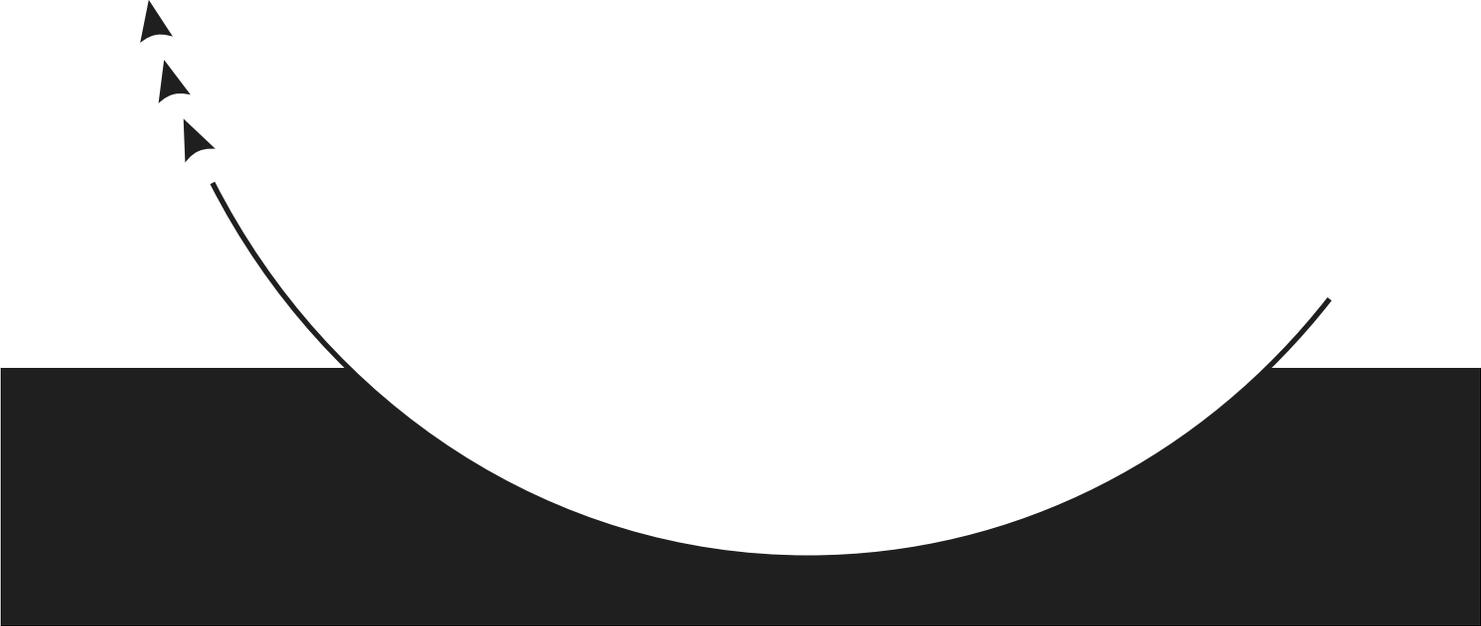


Turning Points

TRANSFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS

School Quality Review





School Quality Review

Turning Points Guides

At the Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner

Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School

Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership

Guide to Curriculum Development

Guide to Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making

Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work

School Quality Review

School Structures that Support Learning and Collaboration

Teaching Literacy in the Turning Points School

For ordering information go to www.turningpts.org

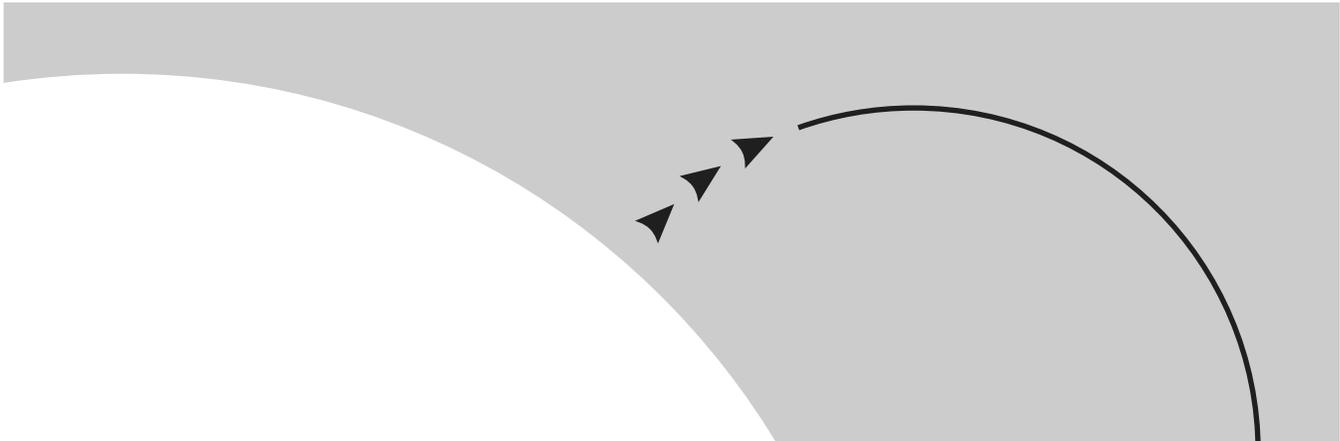


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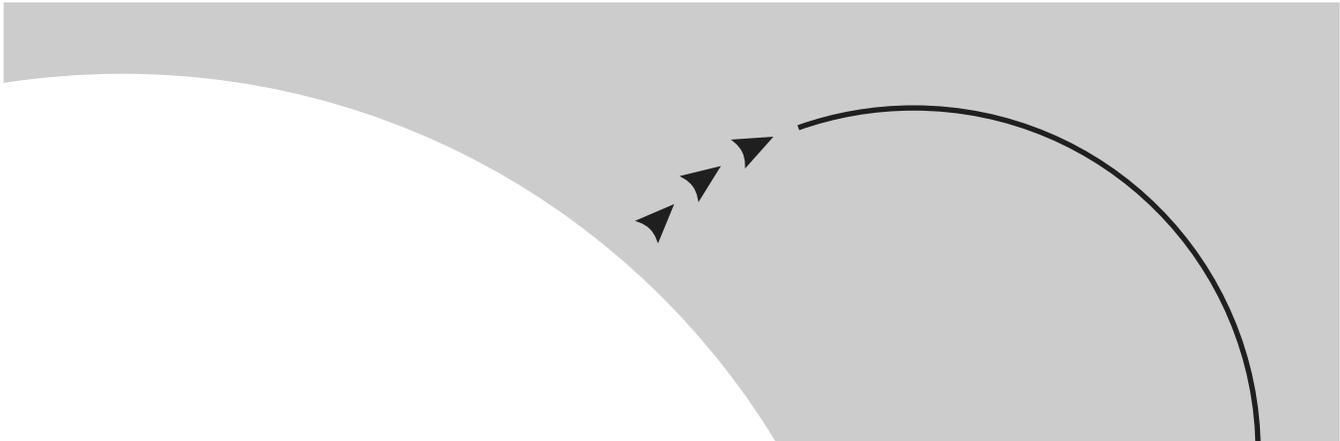
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In addition, as the Boston Pilot Schools' Self-Study Guide was used substantially in the creation of this guide, we would like to thank the Boston Pilot Schools Network, the Boston Public Schools Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation, and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.



Preface

Turning Points is a national design for middle school change, coordinated by the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston, Massachusetts, which serves as the National Turning Points Center. The design focuses on restructuring middle schools to improve learning, teaching, and assessment for all students. It is based on the Turning Points report issued by the Carnegie Corporation in 1989, which concentrated on the risks that young adolescents face as they reach the “turning point” between childhood and adulthood.

Turning Points middle schools commit to a multi-year, systemic change process based on seven guiding Principles. Turning Points schools engage in six Practices that translate the Principles into effective action for sustained improvement in student learning.

