

# **GUIDELINE ON DEVELOPING DISTRICT REPORTS**

## **Reflection on Progress, Achievements, Challenges and Plans**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Minister of Basic Education has requested the refining of district tools and reporting through collaboration between the districts and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). In response to the Minister's request the DBE has developed numerous district tools to improve oversight of schools and district functionality. This document is intended to provide a guideline on the application of the district tools and to provide a detailed reporting framework of the district function. The standardisation of reporting is furthermore intended to streamline reporting formats and content, providing aligned standard information for comparison across the country. This will enable the DBE to improve their understanding of the realities districts face and subsequently develop better targeted policy. In addition to reporting on key thematic aspects of the districts tools, progress, achievements, challenges, mitigating factors and plans for the next quarter and beyond should be included in detail in the report.

The primary function of school districts is to support the delivery of the curriculum in schools and to monitor and enhance the quality of learning experiences offered to learners. This role is particularly important as districts are the closest point of contact for schools and therefore form an important link between individual schools and broader provincial and national processes and policies. The practicality of district management includes but is not limited to an oversight role. In the address given by the Minister of Basic Education and the Director- General at the District Directors meeting in April 2012, the idea that amongst other roles, district managers should be leaders in maintaining quality education within schools, and identifying and assisting poor-performing schools was emphasized.

In summary the school and district tools are focused in key areas as follows:

- To assist districts in evidence-based decision making geared to improvement in management at district level by highlighting which areas require support and improvement in learning and teaching.
- Conducting spot-checks, and independent sample based monitoring to strengthen policy compliance in terms of curriculum related detail – per phase, subject-specific information, and other related areas.
- Facilitating oversight by different groups including those responsible for district functioning in provinces or nationally such as parliamentarians or officials from the DBE
- Adapting best practice models into existing provincial and national reporting to improve the utility of the tools and reports.

Reporting from districts should not be limited to the tools but serve as an opportunity to report on all aspects of school and district management, and articulate comprehensively important information on the school and district process, progress and management.

Completed reports should continue to be submitted as previously, PEDs will then submit the reports to the DBE. Reports should be produced continuously throughout the school year in response to the requirement of each tool and other existing reporting requirement structures. The report compiled at the end of the academic year with regards this guideline and the tools herein referred to, should be a compilation of all reports submitted throughout the year based on the tools.

Reports will be utilised as deemed necessary by PEDs and the DBE and may affect school and district management and other policies, prompt enquiries or clarification as necessary.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING TOOLS**

A set of five school and district tools has been developed for distribution to district managers as follows:

- **School-Level Data Monitoring Tool: Term Four: 2013 Academic Year**

This instrument focuses on school preparedness for the 2014 school year and requires completion by all visitors (including national and provincial monitors and officials, parliamentarians, public and private partners) in the fourth term. The tool focuses on qualitative and quantitative data on admissions, human resource provisioning, LTSM (Learning and Teaching Support Material), academic preparation and curriculum coverage, scholar transport and finance, and school management and governance.

- **School-Level Data Monitoring Tool: Term One: 2014 Academic Year**

This tool is requires completion by all visitors (including national and provincial monitors, district officials, parliamentarians, public and private partners) in the first term to check that the 2014 academic year has started well. The tool focuses on qualitative and quantitative data on school infrastructure, time on task: teaching and learning, LTSM, interventions to improve LTSM, care and support of learners, and management, governance and district support, among others.

- **Circuit/District Managers Monitoring Tool for School-Level Operations with Focus on Curriculum Coverage: Terms One to Four: 2013 Academic Year**

This tool requires completion by officials responsible for oversight of district operations and management. It is intended to boost internal systems for monitoring curriculum coverage towards the end of each term. The tool focuses on qualitative and quantitative data on curriculum in relation to school readiness, admissions, leadership, management and planning, planning and managing school improvement, improved learner performance, finance, furniture, human resources, learner support services, LTSM, nutrition, scholar transport, managing the performance of the principle, Delivery Agreement (DA) and Performance Management Development System(PMDS), school governance, quarterly reports and feedback, risk management, capacity building, school monitoring, and partnerships and communication.

- **Annual District Planning, Management and Monitoring Tool: Term One: 2013 Academic Year**

This tool requires completion by district operations managers on an annual basis in the first term as part of compulsory district oversight and monitoring. The tool focuses on qualitative and quantitative data on infrastructure and resources, staff establishment, district monitoring plan, procedure of LTSM, district official functions, and district delegations in each specific district. Information collected over a period will indicate trends.

- **District Planning, Management and Monitoring Tool: Term Four: 2013 Academic Year**

This tool requires completion by district operations managers once a term between Terms 2 and 4 as a compulsory oversight mechanism. The tool focuses on qualitative and quantitative data on district functions, and district delegations, among others.

