Principal Practice Observation Tool

2013-14

The Principal Practice Observation Tool was created as an evidence gathering tool to be used by evaluators during Principal Practice Observations as part of the Principal Performance Review. The evidence gathered by this tool will be applied to the Quality Review rubric. The tool provides examples and questions directly connected to leadership practices embedded in each indicator of the Quality Review rubric, allowing strong leadership practices to be recognized in the context of any school. The questions embedded in the tool can also serve as a reflection exercise for principals.

Statements that reflect Well Developed practice, as outlined in the Quality Review rubric, are included on each page of the tool as exemplars.

Please contact ppr@schools.nyc.gov with questions

1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards

a. **WD**: School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to CCLS and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts[1], resulting in coherence across grades and subject areas that promotes college and career readiness for all students

b. **WD**: Rigorous habits and higher-order skills[2] are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects so that all learners, including ELLs and SWDs, must demonstrate their thinking

c. **WD:** Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that individual and groups of students, including the lowest and highest achieving students, ELLs, and SWDs, have access[3] to the curricula and tasks

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Engage teachers in a process of adapting/adopting to ensure that curricula are CCLS aligned and meet all student needs
- Base curricular decisions on research, expertise of teachers, and student needs
- Foster a common understanding of what rigor and planning for cognitive engagement look like in the school community
- Establish a common set of expectations for how curriculum should be adapted to provide access for all learners
- Establish systems and structures within teacher teams to plan and revise curriculum based on common expectations using student work and data
- Monitor revision processes to ensure access and cognitive engagement for all students, including relevant sub-groups
- Articulate a clear vision and set of criteria that is used to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum that is consistently implemented across the school

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What key decisions have you implemented to support your faculty in adapting/adopting CCLS aligned curricula? How do those decisions take into consideration the needs of students and teachers?
- Have you encountered any obstacles in orienting your staff to curriculum implementation? How have you strategically addressed those obstacles?
- How have you approached curriculum refinements as a learning community?
- How do you assess the rigor of curricula and tasks? Can you give an example?
- What processes do you have in place to ensure vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment and coherence?
- What is your school's approach to the integration of the instructional shifts and college and career readiness skills?
- What structures and resources do you provide to support teachers in appropriately modifying and adapting curricula so that all learners have access?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[1] *Instructional shifts refer to those embedded in the CCLS*

[2] ***Rigorous habits or higher-order skills:*** *Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) tool and Hess's Cognitive Rigor Matrix inform the terms "rigorous habits" and "higher-order skills" in this rubric*

[3] ***Access:*** *Universal Design for Learning (UDL) informs the curricular planning and revisions for access in this rubric*

1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching[4], aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work

a. **WD:** Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts, as well as by discussions at the team and school levels

b. **WD:** Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies (including questioning, scaffolds in English and/ or native language where appropriate, and routines) strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula so that all learners, including ELLs and SWDs, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills[2] in student work products

c. **WD:** Across the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Articulate the core beliefs about teaching and learning to the school community and promote investment in those common beliefs
- Point to a clear relationship between core instructional beliefs and practices across classrooms
- Facilitate a normed understanding of rigor* in tasks and student work across classrooms through the use of structured protocols to analyze student work and data
- Promote a shared understanding of multiple access points, scaffolding, and routines across classrooms that address the diverse needs of all students
- Ensure that pedagogical practices across classrooms support discussion and student work products that reflect higher order thinking and are aligned to the school's core beliefs and curricula
- Highlight strong pedagogy that supports the relationship among curricula and student tasks through actionable feedback and coaching

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What are your school's core beliefs about student learning and how are those beliefs reflected across classrooms?
- How have you influenced school-wide investment in your instructional vision?
- Where are the challenges in building teacher capacity to support the school's instructional vision? How have you strategically planned to address those challenges?
- What structures do you have in place to ensure coherent instructional practices that promote higher order thinking across classrooms?
- How have you approached providing access to the curricula to ensure that all student needs are being met?
- What processes do you have in place to support teachers in analyzing student work?
- How do you build teacher and student capacity to engage in rigorous discussions and tasks?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[4]Aligned with the implementation of the new teacher evaluation law in September 2013, "Danielson Framework for Teaching, 2013" replaces the term "common teaching framework" Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) tool and Hess's Cognitive Rigor Matrix inform the term "rigor" in this tool

