



## STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





# STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS

## A. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Effective school management is universally accepted as being the critical element in the success of schools. Many South African schools are struggling to meet their own, community and Departmental criteria for success. This is usually related to the capacity, competence and nature of the school's management team and particularly the principal.
2. The competency of school principals is therefore considered a national imperative, which poses an enormous challenge to the education system. The demand for professional school managers is growing. A major challenge within the education system is finding visionary and competent leaders and managers. These leaders need appropriate administrative skills and professional education management competencies.
3. The demands on school management have changed, with emphasis growing on managing learning, safe, diverse, integrated, and challenging, school environments appropriate to a 21<sup>st</sup> century progressive African country. We need principals with the ability to interpret the demands of their jobs and determine how they will perform this within the context of national development. The principals need to tap into the full potential of themselves and the rest of the school community, while seeing their job within the context of improving teaching and learning in the school.
4. The Individualistic management development models will not suffice for this purpose. The professional development needs to build the ability of our principals to work in a holistic way, bringing in staff, community and other partners in a supportive manner.
5. Following the above understanding and in response thereto, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), identified the need to formulate key strategies for creating an environment that is conducive to effective learning and teaching in our schools, where school managers are key role players in attainment of quality education.
6. These strategies are intended to support Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025 commitments made in the education sector plan. The document begins with an analysis of key issues that emerged from the discussions for creating working schools under the following themes:
  - a) Key challenges to be addressed;
  - b) Description of key challenges;
  - c) Responding to the demand of existing policy;
  - d) Rationale for addressing the challenges;
  - e) Strategies to deal with the identified challenges; and
  - f) Table of recommended strategy.

## B. KEY CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE STRATEGY

School management has been highlighted as one of the crucial aspects that can improve the performance of schools by the National Development Plan. Goal 21 in the Action Plan to 2019: Towards the realisation of schooling 2025 highlights that the basic annual management processes must take place across all schools in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment. Indicator 21 of the Action Plan requires the sector to determine the percentage of schools producing the minimum set of management documents at a required standard, for instance a school budget, a school improvement plan, an annual report, attendance registers and a record of learner marks.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) also states that the principal must prepare and submit an annual report in respect of academic performance and the effective use of available resources. The adherence to annual management processes requires principals to prepare and submit annual academic performance report to the Head of Department or the delegated officials

The strategy will address challenges identified in the 2016 NEEDU Report, Auditor-General's findings and from DBE School Effectiveness Monitoring Reports.

The NEEDU Report indicated that schools did not analyse learner and teacher attendance and late coming patterns or taking disciplinary action against teacher habitual absenteeism and late coming.

The Auditor-General found shortcomings in schools adhering to annual management processes. The followings findings were made:

- a) The school governing bodies functionality of oversight and monitoring of school performance was not executed effectively and efficiently because the audit team observed that in some schools minutes were not available, meetings were not held quarterly as required by SASA and there were no attendance registers and agendas as evidence that the meeting formed a quorum or as proof that parents did attend;
- b) Schools did not have updated asset management registers and the process of disposing assets was not properly understood at school level;
- c) The schools did not adhere to LTSM draft policy guidelines in particular establishment of LTSM committee, designating LTSM coordinator, procurement, retrieval and distributing education materials to learners;
- d) The process of monitoring curriculum and content coverage was not consistently implemented across schools, districts and provinces;
- e) The process of managing staff attendance and leave administration was not consistently adhered to by schools.

The following challenges will be dealt with in detail:

- Poor school management and leadership;
- Lack of curriculum planning and management;
- Insufficient contact time;
- Lack of support by SGBs;
- Lack of parental and community involvement;
- Lack of properly constituted RCLs;
- Poor infrastructure;
- Wrong appointments; and

- Lack of reporting and accountability systems.

## **EXCLUSION**

The strategy document will focus only on the challenges that are normally under the school management's control and which require improvement. The document will therefore exclude challenges created by shortage of classrooms, ablution system, unqualified teachers and shortage of teachers. These issues are normally managed at provincial or district level and not by school principals.

## **C. DESCRIPTION OF KEY CHALLENGES**

### **1. POOR SCHOOLMANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

Lack of leadership is the main contributor to underperformance and dysfunctionality in schools. Many South African schools are struggling to meet their own, community and Departmental criteria for success. This is usually related to the capacity, competence and nature of the school's management team and particularly the principal.