A crucial part of this reform initiative is an **accountability process** in which teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other members of the school community formatively examine, analyze, and evaluate individual and school practices, structures, and outcomes. The accountability process includes two major components:



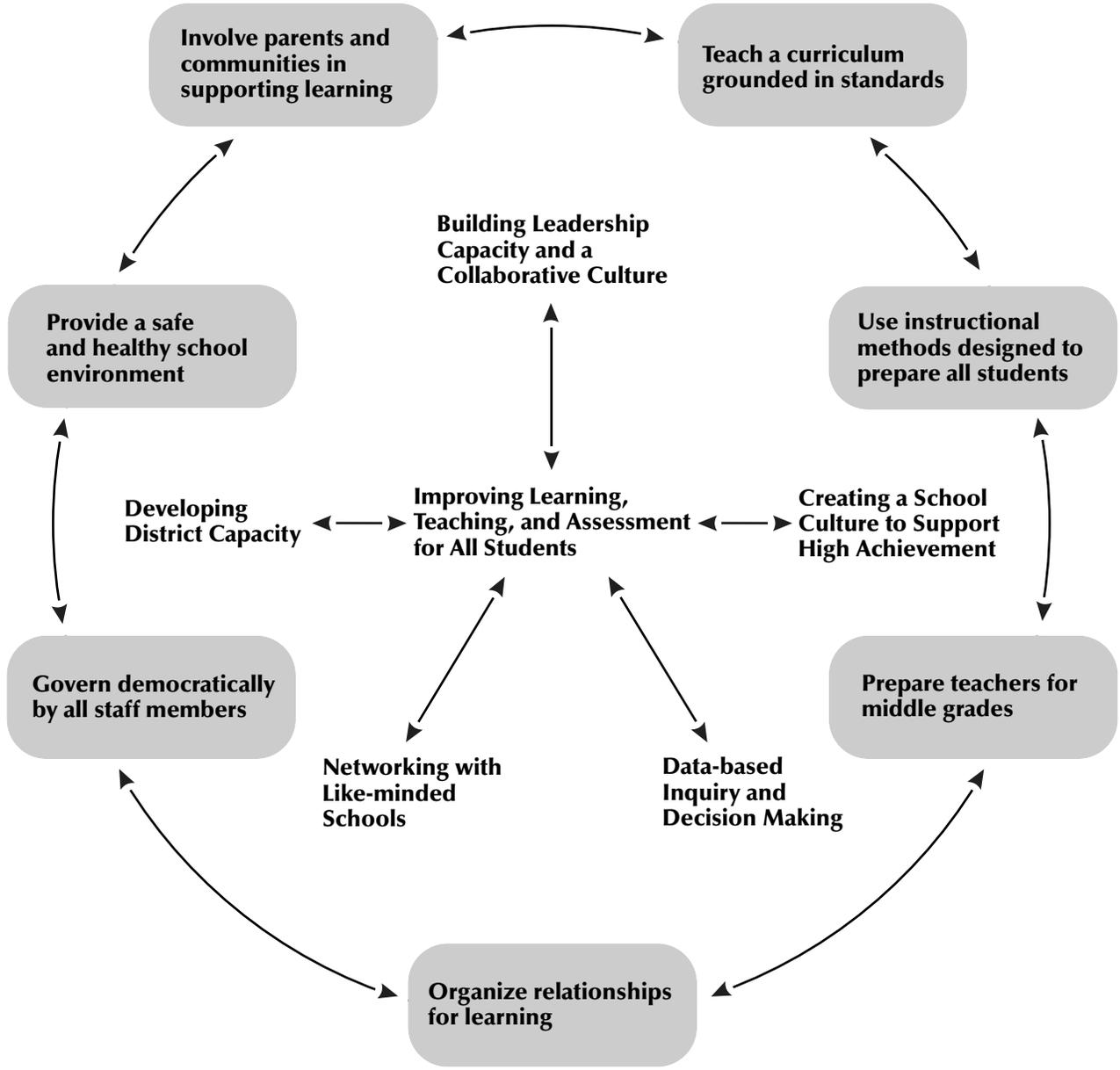
Annual Assessment



School Quality Review

This guide provides a collection of processes, activities, and tools to assist teachers, administrators, and other members of the school community to participate in the School Quality Review, including a School Self-Assessment and a School Quality Review Team Visit.

Turning Points Design Principles and Practices



Turning Points Principles*

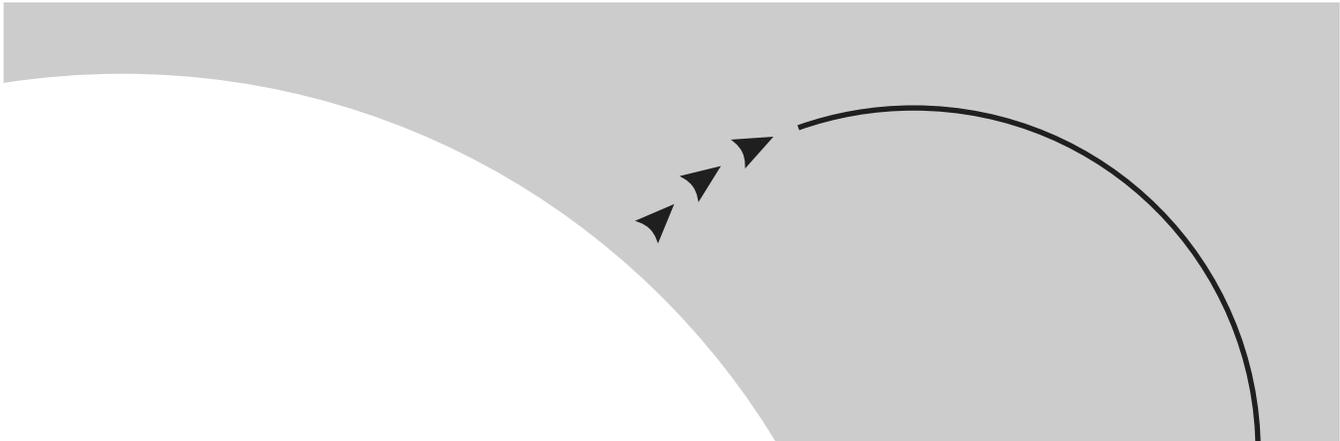
- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve high standards and become lifelong learners
- Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing professional development
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose
- Govern democratically through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know students best
- Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development

Six practices translate these principles into action in each school and throughout a network of Turning Points schools in a district. Within each area of practice, teacher teams, a school leadership team, and faculty committees, engage in collaborative work.

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The Six Turning Points Practices

- **Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for All Students:** working collaboratively to set high standards, close the achievement gap among students, develop curriculum that promotes habits of mind and intellectual inquiry, utilize a wide range of instructional strategies and approaches, emphasize the teaching of literacy and numeracy
- **Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture:** creating a democratic school community, fostering skills and practices of strong leadership, establishing regular common planning time, embedding professional development in the daily life of the school
- **Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making:** setting a vision based on the Turning Points principles, collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data to help improve areas that most impact learning, teaching, and assessment, setting annual measurable goals
- **Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development:** creating structures that promote a culture of high-quality learning and teaching, establishing small learning communities, eliminating tracking, lowering student-teacher ratios, building parent and community partnerships
- **Networking with Like-minded Schools:** participating in network meetings, summer institutes, and forums; visiting other Turning Points schools
- **Developing District Capacity to Support School Change:** building district capacity through collaboration



Introduction

With pride and some relief, Dr. Amy Riordan, Principal of Willow View Middle School, received the report of the External School Quality Review Team that had visited Willow View just two weeks before. Now completing its third year as a Turning Points school, Willow View hosted the School Quality Review Team for three days to assess the school's progress toward becoming a Turning Points Demonstration School. Dr. Riordan and the staff felt a bit anxious about how they would respond if the review revealed wide disparities between how they felt they were doing as a Turning Points school and how the School Quality Review Team perceived Willow View's performance. But as the school review process unfolded their initial fears were all but erased.

For three years the staff at Willow View had been involved in self-evaluation work, identifying both strengths and challenges and developing their Turning Points School Portfolio collaboratively. As they developed a better understanding of the accountability process, they began to realize that this was an opportunity for in-depth reflection on their work. Staff, parents, students, and the wider community could identify shared values, show that they were all working together towards fulfilling common goals, and get feedback on their practices and progress in order to inform plans for further improvement.

The Report of the School Quality Review Team reaffirmed that all the hard work Willow View staff had done to get to this point was not wasted. Students were achieving at much higher levels, teachers were more focused, and there was a clear sense of

This process helped the staff, the school community, and the principal see school improvement as a continuous process.

collaboration. Even as the report confirmed there were some areas, such as greater parental involvement, which needed attention, it suggested that much progress had been made.

Most importantly, this process helped the staff, the school community, and the principal see school improvement as a continuous process. The external review recognized the contribution that had been made over the years by Willow View's self-assessment and acknowledged examples of their outstanding and exemplary practices. It also endorsed the school's belief that to make a greater impact on individual classrooms and the hearts and minds of the whole school community, it was vital that they continue to engage in ongoing inquiry and self-assessment.

Overview of the Turning Points School Accountability System

All schools need to constantly reflect on the quality of their work and the progress and achievements that they make over time. The primary goal of an accountability system is to help schools improve through critical self-reflection. It enables students, teachers, and other members of the school community to evaluate their practices, especially the quality of learning. The school community welcomes an external viewpoint because it can enhance and strengthen good practices.