1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products

a. **WD:** The use of resources (e.g., budget, space, technology, coaches, partnerships) and other organizational decisions are well-aligned to and support the school's instructional goals and long-range action plans, as evident in meaningful student work products

b. **WD:** The use of staff time is structured such that teams have substantial and regular meetings that are deliberately structured so that teachers' professional responsibilities align with the school's instructional goals, focusing teacher time on instructional work and resulting in improved instruction that engages all students in challenging academic tasks

c. **WD**: Hiring practices, teacher assignments (e.g., total student load, effective teachers placed to close the achievement gap), and student program groupings and interventions, including those for ELLs and SWDs, are strategic, promoting access to college and career readiness[5] as well as accountable collaborations among faculty so that groups of teachers hold themselves accountable for their students' progress

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Establish a process for engaging key stakeholders in organizational decisions
- Establish and articulate clear rationales for the investment of resources in school goals, and directly connect those goals to student achievement
- Build structures to maximize time spent on instructional work across the school community
- Establish clear and purposeful protocols for focused and productive teacher team meetings that are consistently aligned to school goals
- Establish clearly defined goals and benchmarks for leadership roles across the school community (APs, teacher leaders, etc.) and assess/track each leader's progress
- Strategically structure supplemental programs(after school, weekends, web-based, etc.) based on student data and needs
- Articulate a strategy and establish a process for hiring and retaining high quality teachers
- Strategically match student and teacher assignments to meet the needs of students and create collective ownership for student progress

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What adjustments have you made to your budget that reflect your instructional goals and student needs? Can you provide a couple of key examples?
- How have you gotten your faculty on the same page about the value and effective use of teacher team meeting time?
- How have you structured team meetings to yield instructional improvements?
- How do you know your decisions are improving instruction and engaging students in challenging academic tasks?
- What factors do you consider when creating staff and student schedules?
- What accountability structures have you created to build collective ownership for student progress?
- What specific interventions are in place to meet the needs of targeted students and close the achievement gap?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[5]College and Career readiness also includes other post-secondary outcomes such as independent living, mobility, and structured employment options

1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults

a. **WD:** The school's approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by a theory of action and results in a safe environment and inclusive culture that support progress toward the school's goals; the school meaningfully involves student voice in decision-making to initiate, guide, and lead school improvement efforts

b. **WD:** Structures are in place so that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to personalize attendance supports and coordinate social-emotional learning, child/youth development, and guidance/advisement supports that impact students' academic and personal behaviors[6]

c. **WD:** The school community strategically aligns professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences and supports, resulting in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Model and guide the school community towards a culture of respect and trust
- Lead the implementation of comprehensive strategies that promote a safe climate and the personal and academic growth of students
- Promote meaningful voice of students and adults in school decisions
- Collaborate with key stakeholders to develop a vision of how to best support the social-emotional development of each student within the context of the classrooms and the school-at-large
- Establish a system to actively engage parents, address concerns in a timely fashion, and provide opportunities for parent outreach
- Establish and articulate school-based approaches to the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors
- Foster professional growth of staff to meet the wide range of social-emotional needs of all students

Suggested Guiding Questions

- How do you build a safe and inclusive school culture? What key strategies have you implemented for discipline and social-emotional support?
- In what ways do you promote student voice? Can you give an example of authentic student involvement in key decision making?
- How have you organized so that student services are well coordinated and align to student needs? Can you give an example of how these services impact student growth?
- What's your school's focus on promoting effective academic and personal behaviors for students?
- How have you built staff capacity to meet the social-emotional needs of students in and out of the classroom? What role do guidance counselors, social workers and/or parent coordinators play?
- What does family outreach focused on the needs of students look like?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[6] *Academic and personal behaviors encompass a range of indicators that support resilience as well as college enrollment and persistence. These behaviors are disaggregated into five overlapping categories: motivation, engagement, work habits/ organizational skills, communication/ collaboration skills, and self-regulation. For more information, see (link).*

2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels

a. **WD:** Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery, thus providing actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement

b. **WD:** The school uses common assessments[7] to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions so that all students, including ELLs and SWDs, demonstrate increased mastery

c. **WD:** Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Ensure that the assessments used in the school community are aligned to standards-based curricula and assess key student knowledge and understanding
- Point to examples of how data drives the refinement of curriculum and instruction
- Engage key stakeholders and tap into teacher expertise regarding school-wide assessment planning and practices
- Track and communicate what ongoing assessment data demonstrates in terms of student progress
- Ensure that assessment choices and practices provide meaningful feedback loops for both teachers and students
- Support and evaluate best practices for frequent assessment strategies across classrooms including checks for understanding and student self-assessment
- Strategize to integrate the use of assessments into teacher team work so that teacher time is spent efficiently and effectively

