidence.

*This information is taken from the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate – Team Training for School Reviews*

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/directorates/schoimpro/EMD/schoolreview/TeamTrainingManual.pdf>

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations should give the school purpose and direction for improving the program under evaluation and in the context of the evaluation terms of reference.
2. A good recommendation focuses on a better or desired outcome and includes feasible strategies for the school to implement.
3. Recommendations should flow logically from the findings and conclusion in the body of the report; they should not appear as a surprise and it should be possible to justify the recommendations by referring back to the findings.
4. Recommendations should be formulated by consensus following team discussion.
5. Effective recommendations take into account the change capacity of the school / KLA / program regarding effective implementation.
6. Recommendations need to reflect current departmental policies and procedures and should be cost-neutral.
7. Recommendations should be free of jargon and written clearly and concisely.
8. Recommendations may focus on fundamental change: changing values and beliefs; significantly altering existing structures, roles and relationships; and setting new strategic directions.
9. Recommendations may focus on incremental change: adding to or altering existing programs; improving resource distribution; improving processes; enhancing skills; refining existing strategies to achieve desired outcomes; developing understandings and generating wider commitment; and altering and extending existing arrangements.



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NSW Department of Education and Training  
Author: Nigel Brito  
Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate  
Locked Bag 555  
Bankstown NSW 2200  
Australia

