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# School Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework



## BACKGROUND

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET) is an organisation with a strong performance agenda which expects the achievement of high standards by all employees. The performance agenda is anchored in the understanding that there is a reciprocal relationship between school leadership, quality teaching and student learning. The development of our people is crucial in sustaining an organisation which is agile and responsive. Given the right support and development, employees will enjoy increasing successes and job satisfaction. The performance agenda focuses on those aspects of the organisation that matter most:

- quality educational experiences for all students;
- responsiveness to our clients – students, parents and the community; and
- strong school leadership and vision.

The Department of Education and Training is characterised by:

- strong and effective leaders whose primary focus is to establish a culture of learning;
- learning being pivotal to achievement;
- employees having a contemporary knowledge of their work;
- an outstanding culture where everyone has a sense of belonging and pride in their work;
- well developed systems to evaluate and monitor performance ensuring self evaluation and self reflection;
- the use of data to inform decision making from the classroom out; and
- high levels of staff and community interactions to review performance and achievement.

Through quality strategies, programs, people, partnerships and systems, the Department of Education and Training will grow educated, skilled and smart Territorians.

## Accountability and Performance Improvement in Schools

### INTRODUCTION

The Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework (APIF) 2006 is a system of accountability that sets clear expectations of standards for performance and promotes a culture of evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement for DET and schools. This information provides specific guidelines to schools for implementation of policy, programs and practice to meet local and system performance goals and targets, including those set by the NT and Australian Governments.

School improvement requires a professional commitment to problem solving, innovation, critical reflection and continuous professional learning.

School improvement is reliant on school leadership that engages people at all levels of the organisation in the learning process by creating a culture of inquiry which develops new capabilities and revolutionises teaching and learning. Strategies must work from the classroom out and have a bottom line of enhancing student progress, achievement and development.

## School Accountability

The APIF recognises that to achieve high levels of educational outcomes, accountability related to student learning is the responsibility of individual teachers. Teachers need to be supported by strong school leadership and strong partnerships with parents and community members. The Strategic Improvement Plan and the Annual Operational Plan must focus on:

- curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment;
- staff development; and
- resource use.

The school community, including the school council, has a role to play in school improvement by providing feedback and information which contributes to and endorses the school's strategic planning and review processes.