The main goal of the Turning Points accountability process is to assess how well a school has implemented the Turning Points design and improved learning and teaching. To this end, the Turning Points accountability system helps schools to:

- Focus on teaching, learning, and assessment
- Ensure a real and understandable demonstration of school improvement and higher student outcomes
- Collect data about what is and what is not working for all students
- Enhance equity by ensuring that all students have equal opportunities and access to learning

- Assess their progress against clearly defined Turning Points benchmarks

The Turning Points accountability process has two major components: the Annual Assessment and the School Quality Review (SQR). This guide focuses on one of the two components, namely the School Quality Review, which includes the School Self-Assessment and the School Quality Review Visit. (For a detailed explanation of the Annual Assessment process, refer to the Turning Points *Guide to Data-Based Inquiry and Decision Making*.)

The School Quality Review

Every four years each Turning Points school is asked to undertake a School Quality Review (SQR), a thorough assessment of its progress. Using the Turning Points benchmarks, the school assesses its work in each of the Turning Points practices and develops a School Portfolio of evidence in each practice area. As a culmination of the process, an external team consisting of local and national Turning Points colleagues conducts a School Quality Review Visit and prepares a report of commendations, issues, and recommendations. As well, this report contains a recommendation to the national Turning Points center about the school's future status in the network—as a continuing member school or as a “demonstration” school that exhibits excellence in most or all of the Turning Points practices. As a final step in the process, the school has the opportunity to respond to the report, correcting any inaccuracies and addressing feedback.

The School Quality Review process includes the following steps:

- The School Self-Assessment and Portfolio Development Process—the whole faculty engages in an assessment of the school's progress and creation of a portfolio of evidence guided by the *Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School*

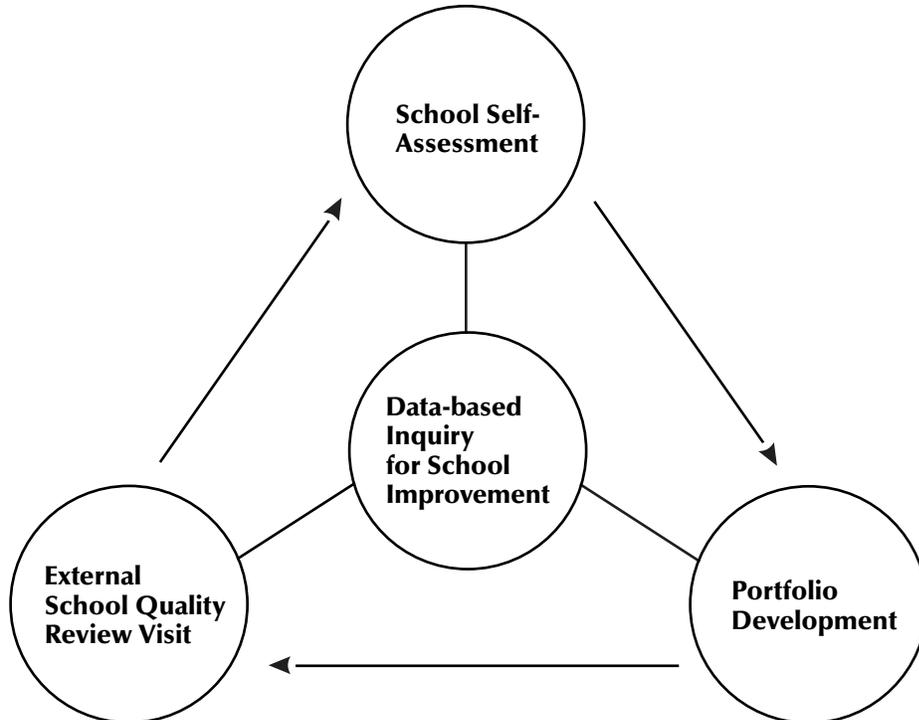
- School Quality Review Visit and Report—an external review team conducts a three-day visit and review of the school's portfolio culminating in a written report of findings based on the Turning Points benchmarks

The main goal of the Turning Points accountability process is to assess how well a school has implemented the Turning Points design and improved learning and teaching.

■
The School's Response to the Report—the school responds to the feedback in the report, forming goals, priorities, and action plans

The box on the next page provides a detailed overview of the entire SQR process from start to finish. While each school's approach will

School Quality Review Process



vary depending on its schedule, needs, and constituents, the key activities should be the same. The remainder of the guide fleshes out each of the main steps in the process and provides suggestions for implementation.

STEPS IN THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

School Self-Assessment and Portfolio Development

1. PREPARING FOR THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW (SEPTEMBER)

Initial meeting of the Turning Points coach, the principal, and the Leadership Team to plan and prepare for the assessment process. This meeting will include plans for the formation of a Portfolio Development Team as needed, and setting up a coordination process among the Leadership Team, Portfolio Development Team, and other school teams involved in the accountability process.

2. ORIENTING THE FULL FACULTY AND FORMING THE PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT TEAM (SEPTEMBER)

The faculty is familiarized with the accountability process and the School Quality Review guide. The orientation should include hands-on activities in using the benchmarks and how to collect and use evidence for planning and improvement. The School Portfolio Team is formed. Dates for future orientation meetings and the External School Quality Review Visit are set.

The Portfolio Development Team reviews the School Quality Review Process and Self-Assessment and the details of developing the School Portfolio with the Leadership Team, the faculty, and the Turning Points coach.

3. CONDUCTING THE INITIAL SELF-ASSESSMENT (OCTOBER)

As a first step in the accountability process, the Leadership Team, the Portfolio Development Team, or the whole faculty conducts a self-assessment of the school's progress, using the Turning Points Benchmarks as a yardstick to assess achievements and shortcomings. The appropriate group rates the school for assigned benchmarks according to the phase they think best characterizes the school's current status—Beginning, Partial, Demonstrating, or Systemic. The group also identifies the evidence that supports their rating. Once the groups have rated their assigned Turning Points Practice in relation to the benchmarks, the faculty reconvenes and considers the ratings of each group. These decisions form the basis for the development of the School Portfolio.

4. DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL PORTFOLIO (SEPTEMBER–JANUARY)

This step includes reaching faculty consensus on guidelines for what to include and the different uses of the portfolio.

Development of the portfolio involves the following activities:



The Portfolio Development Team (PDT) uses the Turning Points Benchmarks to develop the Portfolio, and identifies resources that help address each of the Turning Points Practices.

STEPS IN THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS (CONTINUED)



The PDT collects and makes decisions about evidence and reflects on what the evidence shows, as well on the process itself.



The PDT meets with the whole school community to inform them about the Portfolio Development process and to get their input. There is ongoing communication with the whole school community through regular written updates and meetings.

5. SELECTING THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW TEAM (NOVEMBER)

Members of the School Quality Review Team are selected by the Turning Points Regional Center with input from the school. Generally, five to eight members are selected.

6. COMPLETING THE SCHOOL PORTFOLIO AND DELIVERING IT TO THE TURNING POINTS REGIONAL CENTER (JANUARY)

The school completes and delivers the portfolio to the Turning Points Regional Center. Copies of the portfolio are then distributed to each member of the School Quality Review Team, a copy is kept at the Turning Points Regional Center, and the original is kept at the school. Review Team members are expected to familiarize themselves with the School Portfolio prior to the visit.

School Quality Review Visit

7. ORIENTING SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS (FEBRUARY)

Review Team members receive a half-day orientation about participation in the School Review process. School teams and the Turning Points coach also participate.

8. TEAM CHAIRPERSON MEETS WITH PRINCIPAL AND LEADERSHIP TEAM (FEBRUARY)

The School Quality Review Team Chairperson meets with the Principal, members of the Portfolio Development Team and Leadership Team, and the Turning Points coach to verify logistics and to confirm the school's major interests and questions.

9. SCHOOL VISIT (MARCH–APRIL)

School Visits are three-day intensive, on-site inquiries into the life and operations of the Turning Points school. Each of the three days is structured differently, providing a look at the school from multiple perspectives—students, teachers, staff, and community members. Each day, Team members are mindful of the Turning Points Practices and Benchmarks, using them to drive their search for evidence to support conclusions.

STEPS IN THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS (CONTINUED)

At the conclusion of Day 3, the chairperson leads the Team in a final review of the broad spectrum of information collected and facilitates the shaping of agreed-upon conclusions that shed light on the goals, practices, and results of the school, as well as on other issues at the school. These findings should be outlined and summarized in the report, along with a rating of the school according to the Turning Points Benchmarks, which is produced before the Team disbands.

10. MEETING WITH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND LEADERSHIP TEAM TO REVIEW THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW FINDINGS AND DISCUSS THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS (MARCH–APRIL)

The chairperson and other members of the School Quality Review Team meet with the Principal and Leadership Team to present its report. This is an opportunity for the school to learn more about the School Quality Review Team’s findings, and to discuss the report’s recommendations. The report is also sent to the Turning Points regional and national centers.