### **3. AREAS OF FOCUS IN REPORTING**

The completed tools and supporting reports should be submitted within a week after completion as prescribed. Reports should include all other factors to be considered including challenges, achievements and plans in addition to information required in the tool. Compilation of a singular annual report per district at the end of the academic year covering all the tools is required in addition to the said termly reports.

Areas of focus in reporting are discussed below, with a guideline on the scope of the reporting provided. Discussions are intended to guide reporting based on the 5 tools previously discussed and provide thematic information of focus areas.

### **3.1 Admission**

Admission refers to learners admitted into the school; this information should be recorded by schools in categories including race, gender and grade. Class group allocations, registration of learners on the SA-SAMS system, allocation of enrolment numbers and the 10<sup>th</sup> School Day head count amongst other administrative processes must be included. Proper administration of school admission provides essential information about learners and schools which is the foundation on which school support is based.



*Managers should report comprehensively on admission for all grades offered per school as well as unplaced learners within the district. Categories discussed above should also be noted and addressed.*

### **3.2 Academic Preparation and Curriculum Coverage**

Schools are required to indicate preparedness for the academic year with reference to CAPS orientations, possession of policy documents and academic material. Indication of curriculum coverage is subsequently required to establish potential learning that has taken place at school level and identify schools failing in curriculum coverage.

Assessment is an integral aspect of schooling as it measures effective learning and may serve as an indicator of curriculum coverage. Assessments include school controlled assessments, ANAs and the NSC. Continuous assessment affords learner and teachers the opportunity to measure learner performance and develop meaningful interventions to provide additional support as well as indicating future teaching requirements.



*Managers should report on the schools preparedness for the academic year in reference to teacher preparedness in work and assessment plans, subject guidelines and other supporting policies and processes. Furthermore, reporting on achievements, progress and challenges experienced in curriculum coverage is expected. Elaboration on causes for incomplete*

*curriculum coverage and contingency plans to address the problem and avoid it in future should be detailed.*

*Reporting should also include detail on CAPS training received by teachers in the school, detail on training of teachers for multi-grade schools as well learning area plans including reference to curriculum support and monitoring of learner outcomes. Reporting should articulate its primary learning strategy as well as plans to enhance Numeracy and Literacy within the school.*

*Reporting should refer to assessments indicating the progress and process of the school assessment team. Indication of the frequency of internal or external examinations, the schools promotion schedule and a detailed management plan for assessments are required. Reporting must also indicate the frequency of learner assessment analysis and the process of reporting to learners and parents. Additional issues in assessments should be discussed including progress and challenges.*

*Reporting should also address examination support to learners, particularly Grade 12 learners articulating the targeted NSC pass rate.*

### **3.3 School Operational Plan**

Schools are required to develop and implement an operation year plan which the district must oversee. The plan is developed to ensure a clear process and arrangement of outcome-oriented activities to guide schools in achieving their strategic goals as well as providing districts with details on which to base monitoring of schools. This plan should be signed off by district managers.



*Reporting should provide are required to report in-depth information on the school annual operational plan; this should entail progress and plans on administrative activities, human resource activities and school-based structure activities including School Governing Body (SGB) meetings and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). Reporting should also include a school schedule for school-based structure meetings and other operational activities. Reporting should further include detail on school cycles, recording of classroom visits by principals and assessment of the effectiveness of the hierarchical school process including teachers, Head of Departments (HOD's) and school managers. School operation effectiveness including LTSM*

*procurement should also be reported on including assessment of issues of equity and good practice within the school.*

### **3.4 Procurement of Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM)**

Learning and Teaching School Material are an integral input required by schools for successful learning, and their effective management in terms of planning, support, and procurement is integral. Districts are the first point of contact with schools and resultantly fulfil an important communication channel with provincial education and DBE.



*Report should be on the process of sourcing and supplying textbooks and workbooks, providing detail on achievement and challenges as well as future plans for subsequent terms and remedial action for challenges encountered. Relevant additional information that may assist the district in establishing a comprehensive analysis of this indicator should also be reported.*

### **3.5 Interventions to Improve Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM)**

LTSM interventions refer to school mechanisms utilized to optimize retention and use of learning and teaching support material. Improved administration in this area improves learner and teacher support to learning.



*Reporting should be on the number of workbooks and textbooks received as well as the shortages if there are any. This should also include delivery and shortage information on stationary. The schools textbook retrieval system should be discussed, with reference to its success rate and challenges experienced. In addition reporting on the Annual National Assessments (ANA's) of the school must also be completed as well as on the National Senior Certificate (NSC).*

### **3.6 Time on Task: Teaching and Learning**

In order for teaching and learning to take place both learners and teachers have to commit to their responsibilities by attending school regularly and on time. Continued failure in these actions result in the loss of teaching time and opportunities which negatively affect curriculum coverage and exposure as well as student performance.