## Continuous Improvement Cycle (see Diagram 1 and Figure 1)

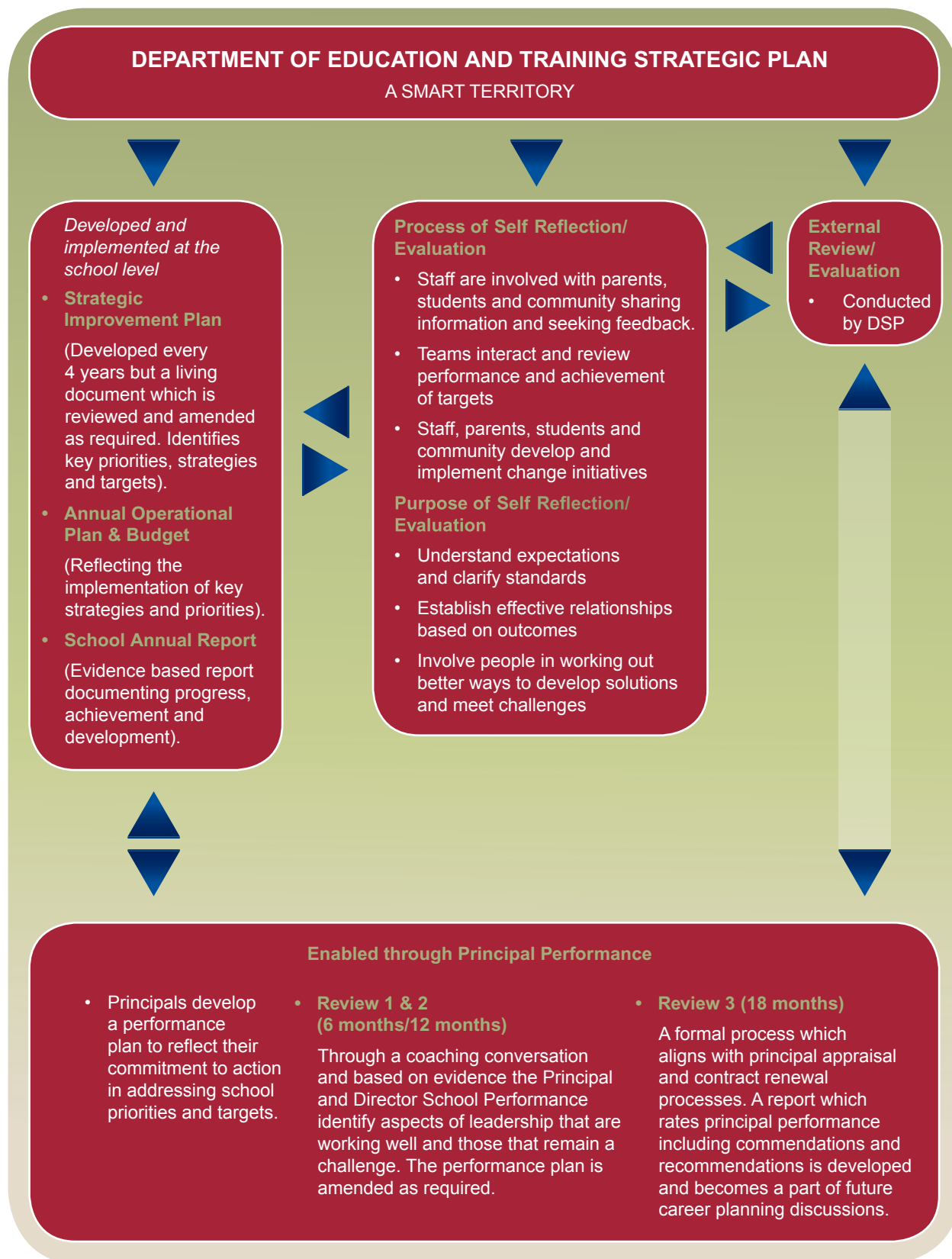
High performing schools regularly monitor and review their performance to guide their actions. Schools are required to self review the effectiveness of programs and practices to bring about improvement.