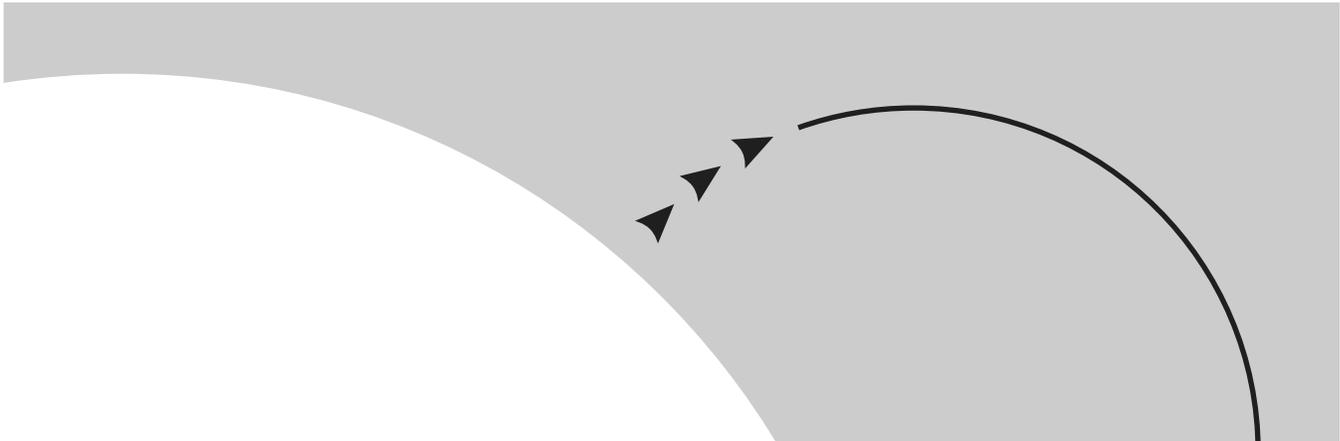
School Response to Feedback

11. THE PRINCIPAL AND LEADERSHIP TEAM REVIEW THE DRAFT REPORT FOR ACCURACY (APRIL–MAY)

Any initial comments or corrections are forwarded to the SQR Team chairperson, and appropriate corrections are made as necessary.

12. SCHOOL RESPONDS TO THE REPORT (MAY)

The school prepares a response to the report, which details actions the school community will take to improve the school, based upon the contents of the Report. This response is sent to the School Quality Review Team and the Turning Points regional and national centers.



The School Self-Assessment

On a Saturday in January, 20 members of the Evergreen Middle School's Leadership Team and faculty, along with a facilitator, gathered in a room to begin the self-assessment process of their School Quality Review. The goal of the day was to gain a head start on assessing where the school was in achieving the Turning Points benchmarks.

The group divided into three smaller groups of 6–7 members, with each group receiving the Turning Points benchmarks for Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for All Students. Over the next hour and a half, for each indicator within a selected Practice, the groups debated the school's progress, coming to consensus on the phase the school had achieved—Beginning, Partial, Demonstrating, or Systemic Implementation. To justify their individual claims and support their positions, group members cited evidence that could be included in a portfolio, such as rubrics, notices of exhibitions, and minutes of team meetings.

When the large group reconvened, each group shared the phase they selected and the accompanying evidence for each indicator. Group members discussed varying perspectives, and worked toward consensus of a rating that best reflected the school's progress. A running score chart was kept, along with a list of potential evidence for each benchmark.

Once all the indicators had been discussed and rated, the group reflected on the picture that they had painted about their school in the area of improving teaching, learning, and assessment. What was it telling them? They concluded that, while there was a lot of

creative instruction going on in individual classrooms, there wasn't necessarily a coherent sequence of curriculum from one grade to the next, nor were they being as successful as they wanted to with a group of low-achieving students. Teachers were working hard to create meaningful learning experiences for their students, but were not as focused on ensuring that the curriculum helped students build upon their knowledge from grade to grade. They had ample evidence of creative teacher lesson plans and units, but little evidence of a sequential, spiraling curriculum.

At the end of a long Saturday, the group felt energized. They had identified many examples of creative teaching and assessment that could be included in their portfolio that would be presented to their School Quality Review Team, and they had also identified that curriculum sequencing was a key priority for strengthening the school. A plan was developed to accomplish this before the actual School Quality Review Team visit took place in the late spring.

The Self-Assessment and Portfolio Development Process

The *School Self-Assessment* is the most important part of the School Quality Review. It is a critical self-reflection and learning experience that supports the implementation of the Turning Points Design and facilitates the school's progress in achieving its vision. It is a systematic assessment of progress by the school community that involves citing evidence to determine whether certain targets or benchmarks have been reached. The Self-Assessment leads to the creation of the School Portfolio and concludes by setting measurable goals for improving learning, teaching, and assessment.

The first step in this process is to designate a body of faculty to coordinate and guide the Self-Assessment and Portfolio Development process. The Self-Assessment may be coordinated by the Leadership Team, a Portfolio Development Team, or any other team, cluster, or study group formed for this purpose, but involves the whole faculty and other members of the school community. The designated team should be representative of the faculty.

Once the Portfolio Development Team (PDT) is selected, it engages in the following steps:

Preparation and Planning—The PDT reviews the Accountability Process, including the Turning Points Benchmarks Guide and the SQR Handbook. The PDT and members of the Leadership Team meet with the Turning Points coach to map out a plan and pull together data, including the Self-Study Data Notebook,¹ for use in the initial assessment. The Turning Points coach may facilitate PDT meetings, as well as act as a resource.

Initial Assessment of Each Turning Points Practice²—The Leadership Team (or designated team) meets with the whole faculty, other members of the school community, and the Turning Points coach to discuss the Self-Assessment process, review each of the six Turning Points Practices, and identify which Practice to focus on. The faculty takes stock by reflecting on the school's vision and reviewing the Turning Points benchmarks and available data, including the Self-Study Survey Data Notebook. The faculty then decides what areas to focus on and creates a schedule of meetings to undertake this process.

The whole faculty assessment can be organized along the following lines:



The whole group generates a series of questions to guide the reflection in smaller groups.



The faculty divides into smaller groups to focus on specific Practices and rates the school on the Turning Points Benchmarks. The Benchmarks provide guidance for selecting evidence and reflecting on the school's performance and development. The small group cites evidence to support the rating and identified strengths and challenges.

Benchmarks provide guidance for selecting evidence and reflecting on the school's performance and development.

1. The Self-Study Survey Data Notebook is the feedback data in the form of charts, graphs, and tables that the schools receive from the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD—University of Illinois) once they have administered the School Improvement Self-Study Survey. Turning Points Schools are expected to undertake this survey every other year.

2. The tools provided in the Turning Points *Guide to Data-Based Inquiry and Decision Making* may be adapted for use in this process.

■
The small group reports its rating and supporting evidence and identified challenge areas to the larger group. Consensus is reached on the ratings and the areas that the Portfolio Development Team should focus on in developing the School Portfolio.

The focus for the Self-Assessment is always on answering the question, “How are we doing?” To find this answer, members of the school community identify evidence. Often the same evidence can be used to support different benchmarks.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

1

Notices of study group meetings, Leadership Team minutes, and topics for faculty-wide discussions

2

Team meeting minutes, observations, and presentations

3

Improved results in state tests

4

School or teacher-generated documents (e.g., mission statement, meeting agendas, budgets)

5

Statistical data (e.g., attendance figures, grades, test scores); samples of teacher and student work (e.g., student portfolios, teachers assignments, assessment rubrics)

6

Observations (teachers journals, reflections from visitors)

Using the Benchmarks — The PDT uses the Turning Points Benchmarks to develop the Portfolio. The Benchmarks help assess the school’s implementation of best teaching and learning practices, optimal use of resources to ensure a culture of high achievement and personal development, family and community involvement in each student’s education, and its relationship with other schools and the district administration. The Benchmarks provide guidance for selecting evidence and reflecting on the school’s performance and development. As the

portfolio develops, a useful strategy is to convene focus group meetings of teachers, parents, and others around each Turning Points Practice and record feedback, discuss ideas, and reflect on the school's goals and development in each Practice. Feedback from such meetings may be included in the Portfolio.

Developing the Portfolio— The PDT collects evidence to include in the portfolio and writes narrative reflections on what the evidence shows. Together with the principal, the Leadership Team, and the Coach, the Portfolio Development Team should decide on a decision-making process for the team, including questions such as: *How will the team decide which pieces are included in the Portfolio? How will disagreements be resolved? At what point should we obtain feedback from, or bring decisions to, the full faculty?*

Informing the School Community and Seeking Feedback— The PDT meets with other members of the school community to inform them about the Portfolio process and to obtain their input. The faculty always maintains the right to decide what should be included in the portfolio and is given ongoing opportunities to review drafts of the portfolio and provide feedback as they see fit.

