

# School Quality Review

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a School Quality Review (SQR)?

A School Quality Review is a process for evaluating a school. A review team visits the school to look at documentation, interview staff, students and parents, and visit classrooms. The goal is to observe learning and teaching and to evaluate the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement.

### Who are the members of the review team?

Each review team will be led by an experienced school reviewer from Cambridge Education, a world leader in educational improvement. Every Cambridge lead reviewer has had wide experience as a review provider and trainer for schools throughout the world, including the United States. Teams will have either three or four members, depending upon the size and complexity of the school. CMS staff members are also on the teams. In future years, CMS staff will lead reviews.

### What training have the reviewers had?

Team members have had five days of intensive training provided by Cambridge Education. The team leaders from Cambridge Education have two decades of experience in reviewing schools in the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere. They have been trained extensively in assessing school methodology and practice.

### How long does an SQR last?

The review team will be in the school for two days.

### How can a school prepare for an SQR?

Schools are not required to produce large amounts of new documents or information for the review team. However, schools should ensure that all data and information given to the SQR team is as current as possible. Before the evaluation, the

team will review the school's student performance data, including the Schools' Progress Report, and will need a copy of the school improvement plan. The only new document to be completed is a self-evaluation form. This form uses the same criteria as the SQR, and that information should be kept current.

### How are schools selected for review?

In the 2007-08 school year, principals volunteered for the pilot program or were recommended by their area superintendents. In the 2008-09 school year, schools within the Northeast and South learning communities will be reviewed as part of their involvement with Managing for Performance.

### Why are SQRs necessary?

An SQR provides a comprehensive picture of a school's performance. Until now, school performance in the United States has been judged largely on the basis of available student-performance data. An SQR takes into account the context of the school. It assesses the educational processes, including learning and teaching, which have a major influence on student results, giving the school a clearer view of its strengths and areas for improvement.

### What are the key criteria for evaluating a school's performance?

Six criteria will be used in an SQR:

- Student achievement
- Teaching and learning
- Curriculum
- Leadership and management
- Learning environment
- Involvement of parents and the community

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## How frequently will schools be reviewed?

It will depend, to some extent, on the results of the first year's reviews. Schools receiving ratings of High Quality or Well Developed will be reviewed every third year. Schools receiving a rating of undeveloped will be reviewed annually and schools rated Proficient will continue to be reviewed annually with the review focusing on areas which needed the most improvement. New schools will not be reviewed during the fall of the first year.

## What happens after the review?

A report will summarize the school's strengths, areas for development and the data used in the evaluation of the school's performance against the district criteria and rubrics. The principal will receive a draft of the report in order to correct any factual errors. The final report will be made available to the school, the Office of Accountability and the area superintendent. The report should be made available to all staff in the school and the school leadership team, and a summary should be given to parents.

## How do I complain if something goes wrong in a review in my school?

A complaint should be referred to the Chief Accountability Officer, who will investigate discrepancies or complaints.

## How do SQRs fit into the overall CMS accountability framework?

The three elements of the accountability framework are the progress report, the school improvement plan and the quality review. Quality review

criteria used in the SQRs are also closely aligned with the goals in the *CMS Strategic Plan 2010*.

## Are there any rewards or supports for schools as a result of an SQR?

There will be no rewards attached to the first year's reviews, which are intended to establish a baseline. However, SQR information is being used to develop support and interventions for schools.

## Will the SQR be part of the principal's evaluation?

Indirectly, yes. The purpose of the SQR is identifying strengths and areas for development. As such, an SQR will provide valuable information for the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan is one of the tools area superintendents will use to hold principals accountable for improving student achievement. Ultimately, the SQR will be part of the school report cards.

## What support will schools receive from the district following an SQR?

Principals, in consultation with their area superintendents, will be able to use a number of professional development supports, including the school improvement process, use of data to improve instruction and best practices for teaching and learning.

## How are these reviews different from previous reviews?

An SQR looks beyond the data to assess the educational processes in the school which influence student outcomes. Student learning and continuous improvement are emphasized. Also, because reviews are conducted using the same framework

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for every school, there is greater consistency in the evaluations. The SQR is conducted by a team and is data-based. It also recognizes that all schools are unique. The SQR is designed to give school leaders information to improve student achievement and give the principal 360-degree input and feedback.

## **How will SQRs help improve the quality of education for students?**

The School Quality Review is one component of CMS's rigorous program for school accountability and improvement. It is a high-quality, evidenced-based, objective validation of the school's work and qualities. Although each school is evaluated using six criteria, the review focuses on student achievement, learning, and quality teaching. When a School Quality Review is set within a culture of self-reflection, analysis of results, and action, it becomes a powerful tool for improving the quality of education for all students.

## **Will individual staff be identified in SQR reports?**

No. An SQR focuses on whole-school performance, rather than individual performance. The evidence gathered in the review is aggregated. Of course, evaluations of the performance of school leadership and its influence on student achievement will mean that the leadership team will be identified, but this will be done collectively.

## **How will the district use SQRs?**

SQRs will inform decision-making, instructional priorities and allocation of resources. The information will enable more accurate planning for development across the whole district and will be used in individual schools for identifying, documenting and sharing best practices.

## **What about confidentiality?**

All reviewers will be required to sign a detailed code of conduct. Confidentiality is a key part of this code and will be monitored. This is an essential part of the integrity of the process.

## **How can I find out more about SQRs?**

Detailed guidance and advice for schools and for reviewers will be made available in SQR Notes of guidance and on the CMS website through the School Quality Review link.

## **How can I become an SQR reviewer?**

Senior leadership in schools or central office should notify the Office of Accountability if they are interested. We expect that all principals and other senior leaders across the district will be trained.

***For more information about SQR,  
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