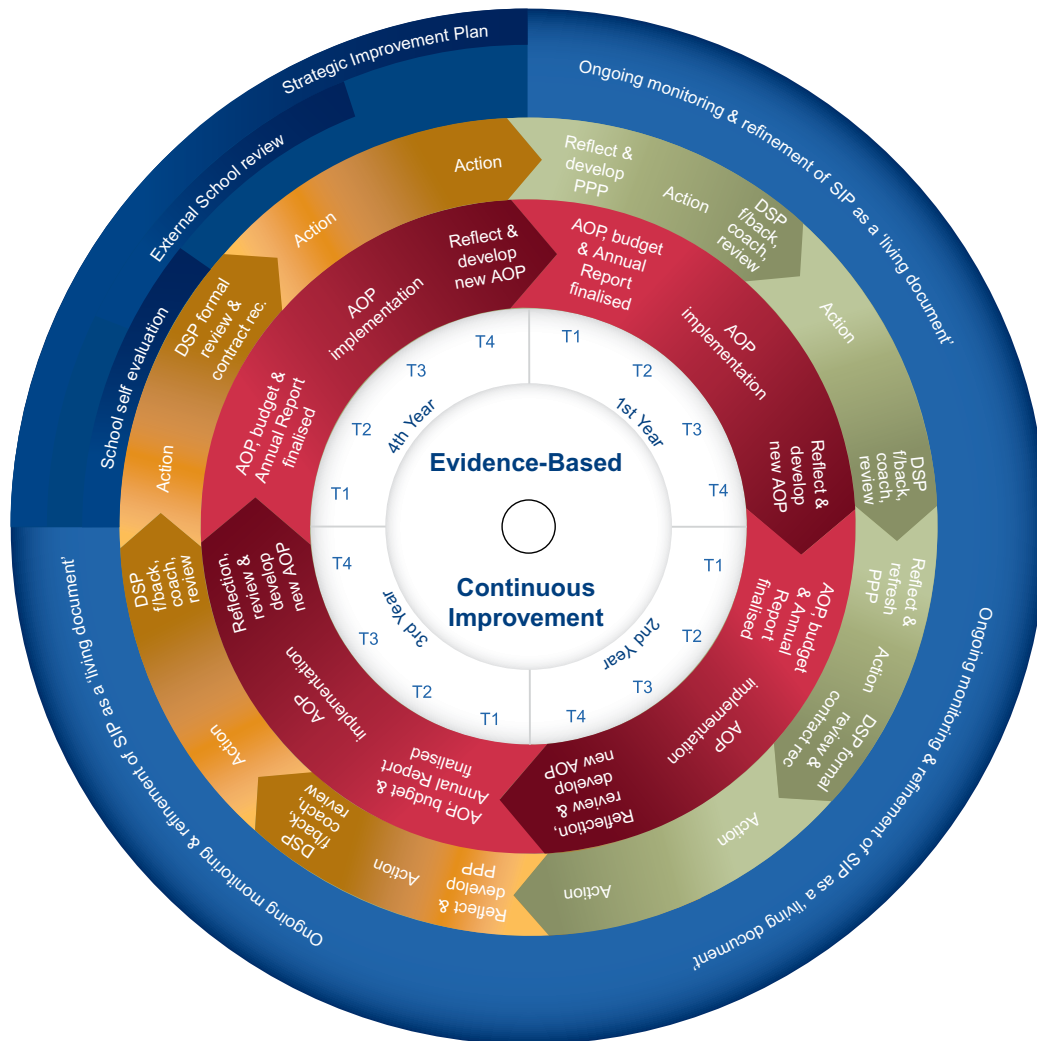
Self review enables an analysis of current performance and the effectiveness of strategies implemented to support performance improvement. It provides the basis for performance reporting and future planning.

Formal review processes, including an analysis of school performance, are to be conducted. The specific approach is determined and guided by the Director School Performance (DSP).

The Strategic Improvement Plan is the one authoritative document which contains the specific expectations and commitments that will be addressed. It is developed every four years but is continually reviewed and amended annually through the Annual Operational Plan. Progress towards achievement is reported in the School Annual Performance Report.

DIAGRAM 1



**FIGURE 1: EVIDENCE-BASED IMPROVEMENT CYCLE****KEY**

■ Annual Cycle
 ■ Principal Performance Cycle (2yr)
 ■ Strategic Improvement Cycle (4yr)

Note: while the annual cycle is fixed, the strategic improvement and principal performance cycle is dynamic and can be commenced at a time that is appropriate to significant changes within the school and negotiated with the Director School Performance.

Every four years, schools establish a Strategic Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan is a brief statement of strategic intent and is to be widely visible throughout the school. They align with the DET Strategic Plan. The Improvement Plan includes:

- improvement goals in Key Results Areas; (See Table 1)
- locally set performance targets, linked to DET and national targets, to measure school progress over time;
- broad strategies to address improvement goals and performance targets;
- explicit components as required by the national or NT funding agreements e.g. Smarter Schools National Partnerships, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan, Digital Education Revolution National Partnership;
- School Community Partnership Agreements for focus schools as required by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014; and
- a published attendance strategy.

The Strategic Improvement Plan is reviewed and amended as needed in consultation with the DSP and the school community as part of the continuous improvement cycle. The school council and the DSP endorse the Strategic Improvement Plan. This needs to be a concise document addressing key school priorities and not more than three to four pages in length.

