

The Teaching and Learning Review: Process, Tools, and Methodology

The Teaching and Learning Review consists of a broadly defined process and a set of research, observation, and interview tools that enable community stakeholders – district and school staff, students, community organizations, and families – to closely examine teaching and learning in their schools. The Review intentionally builds the capacity of these stakeholders to engage in inclusive and honest discussion about how effectively their public schools serve all their children and youth and about what is needed to make public education a source of development and opportunity. The Review developed by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, is customized to reflect the context and needs of the community in which it is being conducted.



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Process

The Review comprises three broad phases: collaborative planning and preparation, collection and analysis of data from schools and classrooms, and development of findings and recommendations for action.

Planning and Preparation

- Institute staff meet with the superintendent, other district personnel, and community leaders to collaboratively tailor the Review to their community's needs. The group identifies the schools to be visited during the Review.
- The district/community planning group identifies a team of educators from the district's schools and central office, leaders of key partner organizations, and family and community members who will gather data during school and classroom visits and develop findings and recommendations.
- Institute staff train the team members in the data-collection process, introducing them to the Teaching and Learning Review tools for observations and interviews and working with the team to adapt the tools to the context of the community.
- Data and background materials about the district, the community, and students are gathered and compiled to provide context for the Review.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Team members spend two full days in the selected schools, gathering data on teaching and learning through classroom observations, individual interviews, and focus groups. One day is focused on educators; the other day is focused on students.
- Institute staff compile the data from all the observations and interviews. Following an analysis of the data, the staff draft a set of preliminary findings for review by the school-visit team.

Findings and Recommendations

- The school-visit team meets, facilitated by Institute staff, to discuss and complete the findings and to develop a set of recommendations emphasizing strengths that the district and its partners should build on, as well as identifying work that remains to be done.
- The findings and recommendations are shared with district and community leaders.

Tools

The Review features a set of tools designed to gather data consistently across multiple classroom observations, individual interviews, and focus groups by each of the school-visit team members.

Observation Tools

- Classroom observations of both educators and students are recorded on “running record” forms. Every two minutes during the class period, the observer notes in writing the actions (who is talking, listening, etc.), language, interactions between educator and students or colleagues, and materials being used.
- Following each observation session, the observer reviews the running record and notes instances of these dimensions for use in data analysis.

Interview Tools

- Individual and focus group interviews with educators and students follow a set of scripted questions to ensure consistency in data collection.

Extended Learning Opportunities and Supports Tools

Gathering data from sources outside the classroom is a natural extension of the investigation guided by the Teaching and Learning Review. A separate suite of tools focuses on extended learning opportunities and supports (ELOS) and accompany the core set of Teaching and Learning tools. They are:

- *Principal interviews* focusing on the major challenges for enhancing instruction. Protocols are particularly concerned with problem areas that require additional supports (e.g., target populations, specific content areas) and the communities of student population.
- *A student survey* to gather individual information regarding time on task and supports in and out of school, as well as to identify additional sites for inquiry.
- *Student focus groups* to allow for more in-depth discussion regarding the teaching and learning struggles of students and to further understand how students and families address these struggles.
- *Community service provider interviews* to gather descriptive data of programs offered to students, assess capacity of organizations that offer supplemental services, and probe the level of partnership with schools and central office.
- *ELOS observations*, using ethnographic logs that track the overall activities, levels of student engagement, relationships represented between adults and students, and materials utilized.