Confidentiality— As the PDT coordinates development of the School Portfolio, it should be mindful of students' and others' rights to confidentiality. Samples of student work form a significant part of the Portfolio. Every effort should be made to protect individual students' confidentiality by removing names from samples of student work.

Purposes and Uses of the School Portfolio

The Turning Points School Portfolio is a tangible means of chronicling the ongoing and complex process of school improvement and its development over time. It may take many forms, but most commonly it is a folder or binder that allows for continual addition of evidence that demonstrates development in each Turning Points Practice. Easy to create and use, the School Portfolio is a self-assessment tool that exhibits a school's goals, progress, achievements, and vision for improvement. It is a collection of evidence that tells the story of the school. The Turning Points School Portfolio is organized into sections based on the six Turning Points Practices.

Easy to create and use, the School Portfolio is a self-assessment tool that exhibits a school's goals, progress, achievements, and vision for improvement.

The process of developing a Turning Points School Portfolio allows for a deep understanding of the structures and practices of the school, what needs to be improved and why, and how the school can remain focused on achieving its goals.

The School Portfolio represents the school's ongoing documentation and reflection on its vision, goals, practices, and progress. An effective Turning Points School Portfolio helps create and maintain a shared vision and supports the creation of a successful learning organization. The evidence may be presented in various forms—print, photographs, video, etc. Of course, the portfolio does not include all possible evidence, but is rather a thoughtful selection of evidence.

REFLECTION

Portfolios provide a richer basis for reflection than quantitative data alone, such as test scores. Just as a student reviews the contents of her language arts portfolio and thinks about her growth as an active learner, teachers and other members of the school community review the developing School Portfolio and reflect on the school's performance and growth.

Writing provides a powerful form of reflection in developing the portfolio. When teachers develop the School Portfolio, they write a Cover Letter that comments on the process by which the portfolio was created. For each Turning Points Practice, they write a reflective piece in which they consider how the evidence they collected demonstrates the school's progress towards its goals and the Turning Points' vision. They consider how various evidence demonstrate strengths, highlight challenge areas, or raise questions for the school community.

Reflection is not limited to writing. Some reflection is recorded and is part of the School Portfolio. Other reflections aren't. Some of the most powerful reflection is collaborative, when teachers and other members of the school community look together at evidence and written reflection collected in the Portfolio. There may be multiple occasions for collaborative reflection, for example:

■
As teachers and other members of the school community select pieces for the Portfolio, discussing how individual pieces demonstrate the school's goals, practices or results



During discussions and meetings with the Review Team

While the Turning Points Accountability Process calls for a school to develop its School Portfolio during its School Quality Review year, every Turning Points school is encouraged to maintain an ongoing School Portfolio as a regular part of its practice. As it presents a rich picture of the school community, the Portfolio serves other valuable purposes, including strategic planning, recruitment of students and staff, and fundraising.

CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PORTFOLIO

In summary, a comprehensive School Portfolio has the following *characteristics*:



Simple Presentation – easy to read and understand



Accessible to all – readily available for viewing by any member of the school community



Explicit criteria – based on the Turning Points Benchmarks



Broad participation – all constituencies of the school community are involved in the design and development of the portfolio



Selection of Evidence – remember, a portfolio is a selection of evidence, not a comprehensive collection

The School Portfolio, covering the Turning Points Practices, should have the following *components*:



Cover Letter – Introduces readers to the portfolio and the process by which it was created



Reflections – Comments for each Turning Points Practice, followed by evidence, on why the evidence has been selected (or developed) and how it demonstrates the school's goals, practices, results, progress, and development. Faculty ratings for each practice should also be included.

The School Portfolio provides a valuable professional development opportunity.

■ **Sample Evidence** — Relevant information from the life of the school that addresses the Turning Points benchmarks. Evidence is in multiple formats including written documents, charts, posters, photographs, models, audiotapes and videotapes, and computer-formatted data.

SELECTING THE PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Who puts the School Portfolio together and how they approach their work critically affect the process and the result. It is, therefore, important that a dedicated team manages the logistics and works together in developing the Portfolio. While it takes a lot of hard work and commitment, the School Portfolio provides a valuable professional development opportunity.

Guidelines for an effective Portfolio Development Team:

■ **Not too large** — Smaller teams of 5 to 8 are most appropriate because they are easier to coordinate and convene for regular meetings.

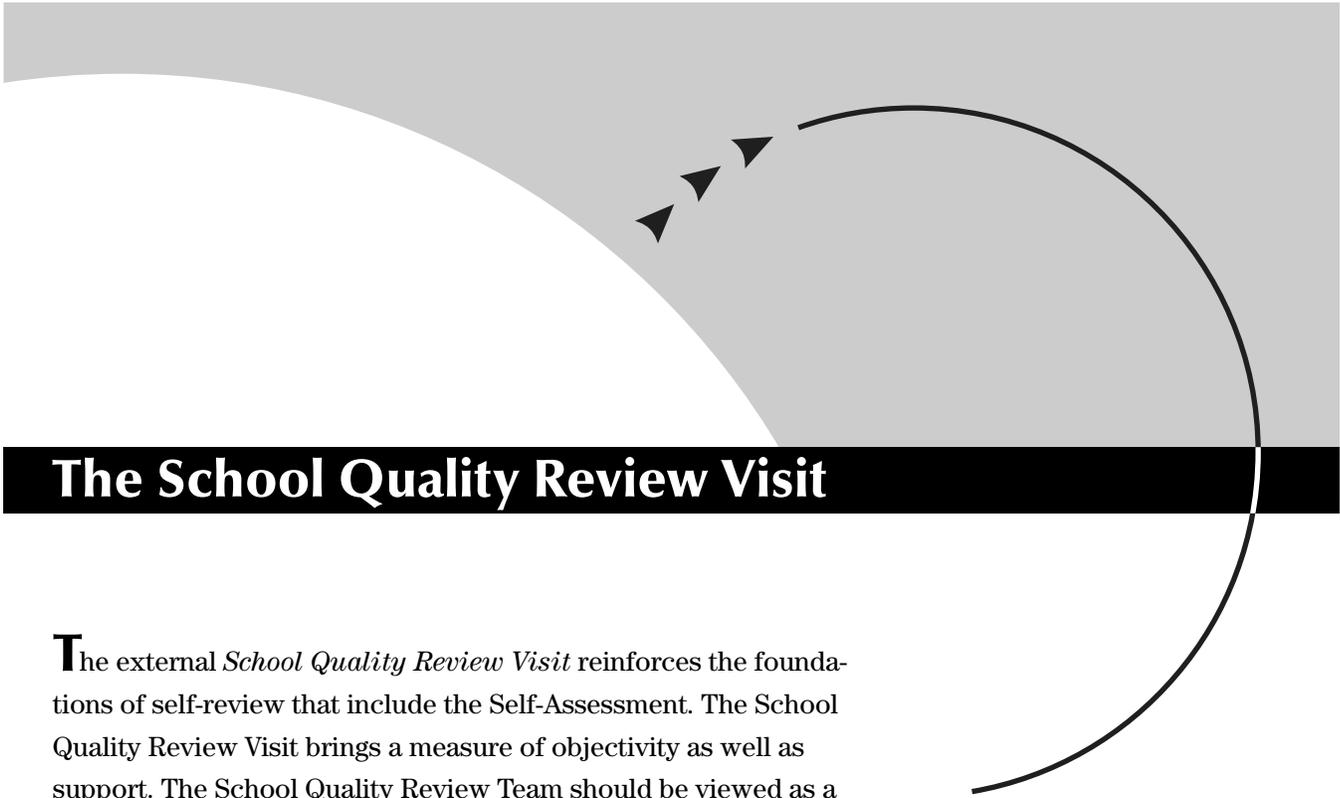
■ **Representative** — Involve the whole school community, including administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

■ **Coordinated** — A coordinator or chair should take responsibility for making sure the group meets regularly, tasks are assigned and carried out, and progress is made. This person should work closely with the Coach.

■ **Committed** — Members of the Portfolio Development Team should share a strong commitment to undertaking and coordinating the Self-Assessment and Portfolio Development Process in preparation for the School Quality Review Visit. The school should demonstrate its commitment by providing time for the Portfolio Development Team to meet and providing resources as required (equipment, clerical support, a budget).

ROLE OF THE TURNING POINTS COACH

The Turning Points coach assists the school in its Self-Assessment and in creating the Portfolio by working closely with the PDT. The coach helps the PDT develop a work-plan and timeline for meetings and deadlines, and provides an important external perspective on the School Portfolio as a work in progress. The coach should meet with the School Quality Review Team during the External Review Visit.



