

NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
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State Education Improvement Process

Interview Guide for the External Team Chair and Visitation Team

This guide provides an overview of interview protocol and sample interview questions to assist team members in leading and conducting interviews of school stakeholders.

Interview Protocol

Preparing the Interview Questions:

Prior to conducting an interview with a stakeholder group:

- Review the information sent to you by the Steering Committee or Team Chair.
- Identify any questions derived from the information that you would like to ask specific stakeholders.
- Review the sample questions provided in this guide.
- Highlight the ones that you want to ask that will help you gain a greater clarity with regard to the school's adherence to the Standards.
- Refine the questions as necessary to best meet your needs.
- Prioritize the questions you most want to have answered, recognizing that 5-8 questions are ideal for a ½ hour interview.
- Start with broad questions, as you will often find that participants answer many of your more specific questions early in the interview.
- Be sure to allow time to ask follow-up and probing questions for the purpose of gathering additional rich information.
- Team members should take turns asking questions.

Organizing for the Interview

Prior to beginning the interview team members should:

- Complete a list of questions to ask
- Decide who will lead the discussion and keep track of time
- Be ready to take notes

You may find it helpful to prepare nametags for the interview participants. This allows you to refer to participants directly and can aid in note taking. Inform participants that their names will not be mentioned in the report.

Beginning the Interview

To begin the interview, the chair:

- Welcomes the participants and explains the purpose of the interview
- Asks team members to briefly introduce themselves
- Asks participants to introduce themselves and to tell their role at the school

Sample Script: “Thank you for hosting the visitation team. We are excited that you are participating in this interview. We know that you are very busy so we want to honor the time we have available. This session will last about _____. The purpose of the interview is to help the Visitation Team gain a deeper understanding of the school. Over the next _____ days, we will review how your school is progressing, provide commendations on the areas in which your school is excelling and offer recommendations that will help your school continuously improve.”

During the Interview

Throughout the interview sessions with each stakeholder group, listen for patterns, themes, and trends that are consistent between the various stakeholders. Note special attention to evidence that cuts across multiple standards. Also pay attention to disconnects and inconsistencies between stakeholder groups. The data you gather during the interviews can help you identify strengths and needs that may emerge into commendations and recommendations for the school. This data may be recorded by each team member by using sticky notes and posting them on a wall chart listing each of the standards.

Closing the Interview

Approximately five minutes prior to the end of the interview, the team chair will:

- Ask the interviewees if there is anything they would like to add before the conclusion of the interview.
- Thank the group for their time and willingness to share.
- Explain that the information they shared, along with the team’s review of the school’s artifacts, classroom visits, and observations, will be used to help the team develop commendations and recommendations for the school. Explain that the team will provide an exit report on the last day of the visit and a written report approximately 20 working days after the visit.

Debriefing the Interview

Take a few minutes to debrief with fellow team members after the interview and before the next interview session or team activity begins. Discuss themes and other items of interest that may have emerged during interview. Gain consensus on the key findings from the interview and capture those findings for later use during team work sessions. Team members using sticky notes to record their findings may add this info to a wall chart containing each of the standards. This group information is helpful if the interview team is split up. The information may then be used for discussion and consensus building during the work sessions.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Sample Interview Questions

Broad Questions:

- 1. From your perspective what are the school's most significant strengths?**
- 2. From your perspective what are the school's most significant challenges?**
- 3. What recommendations do you have to effectively respond to these challenges?**

STATE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Vision and Beliefs

How do we communicate a shared direction to improve student performance?

How did the school establish the Vision and/or Beliefs?

2. Leadership and Governance

Who are we and what are we about?

How do you facilitate instructional leadership?

As school leaders, how do you encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for education improvement?

How does the Education Improvement Process involve the entire community?

3. Teaching and Learning

How do we facilitate student academic growth?

What does the data tell you about how students have performed over the past 3-5 years?

How does the school use that data to make instructional decisions?

4. Resources, Support and Environment

How do we support teaching and learning?

How does the teaching staff use the State Standards in their classes?

How are the benchmark expectations interpreted and aligned among staff?

Do parents and students understand the expectations of the Standards?

5. Ongoing and Continuous Improvement

How do we engage in ongoing improvement planning?

What school data is communicated to parents and community stakeholders?

How are timelines monitored within the school's improvement process?

FINAL QUESTION:

What haven't we asked you that you would like to tell us?

TEACHERS

Sample Interview Questions

Broad Questions:

1. From your perspective what are the school's most significant strengths?
2. From your perspective what are the school's most significant challenges?
3. What recommendations do you have to effectively respond to these challenges?

STATE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Vision and Beliefs

How do we communicate a shared direction to improve student performance?

How did the school establish the Vision and/or Beliefs?

2. Leadership and Governance

Who are we and what are we about?

How do you use your strengths and talents in this school?

As a teacher, how do you engage in collaboration and shared responsibility for education improvement?

How does the Education Improvement Process involve the entire community?

3. Teaching and Learning

How do we facilitate student academic growth?

What does the data tell you about how students have performed over the past 3-5 years?

How does the school use that data to make instructional decisions?

4. Resources, Support and Environment

How do we support teaching and learning?

How do you use the State Standards in your classes?

How are the benchmark expectations interpreted and aligned among staff?

Do parents and students understand the expectations of the standards?

5. Ongoing and Continuous Improvement

How do we engage in ongoing improvement planning?

What school data is communicated to parents and community stakeholders?

How are timelines monitored within the school's improvement process?

FINAL QUESTION:

What haven't we asked you that you would like to tell us?

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SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Sample Interview Questions

Broad Questions:

- 1. From your perspective what are the school's most significant strengths?**
- 2. From your perspective what are the school's most significant challenges?**
- 3. What recommendations do you have to effectively respond to these challenges?**

STATE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Vision and Beliefs

How do we communicate a shared direction to improve student performance?

How did the school establish the Vision and/or Beliefs?

2. Leadership and Governance

Who are we and what are we about?

How are you able to use your strengths and talents at school?

How do you take part in collaborating and sharing responsibility for education improvement?

How does the Education Improvement Process involve the entire community?

3. Teaching and Learning

How do we facilitate student academic growth?

What does the data tell you about how students have performed over the past 3-5 years?

How does the school use that data to make instructional decisions?

4. Resources, Support and Environment

How do we support teaching and learning?

How do the resources you have enhance student learning?

How does your school display a safe and healthy environment conducive to learning?

Do parents and students understand the expectations of the school?

5. Ongoing and Continuous Improvement

How do we engage in ongoing improvement planning?

What school data is communicated to parents and community stakeholders?

How are timelines monitored within the school's improvement process?

FINAL QUESTION:

What haven't we asked you that you would like to tell us?

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PARENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Sample Interview Questions

Broad Questions:

1. From your perspective what are the school's most significant strengths?
2. From your perspective what are the school's most significant challenges?
3. What recommendations do you have to effectively respond to these challenges?

STATE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Vision and Beliefs

How do we communicate a shared direction to improve student performance?

How did the school establish the Vision and/or Beliefs?

2. Leadership and Governance

Who are we and what are we about?

How are you involved in the school?

Are you aware of the current policies and procedures of the school?

How does the Education Improvement Process involve the entire community?

3. Teaching and Learning

How do we facilitate student academic growth?

From whom do you feel welcome and support while at school?

Are you aware of your child's expectations at school?

4. Resources, Support and Environment

How do we support teaching and learning?

Does your child's teacher use the State Standards in their classes?

What type of environment do you most often see at school?

Do parents and students understand the expectations of the Standards?

5. Ongoing and Continuous Improvement

How do we engage in ongoing improvement planning?

What school data is communicated to parents and community stakeholders?

Are you aware of the schools improvement goals?

FINAL QUESTION:

What haven't we asked you that you would like to tell us?

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STUDENTS

Sample Interview Questions

Broad Questions:

1. From your perspective what are the school's most significant strengths?
2. From your perspective what are the school's most significant challenges?
3. What recommendations do you have to effectively respond to these challenges?

STATE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Vision and Beliefs

How do we communicate a shared direction to improve student performance?

What do you think your school is trying to accomplish for students?

2. Leadership and Governance

Who are we and what are we about?

What strengths and talents do you use at school?

What do you know about the education improvement process?

How does the Education Improvement Process involve the entire community?

3. Teaching and Learning

How do we facilitate student academic growth?

Do you discuss your test results with your teacher(s), counselor, principal, and or parent(s)? If so explain.

Do you know what you are expected to learn?

4. Resources, Support and Environment

How do we support teaching and learning?

Do you know how the State Standards are used in your classes?

What kinds of things are available to help you learn at school?

What type of opportunities do you have to be a leader at school and help make decisions?

5. Ongoing and Continuous Improvement

How do we engage in ongoing improvement planning?

What suggestions would you make to your school to get more students involved in learning and in school activities?

How do you know when you are doing well at school?

FINAL QUESTION:

What haven't we asked you that you would like to tell us?