Research Brief
Scholastic Audits

Question: What is a scholastic audit?

Summary of Findings:

"To be truly good, schools must demonstrate how well their graduates are prepared for productive and satisfying futures…"(Bassett, 2004). The bottom line for schools is to prepare their students for successful opportunities beyond high school. In order for a school to do this effectively, they must routinely monitor their progress and assess their students' progress. One component of this process is to determine what their students are learning, how that learning can be applied to life after high school and what the school can do to encourage and support even more rigorous and engaging academic programs (Louisiana State Department of Education, n.d.; Kentucky School Reform Corporation, 2002).

One way of monitoring the effectiveness of a school's program is to conduct a scholastic audit. In 1998 Kentucky became the first state to officially implement scholastic audits. Louisiana, in 2005 and Arkansas, in 2006, followed suit and adopted a model similar to that in Kentucky. California established a process for scholastic audits in 2001 that was designed to conduct an in-depth investigation of schools that consistently failed to make academic progress. Most often schools that score in the lowest one-third to one-half on state achievement tests are selected for audits. Additional audits of a district may be conducted when a district school has not made significant improvement in a two-year period.

The Scholastic Audit Process
The purpose of the audit is to assist individual schools and districts improve. The focus is on gathering data and preparing recommendations that can be used to guide school improvement initiatives. Scholastic audits use a multi-step approach and include:

Preparing for the Audit
• Teams of parents, teachers and university professors are trained in areas of school improvement. A team external to the school is assigned to conduct the audit. Their training includes:
  - the use of school resources
  - building leadership capacity
  - evaluation of school improvement plan
  - research based professional development

- leverage points – the key characteristics of a solid academic program (Kentucky School Reform Corporation, 2002)
- The school compiles a portfolio that most often includes:
  - school improvement plans
  - lesson plans
  - fiscal plans
  - student and teacher handbooks
  - student data including test scores, attendance rates, discipline actions, number and designation of specific course offerings, graduation rates, extracurricular activities/events
  - parent and community outreach and involvement
  - samples of student work (Carr, 2007)

Audit process
- The audit team spends, on average, four days at a site.
- Every classroom and teacher is observed or visited.
- Every member of the faculty and staff are interviewed at least once.
- Representative students, parents and other stakeholders are interviewed.
- Evidence for the audit report comes from at least one of the following: observations, interviews and/or supporting documents.

Audit report
- A preliminary report is prepared by the audit team and presented to the stakeholders before the team leaves the campus.
- Recommendations are then provided, all of which are based on current research and the data gathered during the audit.
- A final report is submitted in writing usually a few months after the actual audit.

Follow-up
- Support for the analysis and examination of the preliminary, then final report are provided.
- An improvement plan is designed, implemented and evaluated.
- According to Carr (2007), when necessary, personnel changes may be made. Some examples include replacing the administration, hiring a school manager, reassigning staff, redefining the roles of staff, adding an administrative intern, and/or providing weekly monitoring of progress.

Scholastic Audit Models

- Arkansas Department of Education. (2006, Fall). School level performance descriptors for Arkansas' standards and indicators for school improvement. Retrieved online from http://arkansased.org/scholastic_audit/pdf/sisi_041408.pdf

A list of this state's standards and indicators that are used in a scholastic audit are included in this piece.

- California Program Improvement Schools Information
  http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ti/programimprov.asp

- Kentucky School Improvement Information
  This site provides information about the Kentucky scholastic audit procedures.
  http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/School+Improvement/Scholastic+Audits+and+Reviews/School+Audits+and+Reviews/

- Louisiana Department of Education. (n.d.) Educational improvement and assistance. Scholastic audit overview. Retrieved online from
  http://www.doe.state.la.us/LDE/eia/2336.html
  The value of this site is to the active links that are provided to the state's scholastic audit rubric and guiding principles.

Online Resources:

- Bassett, P. F. (2004, February 4). From good to great schools. Retrieved online from
  http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/02/04/21bassett.h23.html
  This article describes characteristics of outstanding schools and it also includes a summary of the report on independent schools from the National Educational Longitudinal Study.

- Carr, P. (2007). Kentucky's story. Retrieved online from
  http://www.nwrel.org/nwrcc/images/sos2007/pdx-improvement.pdf
  This is a PowerPoint presentation presented by a division director from the Kentucky State Board of Education, which chronicles the state's scholastic auditing program.

- Kentucky Department of Education. (n.d.) Scholastic audit and review resources. Retrieved online from
  http://www.kentuckyschools.org/KDE/Administrative+Resources/School+Improvement/Standards+and+Indicators+for+School+Improvement/Standard+3/Scholastic+Audits+and+Review+Resources3.htm
  This is a list of resources that covers may topics related to school improvement initiatives.

- Kentucky School Reform Corporation. (2002). Educational information network. Scholastic audits. Retrieved online from

EPI — EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS, INC.

http://www.partnershipforsuccessfulschools.org/publications-and-resources/newsletters/ein/ein-200204.pdf

An explanation the scholastic audit process in Kentucky is provided in this piece.

- Louisiana Department of Education. (2005, Spring). School improvement principles and indicators for Louisiana. Retrieved online from http://www.doe.state.la.us/LDE/uploads/9489.pdf

A list of indicators and their descriptions of guiding principles for the state's scholastic audit are provided.

- Richard, A. (2004, April 7). Audit program seeks out traits found in successful schools. Retrieved online from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/04/07/30audit-s1.h23.html?r=2031878640

This is a brief overview of the audit program in Kentucky.

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http://www.educationpartnerships.org/