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What is your approach to the use of assessments in your school community? Can you discuss the rationale behind your approach?
- Have you encountered obstacles in building a shared understanding of assessment use and design? How have you strategically addressed those obstacles?
- What are some examples of what assessment data has revealed in terms of student knowledge and skills?
- How do you build teacher capacity in using different types of data to adjust curriculum and instruction?
- How do you ensure that assessments and rubrics are aligned to standards and yield valuable information?
- How do teachers check for understanding? How do they create structures for students to self-assess and reflect on their own progress? What has been the impact of such assessments on teaching and learning?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[7] ***Common assessment:*** *Teachers use one shared assessment or use different assessments that measure common skills to evaluate student progress across classes and over time.*

3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community

a. **WD:** There is a "theory of action," which includes a rationale for the short list of clear, focused school-level goals and action plans (long-range, annual, and interim) apparent in the CEP and other planning documents; those goals are tracked for progress and thoughtfully adjusted to leverage changes that explicitly link to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth

b. **WD:** Goal-setting and effective action planning at the school level, including professional development planning, are informed by a comprehensive, data-driven needs assessment and ongoing data gathering and analysis that improve teacher practice across classrooms and close the achievement gap

c. **WD:** School leaders effectively involve and communicate with the school community, including teachers, families, and age-appropriate students, regarding school improvement plans and decision-making processes

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Collaborate with the school community to develop a coherent and shared vision and a theory of action for school improvement
- Identify and leverage a focused set of data-based goals to drive coherence across initiatives
- Collect and use data to assess organizational effectiveness, and promote adult and student learning towards meeting instructional goals
- Ensure that action plans are strategic with clear rationales and benchmarks
- Monitor and evaluate progress through tracking, and revise plans as necessary towards meeting school goals
- Point to connections between the data, professional development needs, and other action plans to meet school goals
- Engage key stakeholders in shared leadership and active communication towards school improvement planning

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What are your goals this year? How do they connect to your vision for school improvement and drive coherence across initiatives?
- How do you ensure that goal-setting and action planning is collaborative?
- How do comprehensive, data-based needs assessments drive your goal setting and action planning process?
- How do you track for progress and adjust your goals to accelerate student learning?
- How do you use the data analysis results to improve teacher practices and student outcomes across classrooms? Can you give an example of this process using a specific goal and action plan?
- What school-wide structures have you established for communicating progress towards benchmarks and goals?

Key Evidence/Notes:

3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations

a. **WD:** School leaders consistently communicate high expectations (professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the teacher practice rubric) to the entire staff, and provide training, resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations

b. **WD:** School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations

c. **WD:** Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provide clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports to ensure that students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Model and communicate clear, consistent, and high expectations to the school community
- Identify and promote school-based strategies that engage students in rigorous instructional tasks
- Embed systems and structures such as articulation that make clear the students' path toward the next level of schooling
- Hold the school community accountable for implementing intervention and support strategies for struggling learners across classrooms
- Facilitate a culture of high expectations through a focused set of academic and personal behaviors promoted across the school
- Ensure that best practices from professional development offerings are implemented into practice
- Establish successful partnerships and feedback venues with families to improve student outcomes

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What do high expectations look like in your school?
- In what ways do you communicate your high expectations about teaching and learning?
- What systems of accountability and support have you established for those expectations?
- What do practices connected to college and career readiness look like across classrooms?
- Can you identify one or two key age appropriate college and career readiness practices you are currently implementing? How do those practices impact student progress?
- How do you ensure that teachers provide ongoing feedback to families regarding student progress?
- What feedback venues are in place among teachers, families and student to provide key information and help prepare students for the next level?

Key Evidence/Notes:

4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection

a. **WD:** School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with effective feedback[8] and next steps from the strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work/data

b. **WD:** Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching; feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers

c. **WD:** School leaders have a strategic, transparent system for managing professional development, make informed decisions, and develop succession plans (assignment, tenure, retention) about teachers, APs, and other staff members; this system is leading to improved quality of student work products

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Systematize a process to conduct frequent, low-inference observations that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and build a shared understanding of effective teaching
- Integrate the analysis of student work and data into feedback cycles
- Ensure that the observation and feedback process is yielding improvements in teaching and learning
- Deliver timely feedback and observation reports with clear next steps that accurately capture the strengths and challenges of teacher practice and its impact on student learning
- Implement a system to track teacher feedback, monitor growth over time, and identify needs
- Demonstrate that professional development decisions are based on the identified needs of individual and groups of teachers
- Establish a clear set of criteria for hiring, assignment, leadership development, and tenure decisions

