TIPS: GATHERING, REVIEWING, ANALYZING DATA AND INFORMATION

How do we know students are learning?
What is the actual program for students?

OBSERVATION: In instructional settings and schoolwide...

- What the students are doing. Receiving information? Applying skills? Practicing newly acquired skills? Synthesizing and evaluating information? Are the students task-oriented? Are they engaged in their work?
- Range of activities taking place from acquisition of factual knowledge to the use of higher level thinking skills.
- How students are applying the skills of reading, writing, speaking, computing, and thinking.
- How the students are challenged to think and to communicate their thoughts orally and in writing.
- How students with special needs are participating in the classroom activities.
- How the instructional settings are varied according to the needs of the students and/or what is to be learned.
- The extent to which the school values learning.
- How students are supported, recognized, and rewarded.
- The interactions among and between staff, students, and parents.

INTERVIEWS (Individual and Group): Keep in mind...

- There is no one "right way" to interview; there is no one correct format.
- LISTEN to responses; be an active listener.
- Explain purposes of questions and double check understanding.
- Use clear and concise language which is appropriate to the interviewee.
- Keep initial questions simple/nonthreatening.
- Use open-ended questions that are unbiased.
- Ask questions to verify, add missing pieces of information, and stimulate thinking about next steps.
- Ask questions which do not imply the answer or reflect biases.
- Allow adequate time for responses and give appropriate feedback to responses.
- Do not push for answers at the expense of the interviewee.
- Be mindful of nonverbal feedback to committee members.
- Be alert to "clues" of interviewees and follow-up what is not being said.
- Do not make comments that reflect personal opinions/biases.
- Begin/end on time. Arrange so everyone can see and be seen, i.e., circle.
- Elicit responses from everyone in the group. Do not allow a few people to dominate the interview.
- Divide larger groups into smaller groups (10–15).
- Use “fishbowl” structure to stimulate a “rich” conversational atmosphere.
- Have stakeholders share analyzed samples of representative student work: showing degree of quality accomplishment of the schoolwide learning results.
- Thank people for attending and contributing to the interview.

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SAMPLE QUESTIONS for INDIVIDUAL and GROUP DIALOGUE

Starter Questions

- We understood from the self-study that...?
- What factors contributed to these results?
- Is this characteristic of...?
- How did the school/group learn from...?
- Where can evidence be found that...?
- What evidence is there that the students are able to...?
- What process did the school/group use to...?
- What elements of the student/community profile are related to...?
- What impact has _________ had on attainment of the learning results?
- Has the school/group considered...?
- Students have certainly benefited from...?
- How does the school/group know if this work meets the needs of...?
- What reasons guided...?
- What questions did the school/group ask about...?
- What led to the school/group’s conclusion about...
- To what extent is the observable evidence representative of what all students are doing and producing?
- How does the evidence analyzed accurately reflect the current school's program and its effectiveness?
- To what extent does the evidence analyzed provide information about the degree of quality accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes by all students?
- To what extent is the school institutionalizing the strategies to assess the school program and student learning (e.g., conversations about the quality of student work and growth over time)?
- How did the evidence support the school's identified growth areas? How were these areas prioritized and the schoolwide action plan developed?
- How will the sections of the schoolwide action plan impact student learning?
- Explain the school's next steps in defining and assessing quality accomplishment of its schoolwide learner outcomes by all students.
- How are the teachers, support staff, administration, students, and the school community working together to ensure that the shared vision of desirable learning results for all students is the basis for all school improvements?

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT TOOLS

- Portfolios of student work
- Open-ended problem-solving situations
- Short and long-term projects/research
- Student, teacher, and parent conferences
- Criterion-referenced/teacher-made tests
- Oral/group projects
- Self/peer assessments
- Hands-on activities
- Performance activities
- Norm-reference tests

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