The School Quality Review Visit

The external *School Quality Review Visit* reinforces the foundations of self-review that include the Self-Assessment. The School Quality Review Visit brings a measure of objectivity as well as support. The School Quality Review Team should be viewed as a “critical friend” who provides an outside perspective to the school in the process of becoming a Turning Points Demonstration school. As a “critical friend,” the School Quality Review Team should be knowledgeable about school change, be able to gain a deep understanding of the school and its character, and should be prepared to assist the Turning Points school to ask challenging questions and offer advice and support.

The External School Quality Review process has **four major steps**:

1

Look at the Data – The School Quality Review Team reviews the School Portfolio and other data

2

Visit the School – The SQR Team conducts a three-day intensive visit to the school

3

Assess the School’s Progress and Write a Report – A School Quality Review Report is presented to the school, the school community, and the Turning Points regional and national centers. An evaluation report produced by the School Quality Review Team is designed to assess the school’s work, advise the school on how to improve its practice, and inform the regional and national Turning Points centers in determining the school’s future status in the Turning Points network.

The School Quality Review Team should be viewed as a “critical friend” who provides an outside perspective.

4

The School Responds to the Report – The school makes a structured response to the School Quality Review Team’s report written by the school, outlining actions to be taken to maintain the school’s areas of excellence and to attend to areas which require improvement

Both these documents inform the school’s action plans and are shared with external and internal constituencies, such as teachers, students, parents, and the wider school community.

Guidelines and Parameters for the School Quality Review Visit

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

The effectiveness of the School Quality Review process is dependent on the expertise, cohesion, and commitment of the School Quality Review Team members. The Team collectively plays the roles of observer and advisor. All individuals who accept nomination to a School Quality Review Team are required to adhere to the following expectations:



Participate in an orientation for School Quality Review Team



Participate in an intensive, three-day school visit and attend associated meetings (e.g., preparations for the visit, de-briefing sessions at conclusion of school days and evenings.)



Work cooperatively with other School Quality Review Team members to present valid and reliable data and other information about the school



Contribute to the planning and writing of the School Review Report

Chairperson

A Chairperson leads each School Quality Review Team. The school and the Turning Points Regional Center jointly select the Chairperson. The Chairperson is accountable for all tasks required of other School Quality Review Team members and has these additional responsibilities:



Meet with the Principal and/or the Leadership Team prior to the visit to set the visit schedule



Coordinate School Quality Review Team meetings and the school visit itinerary



Facilitate School Quality Review Team meetings



Coordinate and oversee writing of the School Quality Review Report



Present the School Quality Review Report to members of the school community

CODE OF CONDUCT

Team members' actions reflect not only the skills and expertise of reviewers, but also a professional code of conduct. A clearly articulated code, agreed to in writing by each member of the School Quality Review Team, tells the school community explicitly that they are working with professionals who will be courteous and will exhibit integrity as they perform their tasks. The following is the **code of conduct**³ for the School Quality Review Team members.



I will acknowledge the privilege inherent in being a visitor to a school and will conduct myself in a considerate and appropriate manner.



I will accept that my first priority during the visit is the educational welfare of all students at the school.



I will work towards an informed, objective, professional view of the work of this school and its community.



I will explain the visit, including its purpose, process, and my role, to any member of the school community, when it is appropriate to do so.



I will keep all information about the school that is not already public in strict confidence.



I will shun access to confidential staff evaluation information and refrain from making evaluative judgments about individuals in the school community.



I will reveal any potential conflict of interest with the school and the School District or the Regional Turning Points Center so that it can be determined if a genuine conflict of interest exists. If a conflict of interest does exist, then I will resign from the SQR Team.



I will abide by the procedures of the visit, including full participation in SQR Team activities and discussions, and the procedures for determining evidence and drawing conclusions. I will work to reach SQR Team consensus on conclusions.

3. This code of conduct is adapted from the Rhode Island Department of Education SALT School Visit Handbook, 1st Edition, developed and copyrighted by RIDE & Catalpa, Ltd., and used initially in the Illinois Quarterly Review.

SCHOOL PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT

In preparation for the visit, the host school, in consultation with the Turning Points Coach and the School Quality Review Team, is responsible for the following:



Ensures that the Turning Points Regional Center conducts an orientation of the School Quality Review process to the full faculty of the school, and an explanation of the role and function of the School Quality Review Team to the school community.



Provides copies of the School Portfolio to the School Quality Review Team and the Turning Points Regional Center in advance.



Creates an initial schedule for the School Quality Review Team Visit, to be discussed and negotiated with the Team.



Sets aside additional documents and data beyond the portfolio for School Quality Review Team members to review.



Schedules meetings with family members or caregivers, school collaborators, and school Board members.



Provides a working room for School Quality Review Team members to meet and speak privately throughout the visit.



Arranges for food, drinks, and supplies that are needed by the School Quality Review Team.

SCHEDULING THE SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW VISIT

Creating the Schedule

Scheduling requires considerable attention. If the School Quality Review Team does not coordinate its activities with those of the school, much of its limited time at the school will be of little value. The importance of carefully planning and scheduling the visit with the Principal and Leadership Team cannot be overemphasized.

While the SQR Team may want to interview all school personnel, time constraints may make this impossible. Group interviews may be an efficient trade-off between time limitations and the desire to

speak with everyone. Even if group interviews are conducted, the Team must determine who should be in interview groups (e.g., within or across grade level or discipline, etc.). For example, if math instruction is one focus of the School Quality Review Team, it might be best to create a group with math teachers at the same or adjacent grade levels.

To effectively use the time provided, each day has a focus:



Day one — Focus on Students

The first day is dedicated to viewing the school from the perspectives of the students. Team members shadow students. Preparation of the report begins during this first day of the School Quality Review Visit and proceeds through the end of the visit.



Day two — Focus on Teaching and Learning

The second day of the visit is dedicated to viewing the school from the perspectives of teachers and staff. Day 1 will have raised questions and issues that can now be explored more deeply through a range of data-gathering activities, such as classroom observations, interviews, and examination of student work.



Day three — Focus on Systems, Structures, and Partners/Writing the Report

The third day's focus is to examine operational structures and systems and to view the school through the eyes of families, care-givers, Board members, and external partners (e.g., funders, community organizations, etc.). The team comes to consensus on the commendations, findings, and recommendations to appear in the report.

See Appendix 1 for a sample schedule.

Conducting the Visit

GATHERING EVIDENCE

While conducting the visit, the School Quality Review Team will have three primary tasks:



Gather evidence



Make judgments

- Make recommendations

Credible Forms of Evidence

Any data, or credible evidence, influencing the evaluation of the school must be obtained through the School Quality Review Visit or the School Portfolio. All sources of data are to be identified by source (e.g., classroom observation, interview, etc.). Any data obtained from sources beyond the School Portfolio, School Quality Review Visit activities, or district data is inadmissible. Credible forms of data include, but are not limited to:

- Interviews with staff, teachers, parents, community partners, or students
- Classroom observations
- Observations of interactions among staff and students
- Observation of physical details
- Demographic information about the student population
- Students' work samples (e.g., portfolios, written work, videos, etc.)
- Standardized test scores and other data supplied by the school or the district
- Student or parent surveys conducted by the school

Neither assumption nor hearsay may be taken into consideration as evidence. It is crucial that Team members share any hypotheses, hunches, or leads with other Team members and pursue them if a Team member intends to make judgments or draw conclusions on the subject or issue.

USING THE TURNING POINTS BENCHMARKS

As it conducts the visit, the SQR team should be guided by the Turning Points benchmarks. When writing the report, the School

Any data obtained from sources beyond the School Portfolio, School Quality Review Visit activities, or district data is inadmissible.

Quality Review Team will be asked to evaluate the school in each of the six Practices. In scheduling and conducting the visit, the SQR Team keeps the Turning Points Practices central to questions, data gathering, and forming conclusions.

KEEPING THE END IN MIND

During the visit it is important for reviewers to remember that they are guests invited to observe the life of the school and provide helpful information to improve student learning and achievement. SQR Team members are not at the school to evaluate individual teachers' or students' performance, but rather to address issues related to teaching and learning for the whole school.

MAKING JUDGMENTS

Each moment that the team is in the school, it will be making observations. Naturally, based upon those observations, members will make judgments that are informed by preconceived notions of what good teaching and learning is and requires. As they make judgments, members should be aware of what their preconceived notions are. Such self-reflection will call for questions similar to these:



What is the role of a teacher?



What should an “orderly class” look like?



How do students learn best?



What is the role of a family member or care giver?

Responding to these and other questions will impact:



What one looks for



What one sees and hears



How one interprets and makes judgments about what one observes

- What one considers to be credible evidence

- What conclusions one draws

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

The School Review Quality Team as a whole is being asked to make conclusions about the school. All conclusions should be:

- Explicitly stated and supported with evidence

- Deliberated and, when needed, confronted or challenged

- Reached through consideration of opposing evidence prior to agreement

- Provided with the intent to inform action, which may improve the school's ability to address the learning needs of students and improve their academic achievement

- Reached through consensus of the group

Reviewers should participate in this deliberative process. Often, reviewers find that their conclusions are either supported or contradicted by evidence gathered or cited by other reviewers. In seeking to be objective, team members should share notions about teaching, learning, and schools as they discuss evidence and draw conclusions. Putting preconceived notions on the table will create a richer and more respectful dialogue about the school. Through deliberation, the Team collectively paints a picture of the school.

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Concluding the Visit

EVALUATING PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOL QUALITY

At the conclusion of the Self-Assessment and the School Quality Review process, sufficient valid and reliable data will be produced, documented, and presented in order to inform school improvement planning and the Turning Points Regional Center about the school's progress towards becoming a Demonstration School.

The SQR Team is required to report their narrative findings on each Turning Points Practice. As well, the team must score the school's performance on each Benchmark of each Turning Points Practice.

Using the Benchmarks for each Practice, the team determines a score of 1 through 4 for each individual Practice within the larger Practices:



A "4" indicates that the school is exemplary in its performance in this area.



A "3" indicates that the school is performing well in this area, though there may be ways to improve. Recommendations are provided for continued improvement.



A "2" indicates that the school is performing satisfactorily in this area. While not deficient, there is room for improvement.



A "1" indicates that little progress has been made in this area and there are significant concerns. Specified action steps are suggested.

The School Quality Review Team provides a rubric score for each individual focus area within a Turning Points Practice, and then a summary Benchmark score for each Practice. The School Quality Review Team rating takes into account the ratings of the school in its internal Self-Assessment. The Team does not provide an overall rating in the form of a score for the school, as it is inappropriate to capture the complex picture of the school's development with a single statistic.

Based on their narrative findings and benchmark ratings, the SQR team will make a recommendation to the Turning Points regional and national centers about the continuing membership of the school in the Turning Points network.

In general, a school will be reaffirmed as a member school if it receives ratings of mostly 2 and 3 across the benchmark areas. If the school receives ratings of mostly 3 and 4, it will be affirmed as a Turning Points Demonstration School and will be asked to play a larger leadership role in the national network. Finally, in rare instances, if a school receives ratings of mostly 1, it will be asked to withdraw from the network if the areas of concern are not addressed within an agreed upon timeframe.

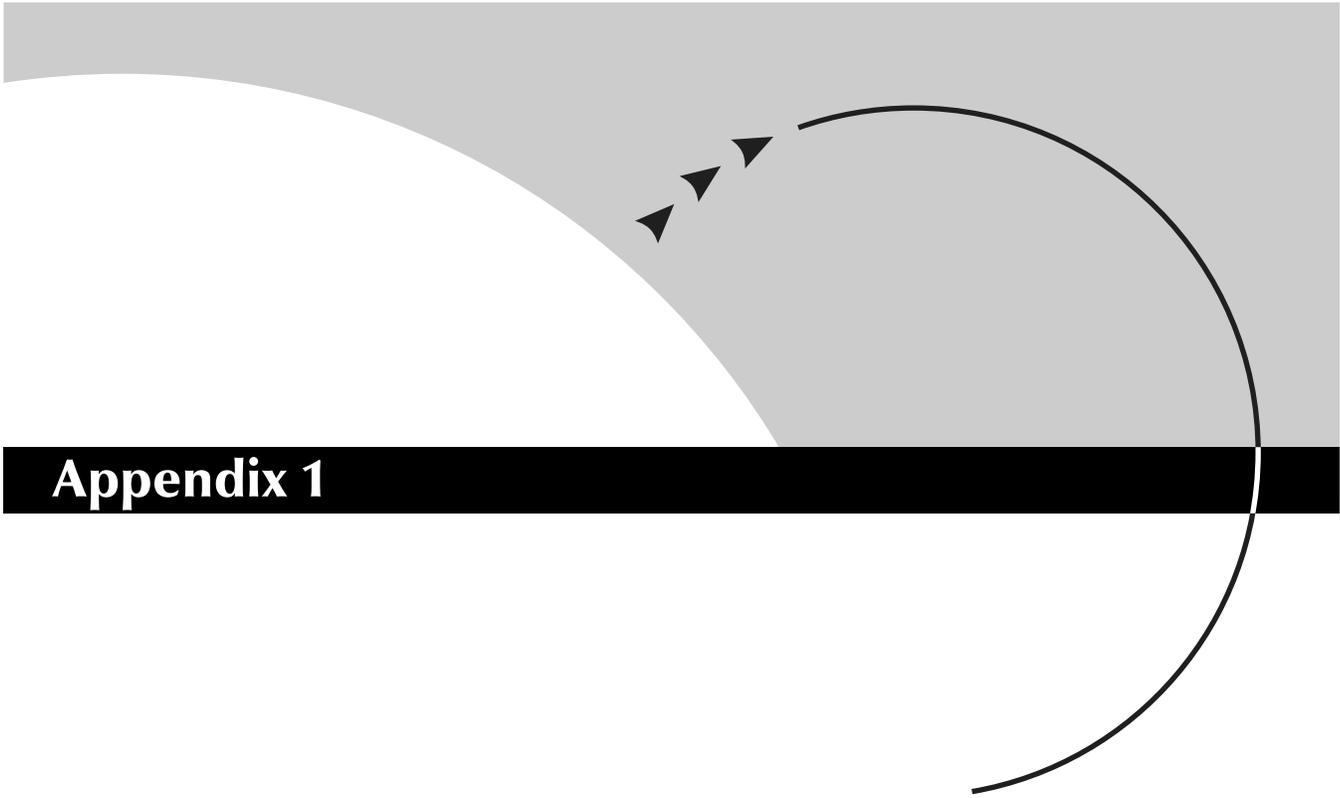
COMPLETING THE REPORT

Once the draft report has been completed by the Team, it should be sent to the principal of the school for review. The principal should review the report for accuracy, and if any inaccuracies or omissions are found, send notice in writing to the Team Chairperson for consideration. The School Quality Review Team Chairperson is then responsible for discussing the principal's feedback with the Team. Consensus is reached on any changes to be made, and the final report is completed. The completed report is then forwarded to the Turning Points regional and national centers.

THE SCHOOL RESPONDS TO THE REPORT

Whether the school receives mostly high ratings or a more mixed report, a thoughtful response to the team's feedback is an important part of the process. To ensure that the SQR team's report becomes a useful part of the school's ongoing inquiry process, the Portfolio Development Team facilitates a school-wide discussion of the findings. This community discussion, which may take place across several different forums including whole faculty, teacher team, student, and parent meetings, should result in the creation of goals, priorities, and action plans.

A sample outline of a report, followed by an example of commendations, issues, and recommendations are found in Appendix 2.



Appendix 1

SAMPLE VISIT SCHEDULE

To be modified for each school.

Day 1: Focus on Students

8:00

School Quality Review Team members arrive at school.

8:15

Check-in meeting of the Review Team in a room designated for the Team's use during the visit. The Team receives an initial overview of the school by the principal, the Leadership Team, and the Portfolio Development Team. The Review Team reviews the schedule.

8:30

Student shadowing. Each member of the Team is paired with a student to shadow for the rest of the school day. Time is allotted for conversation with students (lunch) and looking at student work samples.

2:30

The Team meets to discuss first impressions, define focus questions and roles for the next day's visit, and review materials available to the Team, including the School Portfolio.

SAMPLE VISIT SCHEDULE (CONTINUED)

3:30

The Team meets with the school's Portfolio Development Team to go over the visit schedule and address questions from the school or the Team.

4:30

The Team reconvenes to begin assembling evidence and making conclusions.

5:30

Adjourn.

Day 2: Focus on Teaching and Learning

8:00

Team members arrive at school.

8:15

Team members observe classes, meet with groups of teachers, or attend teachers' meetings for the rest of the school day.

11:00

The Team reviews the School Portfolio with special attention to the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment section.

12:00

The Team interviews the faculty individually or in groups or teams.

2:30

The Team meets to begin to frame conclusions about the school's performance, especially in teaching and learning. The Team also reviews materials and plans activities for the final day of the visit.

4:00

The School Quality Review Team meets with the Portfolio Development Team to review the schedule.

4:30

The School Quality Review Team reconvenes to continue framing conclusions and begin drafting report.

5:30

Adjourn.

SAMPLE VISIT SCHEDULE (CONTINUED)

Day 3: Focus on Systems, Structures, and Partners/Writing the Report

8:00

Team members arrive at school.

8:15

Check-in meeting

8:30

Team members meet with the principal, other administrators, families, and other school community members.

10:30

Team members observe additional classes, review materials, and examine students' work samples.

12:00

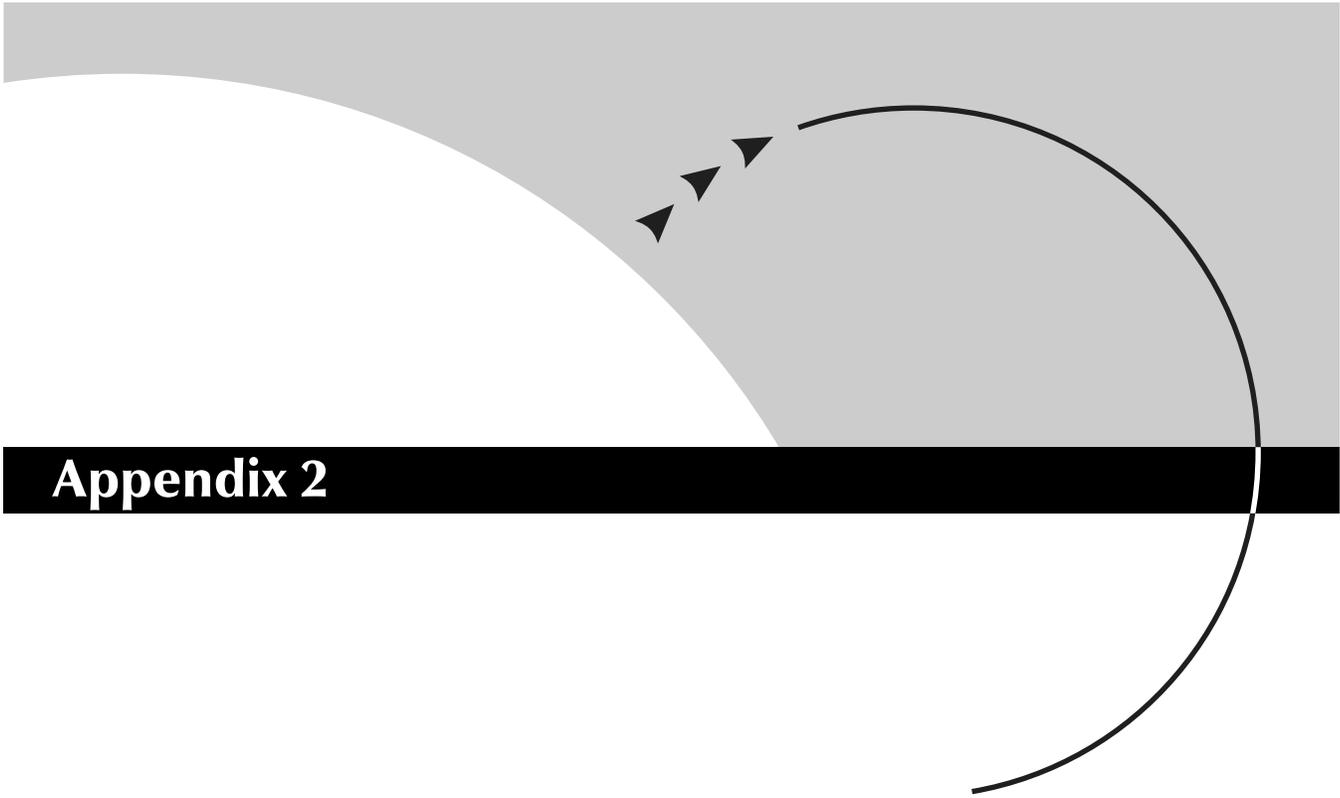
Team meeting to complete the report and evaluate school performance.

4:30

Exit meeting with the principal and leadership team to provide initial feedback on the School Quality Review Team's findings.

5:00

Adjourn.



Appendix 2

SAMPLE REPORT FORMAT⁴

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Purpose of Visit and of this report
- B. Team members' backgrounds
- C. Findings based on the six Turning Points Practices/Benchmarks
- D. How information was collected
 - 1. Number of students followed
 - 2. Number of classes observed
 - 3. Number of discussions/interviews conducted and with how many individuals
 - 4. Review of the School Portfolio and other data
- E. How conclusions were reached
 - 1. Use of evidence
 - 2. Team deliberations and consensus*
 - 3. Dissenting views* (when necessary and under what type of circumstances)

*The views and opinions reflected in the School Quality Review Report are those of the entire School Quality Review Team. The School Quality Review Team should reach consensus on all commentaries and evaluations in the report. If consensus cannot be reached, dissenting views should be clearly noted as such in the relevant sections of the report.

4. This report is adapted from the Rhode Island Department of Education SALT School Visit Handbook, 1st Edition, developed and copyrighted by RIDE & Catalpa Ltd.

SAMPLE REPORT FORMAT (CONTINUED)

F. Profile of the School

A brief description of the school including the school's location, governing body, size, grades, and demography. Also identify major changes (if any) that are underway (e.g., a new principal, turnover of staff, etc.), and major improvement efforts undertaken in the last 3–5 years.

II. IMPROVING LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

- A.** Findings—Commendations
- B.** Findings—Issues and Concerns
- C.** Recommendations
- D.** Benchmark Scores

III. BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND A PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

- A.** Findings—Commendations
- B.** Findings—Issues and Concerns
- C.** Recommendations
- D.** Benchmark Scores

IV. DATA-BASED INQUIRY AND DECISION MAKING

- A.** Findings—Commendations
- B.** Findings—Issues and Concerns
- C.** Recommendations
- D.** Benchmark Scores

V. CREATING A SCHOOL CULTURE TO SUPPORT HIGH ACHIEVEMENT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A.** Findings—Commendations
- B.** Findings—Issues and Concerns
- C.** Recommendations
- D.** Benchmark Scores

VI. NETWORKING WITH LIKE-MINDED SCHOOLS AND DEVELOPING DISTRICT CAPACITY TO SUPPORT SCHOOL CHANGE

- A.** Findings—Commendations
- B.** Findings—Issues and Concerns
- C.** Recommendations
- D.** Benchmark Scores

SAMPLE REPORT FORMAT (CONTINUED)

VII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND OVERALL EVALUATION

A. Most Important Commendations

No more than five (5). They must already be included in the report.

B. Most Important Issues and Concerns

No more than five (5). They must already be included in the report.

B. Most Important Recommendations

No more than five (5). They must already be included in the report.

Recommendations should include a reasonable timeline for action steps to be taken and, as much as possible, be cost neutral (or doable within the existing budget).

VIII. APPENDICES

- A.** Appendix I: Any documents relevant to School Quality Review Team's process and/or its evaluation of the school

EXAMPLE OF COMMENDATIONS, ISSUES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS⁵

Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for All Students

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

School Portfolio materials; current reports; classroom observations; shadowing of students; meeting with administrators, faculty, parents, and students

COMMENDATIONS

Student learning results from a wide variety of integrated activities including classroom instruction, group and individual projects, and presentations. An effective range of instructional strategies are demonstrated by staff.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

Students did not always understand the reasons for doing the particular assignments they were working on. That is, they couldn't consistently explain what they were learning as a result of their activities in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the [school's name] develop clear, written habits of mind, or ways of thinking and behaving, for the school. These habits should be embedded throughout the curriculum and daily life of the school.

Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

School Portfolio materials; current reports; classroom observations; shadowing of students; meeting with administrators, faculty, parents, and students

COMMENDATIONS

Well established teams meet regularly to examine student work and develop curriculum. The school's leadership team and governance process works well to include all faculty in major decisions. Peer observations are conducted among teaching faculty to improve practice and strengthen collegiality.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

While the peer observation program is commendable, at this stage it involves only some teachers.

5. Please note that this sample of issues and recommendations covers only three of six Practices.

EXAMPLE OF COMMENDATIONS, ISSUES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand the peer observation program to include more teachers and more frequent classroom observations. Peer observation should become a more formalized professional development procedure involving all faculty.

Data-Based Inquiry and Decision Making

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

School Portfolio materials; current reports; classroom observations; shadowing of students; meeting with administrators, faculty, parents, and students

COMMENDATIONS

The school is beginning to provide more structured opportunities for all faculty groups to look at and analyze data.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

While the school has generated some data to assess individual student performance, there is an absence of other data that would provide important information. In the absence of such data, the Team was unable to ascertain whether student achievement was equitably distributed across sub-groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status), an important item in terms of equity and achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop a plan to gather and analyze data from multiple sources aimed at assessing patterns and equity among groups of students.

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