*Managers should report on compliance of teachers and learners in arriving in class consistently and on time; subsequently reporting on the occurrence of teaching and learning is required.*

*Challenges experienced in this area should be reported in detail as well as plans in place to remedy the problem. Additional information such as contributing factors should also be discussed.*

### **3.7 Staff Establishment**

Human resources are an important aspect of successful functionality at all levels of government. Understaffing of posts, particularly core posts such as that of managers and admin staff as well as specialised posts as per requirements of the government affects district performance. Recording staffing requirements and funded staffing in districts is therefore important as it furthermore provides the DBE with information for budgetary post allocations planning.

The second aspect in this theme requires information on the number of schools allocated to the district as well as the vacancies of posts in these schools. This similarly provides information for planning and relates inputs-number of district officials- with outputs -the number of schools district are responsible for. The establishment of this correlation allows for analysis regarding district staff increases or decreases.



*Reporting should address current staffing as well as requirements for additional staff with motivation provided on the request of additional staff. The progress in the filling of posts, challenges in current staffing and plans for future staffing should be discussed.*

### **3.8 Care and Support of Learners**

Learner care and support refers to the additional services offered by schools, to enhance learning. Such services include support programmes such as the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and the accommodation of children with special needs. Further services such as implementation of the Learner Enrichment Project, Inclusive Education and the Library Policy also form part of learner support initiatives.



*Report should focus on the school profile, accessibility for learners with special needs and if the school currently has any learners with special needs. Reporting on the NSNP is also required with challenged and possible remedial action discussed.*

*Reporting on inclusiveness of education at schools, implementation on the library policy and learner enrichment program should also be discussed.*

### **3.9 Planning and Managing School Improvement**

Schools are required to develop a School Improvement Plan (SIP) which articulates developmental school goals, targets for the goals and a plan on how these goals will be achieved. This plan addresses all aspects of schooling including quality assurance, analysis of performance in the ANA's and NSC, and inclusion of a monitoring system for SIP implementation. This plan must be ratified by the District.



*Reporting on the SIP should be comprehensive, articulating curriculum coverage improvement plans, learner performance improvement plans, and other quality assurance processes and results. It should detail achievements, progress, challenges and planned focused action to remedy identified areas of improvement. Reporting should also address time frames articulated in the SIP and whether those were reached. Reporting should also indicate the monitoring mechanisms used by the school and district to ensure that the SIP is implemented as well as all other areas referred to in the planning and managing school improvement indicator.*

### **3.10 Scholar Transport**

Provision of scholar transport, recently introduced, is intended as a measure to assist learner's access schools. This is particularly important for learners without reliable and safe access to school transportation.



*Report should be on the provision of scholar transport, it is also advised that managers report challenges experienced and recommended solutions.*

### **3.11 Finance**

School finances and submission of financial documents to the district indicating the allocation of funds in the previous year and a projection of required funds for the subsequent school year are an important aspect of planning and school management. Financial management of schools and districts is based on national financial standards as well as the school/district financial policy, in the case of schools this must be ratified by the district director.



*Reporting should be based on compliance to the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), compliance to the school or districts financial policy as well as spending for the previous financial year. Reporting should be accompanied by submission of financial reports and statements as required, namely Annual Audited Financial Statements, BAS reports and an approved budget for the subsequent year amongst other financial document requirements.*

### **3.12 Infrastructure and Resources**

Access to basic structural and administrative infrastructure is significant for the creation of an enabling environment for districts to successfully execute their mandate. Constant evaluation of these conditions is important as it informs PEDs and the DBE on infrastructural requirements and provides evidence of mitigating circumstances that may limit the performance of district officials.



*Reporting should be based on the conditions and use of infrastructure; facilities, running water, electricity, office equipment, furniture and access to transport. Requirements within the district as well as challenges posed by lack of these requirements should be discussed; requests for additional furniture etc should be motivated.*

### **3.13 School Management and Governance**

Management of schools through planning and the consistent availability and the presence of teachers is an essential part of effective school management. This indicator refers to planning for the following schooling year including the activities completed in preparation, teacher attendance and absenteeism. Schools are required to develop policies on school management

for learners, teaching staff and supporting bodies, the implementation of these policies should be monitored and evaluated periodically.



*Reporting should be on school readiness with reference to detail on activities completed in preparation for the new schooling year.*

*The second aspect of reporting requires detail on teaching staff for the following academic year, as well as reporting on teacher attendance, absenteeism and administrating of teacher attendance in the current year.*

*Reporting should also include an assessment of the development of school policies such as a code of conduct, religion, HIV/AIDS, and learner pregnancy amongst other school policies.*

### **3.14 Management, Governance and District Support**

Districts are expected to support school functionality and governance, this indicator details the oversight role and documents required to adequately measure the state of school management and governance.