## KEY RESULT AREAS

The five inter-related Key Result Areas (KRAs) provide the framework for monitoring and measuring school performance. Relevant outputs and outcomes should be locally determined in conjunction with the DSP, the community and in the context of regional, NT and national priorities.

**TABLE 1: POTENTIAL SOURCES OF EVIDENCE OF PERFORMANCE**

| Key Result Areas                                | Outputs and Milestones  | Outcomes and targets  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>1. Teaching and Learning</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum planning including: strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and Information Communication Technology for Learning</li> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Individual Learning Strategies</li> <li>Educational Adjustment Plans</li> <li>NTCET Assessment Plans</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9</li> <li>Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) achievement</li> <li>T-9 net</li> <li>Vocational Educational and Training in Schools (VETiS) qualifications by level</li> <li>Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) achievement</li> <li>Diagnostic and other school-based assessment</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. Wellbeing</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities identified in student and staff perception surveys</li> <li>Relevant well-being policies and/or programs</li> <li>Celebrations of success and progress</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student perception data</li> <li>Staff perception data</li> <li>Student suspension data</li> <li>Student mobility data</li> <li>Staff Absences data</li> <li>Staff turnover and retention data</li> </ul>  |
| <b>3. Durrumdujcbz Transitions and Pathways</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range of options and flexible learning programs for individuals and groups of students including students with special needs.</li> <li>Student destination survey</li> <li>Attendance strategy</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australian Early Development Index data (AEDI)</li> <li>Assessment of Student Competencies (ASC) data</li> <li>Student attendance data</li> <li>Real and apparent student retention data</li> <li>VETiS completions</li> <li>NTCET completions</li> <li>Australian Tertiary Assessment Rank</li> </ul>   |
| <b>4. Partnerships</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander School Community Partnership Agreement</li> <li>Memorandums of Understanding</li> <li>Service Level Agreements</li> <li>Community and/or industry engagement events</li> <li>Effective partnerships</li> <li>Priorities identified in parent and community perception surveys</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent perception data</li> <li>Community perception data</li> </ul>   |



| Key Result Areas     | Outputs and Milestones  | Outcomes and targets   |
|----------------------|---|--|
| <b>5. Leadership</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School mission/vision and values statements</li> <li>• 360° feedback</li> <li>• Interpersonal relationships</li> <li>• School review</li> <li>• Performance Management processes</li> <li>• Professional Development data</li> <li>• Leadership and PD components of School Literacy and Numeracy and ICT self-assessments</li> <li>• Alignment of expenditure with strategic directions</li> <li>• Expenditure of supplementary funding within period of agreement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational health and safety data</li> <li>• Principal and leadership turnover (system level monitoring)</li> </ul> |

## ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Annual Operational Plan is a practical guide to map the processes needed to achieve the goals and targets identified in the Strategic Improvement Plan. The Annual Operational Plan identifies:

- short-term key priorities aligned to the targets set in the Strategic Improvement Plan;
- specific actions required to implement improvement strategies;
- staff who are to perform the actions, and their accountabilities;
- resources and professional development needed to assist implementation; and
- performance measures used to monitor annual progress toward longer term targets.

Director School Performance and the school council endorse the Annual Operational Plan.

## EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Financial planning, monitoring and reporting are key aspects of the Annual Operational Planning process and as such need to be fully integrated.

Schools receive funds from the following sources:

- PCEB (per capita equity base) – includes cleaning, ground maintenance, essential services, school supplies etc.
- SSD – Student Services Division for Inclusion Support Assistants (ISA) or specific children/activities
- UMR and non UMR – Urgent Minor and Non Urgent Minor Repairs

School communities must use resources effectively. Cash reserves should reflect and align to identified future resourcing priorities. Programs and activities funded by schools must be sustainable and due consideration needs to be given to ongoing maintenance costs and future asset replacement.