### **2. LACK OF CURRICULUM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

Poor performing schools are characterised by lack of proper curriculum planning. Teachers plan as individuals and are never supervised. There is no proper lesson planning. The heads of department do not check and monitor the plans to ascertain whether they are relevant to the given syllabus. Such schools do not plan for regular assessments to track learner progress. There is far too little writing done in many classes as reported by the NEEDU. Some of the challenges are that the syllabi are not completed. NEEDU further reports that there is little or no monitoring of learners' written work by HODs, principals and District officials to check quality of work.

Principals of such schools do everything in the school except being an instructional leader who manage the delivery of curriculum and give support to teachers in implementing the curriculum.

### **3. INSUFFICIENT CONTACT TIME**

Our investigation into poor performance and dysfunctionality in schools which lead to poor learner attainments points to ill-discipline. There is no enforcement of the non-negotiables by the school managers. The schools have high absenteeism rate, late coming, early departure and not focusing on time on task. These issues apply to both learners and teachers.

According to the NEEDU Report, in more than a quarter of schools offering Senior and FET Phases, late coming after break is rife and teachers return to class after break later than their learners. This remains undetected because there are no systems to curb this practice.

### **4. LACK OF SUPPORT BY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs)**

Unproductive schools always have a non-functional SGB. Such SGB rarely have meetings in such schools. Most of these governing bodies have little or no understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They either rubber stamp the decision of the principal or cause conflict in the school.

### **5. LACK OF PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Parents of children in poor performing schools are often not involved in the education of their children. They do not receive regular feedback on the progress of their children. Communities around are not proud of such schools and therefore disengage.



## **6. LACK OF PROPERLY CONSTITUTED REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS OF LEARNERS (RCLs)**

The RCL is an integral part of the schooling system which contributes to the culture of learning and teaching. If properly established and well guided, the RCL can play an important role in ensuring that there is teaching taking place in the school. A properly constituted RCL will put the needs of the general learner population first and demand the right to be taught

## **7. POOR INFRASTRUCTURE**

Schools with poor management systems tend to neglect their infrastructure. Our focus is not on schools with poor or no infrastructure at all, but schools that fail to maintain what is their possession.

## **8. WRONG APPOINTMENTS**

Appointment of school managers with poor leadership and management skills impact negatively on discipline in schools and the provision of quality education in general. A range of factors such as lack of school management programmes and poor appointment procedures contribute to wrong appointments.

## **9. LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Schools with a weak culture cultural operating system have teachers who see problems and say nothing because they assume they do not have the power or authority to raise the concern. Time, resources and morale are wasted through the notion that accountability is someone else's job. It is always assume that someone in a higher position will deal with it. Teachers in such schools do not hold one another accountable for their actions.

# **D. RESPONDING TO THE DEMANDS OF EXISTING POLICY**

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, as amended is the main legal instrument that regulates activities in the public schooling system. SASA together with the Employment of Educators Act form basis for holding principals, SMTs and Teachers accountable for:

- The role that principals are expected to play in managing their schools is explicitly captured in Chapter A, section 4.2 of the Personnel Administrative measures under the heading Duties and Responsibilities that principals must execute
- The implication for non-compliance with the above mentioned pieces of legislation are described in the Chapter 5, section 16, 17 and 18 which deals with misconduct and incapacity
- The expected activities of the School Governing Bodies and those of Representative councils of Learner are covered in SASA.

# **E. RATIONALE FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES**

The DBE and the province cannot afford to let these challenges remain unaddressed if we have to improve the culture of teaching and learning and improve learner attainment.

## **1. POOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

Effective school management is universally accepted as being the critical element in the success of schools. Poor performing schools lack systems on how to deal with absenteeism, late coming, teachers not teaching, ill-discipline and poor financial management. The schools are conflict ridden due to lack of policy implementation by the school management. Without putting these basic requirements for functional schools, there is no hope of attaining positive learner results.

There have to be strategies to ensure that school managers play their management role so that teachers can teach and learners can learn.

## **2. CURRICULUM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

Planning is an essential process of leadership. Planning is articulating shared direction and coherent policies, practices, and procedures for realising high standards of learner performance. It helps school managers focus resources, tasks and people (Clark et al, 1984).

Section 16A of the Education Laws Amendment Act calls for the principal of an underperforming school to draw a School Academic improvement plan responding to the report submitted to the Head of Department on the academic performance of the school. The academic improvement plan should be based on collected data for decision making purposes.