*Reporting should be on year plans, work schedules per grade and school time-tables for homework and extra-curricular activity. School registers for learner attendance and teacher attendance are also required. Reporting should be accompanied by supporting documents. Detail on the frequency of governing body meetings and school efficiency is required. Lastly District support should be evaluated by schools with challenges recorded as well as areas requiring urgent district support to enable remedial action.*

### **3.15 District Roles**

District role responsibilities are developed based on the pillar's of planning, support, oversight and accountability, as well as public engagement. Planning entails planning at district level as well as supporting schools in planning their School Improvement Plans which chart the required process to improve school management monitored by the district. Support refers to the creation and maintenance of good relations with schools, particularly teachers and principals in order to strengthen school management. Oversight and accountability is two-fold, being responsible for

holding school principals accountable and being held accountable to provincial structures. Public engagement is the fourth pillar of district roles and is founded on the understanding that public engagement and partnering is essential to successful governing. It is therefore imperative for district officials to establish a good rapport with the community providing critical information and facilitating consultative discussions.



*Managers should report on compliancy of the district function with its designated roles. Achievements, progress, challenges and plans should be discussed in detail with recommendations on improvement methods for the district to better fulfil its role based on planning, support, oversight, accountability and public engagement.*

### **3.16 District Organisation and Functions**

Districts are the foundational school support structure enabling schools to function adequately in addition to the districts school management role. Curriculum support, management support, learner support, examination support, parent involvement and school governance also require district oversight and support.



*Reporting should be on support provided to teachers in curriculum planning and delivery, CAPS training, Naledi training and resources. Overview of meeting held and their findings, parental involvement in the school through the SGB and any other channel, exam preparation support as well as operational management should also be reported. Progress made, challenges experienced, recommended solutions and plans on these aspects should be provided in detail with reference to available evidence. Additional relevant aspects of district organisation and functions should also be addressed.*

### **3.17 District Delegation**

District delegation entails the implementation and assessment of human resources, school governance, financial management and overall adequacy of district delegations. The effective execution of human resource at schools creates an enabling environment for schools to function adequately. District officials are expected to principally provide staff to newly established schools, and institute disciplinary measures against school staff that fails to adhere to professional conduct. The second aspect is school governance; it is the responsibility of the

district to ensure that school governing bodies (SGB) are established and effective. SGB's empower parents of learners with direct involvement in schools but districts have to ensure their actions are within their mandate. The third key aspects financial management of funds allocated through PEDs. Districts have authority to procure goods, equipment and services as required but similarly have a responsibility to ensure compliance with the Public Financial Management Act (PFMA). Thorough recording of financial expenditure must be provided in detail and reported on in order to maintain accountability and ensure district compliance with the PFMA and other financial regulations. The final aspect is assessment of adequacy in the district delegation, reporting on this aspect is important as it provides information on role execution successes and failures of the district which may impede or enhance other aspects of district performance.



*Reporting on human resource support provided to schools, challenges experienced and improvement plans and recommendations should be provided. The report should also contain detailed reflection on the functionality of SGB's, imposed limitations and intended future changes as well as other additional relevant information. A detailed Report of financial expenditure as well as justification for spending should be provided. Discussion of related challenges and plans must also be reported. Objective assessment of the function of district delegation should also be reported on with detail provided on progress, achievements, challenges and intended correction plans.*

### **3.18 District Improvement Plan (DIP)**

All districts are required to develop and work in accordance with a DIP. It provides a guideline on the requirements for processes and policies required to successfully function within the district. It should also be strongly related to national DBE strategic goals principally referred to in the Action Plan to 2014 and the Minister's Delivery Plan amongst other key documents. Requirements stipulated for schools, teachers and learners are also required to be included in the DIP to ensure district management of these. This indicator lists the specific factors required for inclusion in DIP's and requires evidence for responses provided for verification and accountability.

The second aspect of this indicator refers to the manner in which district officials assess schools and provides a guideline on the aspects that should be attended to specifically during school inspections. Reporting on this provides a reflection on the district/school relationship, a key

relationship that contributes to successful school management and ultimately educational success



*Reporting on assessment of the DIP, identification of shortcoming within the plan and corrective action to follow should be provided. Detail on observed best practices, required DIP implementation support and progress of DIP development and implementation should also be discussed.*

*Further reporting is required on the district function in school visits, the manner in which visits are conducted, challenges they encounter, as well as recommended solutions and plans. Managers should use this opportunity to report on additional relevant aspects of DIP's as well as school visit assessments.*