The Annual Operational Plan should be underpinned by a supporting budget which aligns with school priorities and strategies. Effective financial management practices include the following:

- budgeting – the process of allocating resources to planned outcomes reflected in the operational plan, with sound cash flow management;
- monitoring – the regular review of actual performance against the budget;
- reviewing – making necessary adjustments to budgets when changes occur to planned outcomes or the levels of revenue received; and
- reporting
  - at the end of each month reports to staff and school council
  - at the end of the year, the overview of actual performance against the plan and sharing this report with the school community.

Each stage of the cycle requires liaison, input and feedback from the staff and school council.

## MONITORING AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Performance can be monitored and measured through achievement of milestones (outputs) and progress towards targets (outcomes). Milestones and targets must focus on local priorities and show clear connection to systemic and national outputs and outcomes. It is critical that information reported by schools is accurate and timely. Schools monitor and measure performance by comparing their results, appropriate to their context, with:

- achievement standards within the NT Curriculum Framework (NTCF), NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) and the Australian Curriculum;
- national standards within both national and international assessment programs (such as NAPLAN, NAP sample assessments, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS) including like schools, NT and national averages where available;
- literacy and numeracy expectations in the T-9 Diagnostic Net;
- agreed national, NT and regional performance targets; and
- school improvement targets.

Performance can be monitored and compared both at a point in time and also over time. Measuring performance over time can provide evidence of:

- impact of strategies and focused effort;
- rates of improvement, particularly in comparison to previous performance; and
- progress towards local, regional, NT and national targets.

Those schools which are high performing track student progress on a regular basis and can demonstrate through evidence based practice that they are adding value to each and every student.

## SCHOOL ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Schools provide an Annual Performance Report to their communities against the five KRAs, the school's performance targets and the performance standards based on like school, NT and national averages. The report is limited to a maximum of 10 pages. The DSP and school council endorse the information contained in the school's Annual Performance Report. The School Annual Performance Report must separately identify supplementary funds allocated to meet the needs of the school's target student cohort, and the relative achievement levels of target students. This requirement is waived if low student numbers create a risk of individual students being identified. The report is to be submitted annually to the Director School Performance by the end of Term 1.

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW

All staff are required to have a Performance Plan identifying actions, standards and targets aligned with the Strategic Improvement Plan. Principals and delegated staff manage Performance Review and use the process to build staff capability. The review should include explicit leadership development, while positively focusing staff performance on student learning to align resources and professional learning. The process forms the foundation for the creation of a culture of inquiry which develops new capabilities and revolutionises teaching and learning. The core challenge is to establish classroom routines and practices that represent personalised, evidence based, focused teaching and learning.



## ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW, PRINCIPAL APPRAISAL AND CONTRACT RENEWAL

A principal's annual performance review is based on school performance information and evidence that the compliance requirements of NT and Australian Government legislation, regulations, standards and improvement targets have been satisfied. NT DET currently employs the majority of principals on a contract basis for two year periods with the option of a two year extension. Six months prior to renewing or extending contracts, the DSP will review a principal's performance. This appraisal will involve a review of the evidence on school and individual performance. A report that rates the principal's performance will inform decisions regarding future employment options including contract renewal. However, performance reviews are continuous and ongoing throughout the cycle and are designed to engage principals in an agenda of improvement.

### DIAGRAM 2: ALIGNING THE PROCESS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY, SCHOOL & PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE

| Key Results Areas   | School Review   | Principal Performance  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>1. Teaching and Learning</b><br>Leading curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning that results in quality learning outcomes for all learners   | <b>1. Student outcomes data</b>                       | <b>1. Be out and about</b> (close to our people and business)  |
| <b>2. Well-Being</b><br>Improving the school's ability to meet the needs of all learners and staff through interactions that are mutually supportive and focused on the learning and well being of all.                   | <b>2. Clear strategic direction</b>                   | <b>2. Know what is going on</b> (spend regular time communicating and listening)   |
| <b>3. Participation, Transitions and Pathways</b><br>Personalising learning in all phases of schooling to maximise attendance and participation, resulting in further training, learning and employment pathways for all. | <b>3. Analysing data for improvement</b>              | <b>3. Act effectively and efficiently</b> (to solve problems discovered by being out and about and knowing what is going on) |
| <b>4. Partnerships</b><br>Working together in productive and mutually supportive ways to develop a strong sense of belonging, achievement and pride in the school.  | <b>4. Positive, collaborative school culture</b>      | <b>4. Involve our people</b> (with parents, community and others through regular programs)                                   |
| <b>5. Leadership</b><br>Establishing and driving an explicit and localised school improvement agenda.   | <b>5. Use of school resources to improve learning</b> | <b>5. Create interaction</b> (across areas of the school community to improve links)   |
|   | <b>6. Building a professional team</b>                | <b>6. Find better ways</b> (involve people in working out better ways to do things)  |
|   | <b>7. Curriculum Leadership</b>                       | <b>7. Learning and Development</b> (make sure people have appropriate coaching and training to implement core business)      |
|   | <b>8. Effective Teaching</b>                          | <b>8. Give and seek regular feedback</b> (and recognition of performance)  |
|   |   | <b>9. Monitor/manage work conditions</b> (pay attention to physical and emotional work conditions)                           |
|   |   | <b>10. Lead by example</b> (with consistent high standards of behaviour, ethics and hard work).                              |

## COMPLIANCE

Compliance is a critical aspect of effective school management and accountability. The school principal ensures that appropriate programs are in place and that resources are targeted at and reach identified areas and students, to facilitate their achievement of outcomes.

The School Compliance Checklist is part of a web-based tool designed to assist schools to comply with key legislative, regulatory and policy requirements in the broad areas of facilities management, financial management, governance, human resource management, occupational health and safety and risk management.

## School's Toolkit

### GUIDES, TEMPLATES AND TOOLS

The following guides, templates and tools have been developed to assist schools to implement the APIF's cycle of performance analysis, self review, planning and implementation, monitoring and reporting.

### PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS AND SELF REVIEW

- School Self Review guide and template
- School Reflection tool
- Teacher Reflection tool
- Performance Review guides, templates and tools
- Data Analysis and Reporting tool

### PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING AND REPORTING

- Strategic Improvement Plan guide and template
- Annual Operational Plan guide and template
- Annual Performance Report guide and template.

The guides, templates and tools listed above, along with other useful resources for schools, can be found on the DET staff site.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### WHAT ARE DIRECTORS SCHOOL PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABLE FOR?

The work of Directors School Performance must challenge principals to confront reality as to change behaviours, priorities and practices. They will work with principals so that they lead change which penetrates deeply into the classroom bringing about systematic improvements in teaching and learning. Most significantly, the work of the Directors School Performance must drive the school performance agenda so that principals embed practices of internal accountability. Through a coaching model, Directors School Performance will gain the commitment of principals while also developing their skill to deliver on the priorities, strategies and targets of DET.

### WHAT ARE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ACCOUNTABLE FOR?

The work of the Principal is to maintain a focus on instructional leadership to enhance student progress, achievement and development. Principals create high performing schools by:

- focusing on students and their learning;
- focusing on teachers and their teaching;
- building capacity and people power to take charge of change;
- defining and articulating direction;
- leading a culture of inquiry and learning;
- committing to strategies to achieve specific targets;
- maintaining momentum and urgency; and
- continually monitoring and evaluating processes, achievement and development.

### WHAT ARE TEACHERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR?

Quality teaching is pivotal to student learning and is the decisive element in improving student outcomes. Teachers have a responsibility and accountability to:

- meet high standards of teaching;
- get students to meet high standards of education; and
- add value each and every day to student learning.

As instructional leaders, teachers will take responsibility for their professional learning so that classrooms are characterised by:

- precise focused teaching;
- engaged learning;
- high expectations; and
- intentionally inviting interactions.