## **3. INSUFFICIENT CONTACT TIME**

Reasons for reduced contact time are well documented. Some of the reasons are genuine but most of them are due to ill-discipline and the inability of the school principal to take action against offenders. The holding of meetings, workshops, memorial services, late coming, and absenteeism are the main contributor to non- completion of learning programmes, leading to poor learner attainment.

A school that will at least manage the above challenges, even in the absence of quality teaching in class will be able to produce satisfactory results.

## **4. LACK OF SUPPORT BY THE SGBs**

The Government has identified education as the apex priority. Teachers, support staff, learners and parents are expected to work collaboratively with government to turn schools into thriving centres of excellence. These immediate stakeholders in education can organise their contributions to education through the democratically elected school governing bodies (SGBs). Without the volunteerism, sacrifice, dedication, and contribution of SGB members, the Department would not be able to fully implement its educational programmes.

The President of the country speaks of making education a societal issue. That is why we have entrusted School Governing Bodies with our policies, finances and all other education resources in order to entrench transformation, constitutional values and the pursuit of academic excellence. It is for this reason that the Department, through its Provincial Education Departments and Districts must invest more energy, resources and time in School Governing Bodies to enhance the quality of education for all learners in the public schooling system.

## **5. LACK OF PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Leading a school with high expectation and academic achievement for all students requires robust connections to the external community. These connections include linkages to family and other people and institutions in the community that advance academic and social learning. There is research based information about the positive relationship between family involvement and social and academic benefits for students. It has been proven that teacher outreach to parents of low performing students, such as meetings, sending materials home and communicating with parents when their children have problem, improved learner achievement

## **6. LACK OF PROPERLY CONSTITUTED RCLS**

There is a need to formulate key strategies for creating an environment that is conducive to effective learning and teaching in our schools, where learners are key role players in embracing and supporting their own learning.

The Department's goal is to consolidate the legitimate role of the RCL as a statutory body and to discourage practice of



the prefect system. Initiations practices are to be compliant with education policy.

## **7. POOR INFRASTRUCTURE**

It is generally accepted that there is a link between the physical environment and teaching and learning effectiveness, as well as learning outcomes. Poor learning conditions contribute to learner and irregular attendance and drop out of school. Learners develop a negative attitude towards the school and their ability to engage in the learning process is compromised.

School facilities that are well maintained prolong the life expectancy of school buildings, furniture and other equipment and thus contribute to the effective learning and teaching in schools. This is an important function of the SGB.

When infrastructure is neglected funds that are allocated for the development of education end up been redirected towards endless repairs and renovations. The implementation of preventative programmes can prolong the life span of school buildings and facilities.

## **8. WRONG APPOINTMENTS**

School principals as representatives of the department work within School Governing Bodies to recommend the appointment of teachers up to Deputy Principal level. Unless the performance of the teachers in their previous level is taken into consideration when recommendations are made and the tendency to allow influences from other stakeholders in the appointment processes continues with disregard to performance, incompetent middle managers will weaken the management teams of schools.

# **F. STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES**

## **1. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

In improving school management and leadership practice DBE will:

- Mediate the Policy of the South African Standard for Principalship;
- Mediate the Framework for the Induction of School Principals. Newly appointed principals will be taken through a year-long induction programme before they take up a post at the school. The newly appointed principals will be exposed to the basic expectations by the Department in carrying out their responsibilities. It will include a package of important legislations, good practices, non-negotiables and how the circuit and district offices function
- Conduct training on curriculum management;
- Training on financial management;
- Establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in geographical areas for principals to share good practices under the guidance of circuit managers. PLCs will have to be institutionalised at district level so that they do not operate as social contracts for poor performing school. The circuit manager will have standing meetings scheduled for such meetings.

## **2. CURRICULUM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

To improve curriculum planning and management of the curriculum, the following need attention:

- Guiding principals to report on the academic performance of the school by indicating minimum aspects that they have to report on, such as learner marks per subject, causes of poor performance, availability of resources, teachers, attendance, and showing how each has contributed to poor performance.
- Guiding principals to develop an academic improvement plan based on the data captured in the school academic report. The plan should include target per subject. Frequency of assessments, the minimum number of written

work per subject, grade, per week. The school must indicate how the principal and the SMT will monitor the implementation of the plan and how they will track learner progress and report to the parents.

- The above will be done through the development of exemplar templates which the DBE will mediate with circuit managers who will in turn ensure that principal comply with the Education Laws Amendment Act by completing the report and the plan.
- The district is required to collate the report and plan in order to develop a district academic improvement plan. The district office is to use the submitted school academic improvement plans to hold principals accountable.
- SMG together with District Development directorates will monitor districts

To develop school principals on the management, monitoring and provision of support on the use of:

- Curriculum Assessment Policy Support (CAPS) document
- Workbooks
- Lesson plans
- LTSM catalogue when selecting materials in line with the CAPS and workbook
- Annual National Assessment procedures

Implementation of the above will begin with Circuit Managers and Subject Advisors for them to understand their monitoring and reporting role. The information will be disseminated to schools with each circuit manager taking responsibility for the schools under the given circuit. Districts will be allowed to work out a system for training principals using a matrix system.

Districts will be expected to provide plans for the trainings per circuit so that monitoring and quality assurance can be done.

### 3. IMPROVED CONTACT TIME

**(a) Learner absenteeism-** the policy on Learner Attendance will be implemented with effect from January 2011. The policy will be mediated at provincial and district level so that principals and Governing Bodies are made aware of the expectations of the policy before the end of October 2010.

Through Districts and Circuit, principal will be made to:

Develop school policy to respond to challenges on

- Absenteeism
- Develop intervention strategies, including catch up programmes for learners who missed classes due to one reason or the other.
- Keep attendance records
- Analyse attendance patterns
- Consult parents of absenteeism offenders

#### **(b) Teacher absenteeism**

Principals will be made to

- Keep records and analyse absenteeism patterns
- Inform teachers on the number of days available on each category of leave e.g. personal urgent matters, family responsibility

- Complete leave forms with clear recommendation whether the leave was approved or not. If not, or leave days in that category were exhausted, then a recommendation of leave without pay must be made.
- Take disciplinary action against serial absenteeism
- Provide reports to the circuit manager on steps taken against teachers with absenteeism problem.

The District is to monitor regularly the keeping of attendance records by principals and hold them accountable for failing to take action against such teachers by taking disciplinary actions in terms of misconduct in the Employment of Educators Act.

**(c) Late coming, early departure**

They will be dealt with as above by the keeping of records, analysing patterns, taking disciplinary action.

#### **4. SUPPORT BY SCHOOL GOVERNORS**

DBE will make school governing bodies functional by:

- Making principal accountable for the SGB functionality as part of their job description as stipulated in the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2007. The assessment of the principal's assessment must include how he manages SGB affairs.
- Producing a simple document to advice SGB chairperson step by step on what to do in running a functional governing body.
- Providing a checklist to school governing body to evaluate their own functionality.
- Institutionalise the clustering of SGB chairperson to form a circuit functional structure, to district until the formation of a provincial organisation to aid dialogue and support to the QLTC. Circuit managers will be compelled to hold regular prescribed meetings as a support mechanism to SGBs.
- Provide SGB with a list of compulsory topics that non-functional SGBs must be trained on. The rest of the training should be conducted on a need basis

#### **5. PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Schools have important responsibilities to communicate effectively with parents and learners about how each learner performs at school. Beside the traditional report cards, our strategy will include:

- Mediate national guideline on how parents can support learners at school;
- A simplified document advising parents on what to do to support their children in learning. The principal and the SGB will lead the dissemination of information;
- The release of a comprehensive subject plan to parents detailing expectations, pass requirements, the number of expected written work, homework timetable, and their frequency assessment programme schedule of meeting with parents for them to hold the school accountable for non- delivery of the programme;
- The use of other communication tools to parents whose children performed poorly such as additional notes attached to reports:
  - Phone calls to parents
  - Weekly/Monthly progress reports
  - Newsletters to parents
  - Personal letters to parents
  - Evaluated projects and assignment

- Homework hotlines

## **6. INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE**

The strategy will focus on newly built and renovated schools by:

- Rolling out a school maintenance programme for the SMT and SGB to be able to have the school's infrastructure maintain and preventative programmes implemented
- Prepare the SGB to qualify for the granting of section 21 statuses on maintenance to reduce the red tape involved when funds are managed by the department. The SGB can form a committee to drive this very important function. There are a lot of parents with the necessary expertise and networks that can help with procurement and fixing of some broken items at the school.

## **7. APPROPRIATE STAFF APPOINTMENTS**

Management development programmes need to be strengthened to create a pool of potential managers who will fill management positions in our schools. Examples of such programmes are induction of school managers, coaching and mentoring and establishment of learning networks. SGBs need to be capacitated on selection and interview procedures for them to be able to recommend appropriate candidates for management posts.

## **8. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability sessions where accountability conversations are held at all levels from the school to district and finally provincial office will be held. The culture where everyone (Teacher, HOD, Learner, Circuit Manager, Subject Advisor) can hold anyone else accountable will be introduced through regular scheduled and compulsory meetings at all levels of the provincial system.

School Management Team meetings will have standing agenda items inclusive of:

Reports and discussion by HODs on:

- Attendance and punctuality
- Grade by grade, subject by subject report and discussion on:
  - Curriculum coverage;
  - Assessment report;
  - Workbook utilisation;
  - Intervention plans;

## **G. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS**

### **1. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PRINCIPALS**

The strategy aims to focus on the primary role of the principal in ensuring that the school has clear, measurable goals for learning and academic progress of the learners. Setting clear goals for learner achievement is central to effective leadership, as it guides the daily practices and decisions of all stakeholders. One cannot monitor and evaluate what cannot be measured. The principal has the responsibility to collect data, analyse, interpret, develop intervention strategies and submit analysed reports to the district office.

NEEDU recommends that Schools should develop an efficient system (preferably electronic) to assist SMTs to analyse information collected through different registers or systems so that habitual late coming, early departure and poor attendance are identified quickly (at least on a weekly basis) and through which teachers could be held accountable within the confines of the Employment of Educators Act.

### **2. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DISTRICT**

The district, through the Circuit Manager must collect all the various plans produced by schools to analyse, provide guidance and ratify them. This has been one of the weaknesses identified by the Auditor-General, approval of documents submitted by schools. The district has to also receive and analyse reports submitted on late coming, absenteeism, early departure and curriculum coverage with a view to support school principals in taking disciplinary steps against staff members whose reports show elements of policy violations.

Districts need to develop systems and tools to systematically and, on a regular basis, monitor how principals handle teacher late coming, early departure and absenteeism. The system should be in a position to track or monitor time loss when teachers leave their classes for one reason or the other.

The Circuit Manager should facilitate the submission of cases of misconduct cases to the Labour Relations for actioning.

### **3. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROVINCIAL OFFICE**

The provincial office is tasked with the responsibility to process all cases of misconduct referred by the districts for disciplinary hearing to take place. The provincial office should ensure a speedy resolved to all cases referred to the Labour Relations units.

# CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

STAGES	ACTIVITIES	PROGRESS
DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Data interpretation</li> </ul>	
PLANNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Academic Report</li> <li>• Intervention strategies</li> <li>• Subject Improvement Plans</li> <li>• Target setting</li> <li>• Year plan</li> <li>• School Improvement Plan</li> <li>• Development of tools</li> </ul>	
IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time on task</li> <li>• Adherence to plans</li> </ul>	
MONITORING & SUPPORT	Utilisation of monitoring tools to verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum coverage</li> <li>• Written work and other task</li> <li>• Assessment coverage</li> <li>• Workbook/textbook utilisation</li> </ul>	
REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback at various levels of the</li> </ul>	





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### WRITTEN WORK

EDUCATOR	WRITTEN WORK		ASSESSMENT		
SUBJECT & GRADE	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	COMMENT

NAME OF PRINCIPAL: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



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### EARLY DEPARTURE REGISTER

DATE	NAME OF EDUCATOR	TIME OF DEPARTURE	REASON	SIGNATURE	PERMISSION GRANTED BY

NAME OF PRINCIPAL: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



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### **LEAVE SUMMARY** (the number of days taken by the employees per leave category)

STAFF MEME- BER	SICK	FAM RES	URGENT	EXAM	STUDY	MATERNITY	OTHER (SPECIFY)

PERIOD: FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_ (YEAR AND MONTH)

NAME OF PRINCIPAL: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



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### LEAVE SUMMARY PER MONTH

NAME OF STAFF MEMBER	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1.												
2.												
3.												
4.												
5.												
6.												
7.												
8.												
9.												
10.												
11.												
12.												
13.												
14.												
15.												
16.												

YEAR OF SUMMARY: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PRINCIPAL: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



**MONTHLY ATTENDANCE SUMMARY**

Name of School			
Province			
District			
Circuit			
	NUMBER ABSENT	NUMBER REPORTING LATE	NUMBER LEAVING EARLY
SUMMARY			
AVERAGE %			

Provide reason for unacceptable rate of absenteeism, late coming or early departure with reference to implicated staff members. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate corrective measures taken including sanctions imposed where applicable

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PRINCIPAL: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_





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