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What are your beliefs about how adults learn best? How do your beliefs drive your teacher feedback cycles?
- How are you establishing trusting relationships with teachers while holding them accountable in order to provide targeted feedback and improve practice?
- What systems have you put in place for conducting teacher observations? How does student work and data analysis support your feedback?
- How do you promote inter-visitation, peer coaching, and collegial support among teachers?
- How have you worked with your school community to norm understanding of the Danielson Framework and effective feedback connected to it?
- What teaching patterns and trends have you observed and how have you addressed those through goal setting and professional development?
- What leadership opportunities have you created in your building? What are your succession plans for key leadership roles?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[8] *Effective feedback is specific, actionable, time-bound, and prioritized. It is also aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2013 version) and to the CCLS, where appropriate.*

4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach[9] that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning

a. **WD:** The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of CCLS (including the instructional shifts), resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners

b. **WD:** Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused, resulting in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students

c. **WD:** Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Build structures for teachers to meet regularly within teacher teams
- Establish, articulate and model a consistent process and protocols for data/work analysis within teacher teams
- Monitor teacher team work to ensure that they lead to instructional and curricular next steps, improve teacher practice, and yield student progress
- Provide targeted professional development and build teacher capacity in data-driven improvement cycles
- Develop teacher leaders within teams who drive key decisions related to the improvement of student achievement and progress towards school goals

Suggested Guiding Questions

- How have you structured your teacher team meetings to ensure that they are effective and productive?
- What do data and student work analysis process look and sound like across teacher teams?
- How do you hold teachers accountable for the implementation of team decisions regarding next steps?
- How do you support teams and build teacher capacity in data-driven inquiry work?
- How does the work of teacher teams strengthen the instructional capacity of your teachers? Can you give an example?
- How does the work of teacher teams improve student outcomes? Can you give an example?
- How have you built distributive leadership to drive teacher team work and ensure teacher voice in key decisions?
- What impact have shared leadership practices yielded thus far?

Key Evidence/Notes:

[9]*The term **inquiry approach** is defined by the expectations of teacher teams in 4.2b and across this rubric*

5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS

a. **WD:** School leaders and faculty have an effective and transparent process in place to purposefully evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices in response to student learning needs and the expectations of the CCLS, with a focus on building alignment and coherence between what is taught and how it is taught (evaluation of practices of 1.1, 1.2, 2.2)

b. **WD:** School leaders and faculty have a process in place to purposefully evaluate the quality of school culture and the ways expectations are developed and shared among school constituents, with a focus on making adjustments to support the expectations of the CCLS (evaluation of practices of 1.4, 3.4)

c. **WD:** School leaders and faculty have a process in place to purposefully evaluate and adjust the use of organizational resources and the quality of teacher team work and professional development practices, with particular attention to what teachers need to learn to support student mastery of the CCLS (evaluation of practices of 1.3, 4.1, 4.2)

Examples of Principal Practice

How effectively does the Principal…

- Embed a system with indicators of success to evaluate school's instructional core; use findings to communicate examples of strengths, areas of need and clear next steps for adjustments
- Ensure that instruction and tasks are modified based on data analysis to support students in meeting the expectations of the CCLS
- Embed a system with indicators of success to evaluate the school culture and expectations; use findings to communicate examples of strengths, areas of need and clear next steps for adjustments
- Make effective adjustments to increase the quality of school culture and expectations so that all students meet the expectations of the CCLS
- Embed a system with indicators of success to evaluate the structures for improvement; use findings to communicate examples of strengths, areas of need and clear next steps for adjustments.
- Ensure effective adjustments to organizational resource use, teacher team work, and the observation process so that adult learning supports student mastery

Suggested Guiding Questions

- What data do you analyze to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular, instructional, and assessment practices? Can you give an example of a decision made as a result of this process and its impact?
- What process have you established for reviewing lesson plans and student work?
- Can you give an example of recent modification to a unit and speak to how the revisions support student progress towards CCLS?
- What data do you analyze on school environment and culture? How often? Can you give an example of a recent finding and an adjustment you've made?
- What data do you analyze to regularly evaluate and adjust teacher team practices? Can you give an example of a recent decision made as a result of this process and its impact?
- What data do you analyze to regularly evaluate and adjust your teacher evaluation process? Can you given an example of a recent change you've made as a result of this process and its impact?

Key Evidence/Notes: