Literature on school improvement projects suggests that interventions are more likely to succeed when they are implemented in schools with a certain basic level of functionality.

What is school functionality and how do we determine levels of functionality? This BRIDGE Resource points you to:

- **Some Useful Resources**: here we extract key points from selected texts or tools and give links to the full resource.
- **Reports, Papers and Articles**: here we describe some examples of useful sources and where to find them.

School functionality cuts across all BRIDGE Focus Areas, with particular relevance to School Leadership, Teacher Development and Learner Support.

The Department of Basic Education identifies 9 key areas for evaluation, or domains of school functionality. While these overarching domains are common to all the sources selected for this resource, you will find them described in a variety of ways, reflecting differences in approach and emphasis.

BRIDGE School Profile Guide
BRIDGE’s Guidelines aim to support the work and spend of social investors who promote educational improvement. We have developed a School Profile Guide which draws on many of the sources in this Resource. Its purpose is to help you establish a preliminary overview of the level of functionality of a school which is the target of a funded intervention. Click [here](#) for the School Profile Guide.
Some Useful Resources


School Self Evaluation Instrument, Department of Basic Education (April 2015)

The Department of Education (DoE) in 2001 introduced the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) (Government Gazette Vol. 433, No. 22512, 26 July 2001) which put in place mechanisms for determining the performance of schools, using both internal (self) and external evaluation.

The WSE Policy identifies these nine key areas for evaluation:

- **Basic functionality**
  ... the ability of the school to realise its educational and social goals. It focusses on establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment and dealing with absence, lateness and truancy.

- **Quality of teaching and learning, and educator development**
  ... curriculum planning and time management; creating a positive learning environment; teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the curriculum; lesson planning, preparation and presentation; conducting and managing assessment; and promoting and managing teacher development.

- **Curriculum provision and resources**
  ... implementing the curriculum as well as extra- and co-curricular enrichment programmes. It emphasises compliance with the CAPS curriculum and providing and managing teaching and learning resources.

- **Learner achievement**
  ... academic achievement in internal and standardised assessment as well as participation in sports and cultural activities. It includes learner ability in mathematics and the school’s language of teaching and learning, and the school’s ability to support learners with barriers to learning.

- **Leadership, management and communication**
  ... providing direction to the school; managing the curriculum, staff and physical resources to promote quality teaching and learning, and promoting stakeholder involvement through communication strategies.

- **Governance and relationships**
  ... the School Governing Body’s responsibilities in terms of establishing a purposeful and disciplined school environment, including providing strategic direction and performing legally mandated financial and human resource functions.

- **School safety, security and discipline**
  ... providing a healthy, safe and secure environment for learners, staff and others at the school, including complying with relevant legislation; managing learner discipline and contributing to emotional, social and physical well-being of learners.

- **School infrastructure**
  ... the provision and maintenance of school buildings, equipment, furniture, facilities and services needed to support a positive teaching and learning environment.

- **Parents and stakeholder involvement**
  ... communicating with parents; promoting parental and community involvement in learners’ education; and using their contributions to support learners’ progress.


The School Self Evaluation Instrument provides detailed information on the scope and depth of the nine key areas that contribute towards a functional school environment. While it is designed to be used by principals and school managers, it will give anyone interested in the topic a comprehensive overview of school functionality factors and what they entail. [Click here](#) for the DBE School Self Evaluation Instrument.
This document outlines the DBE’s vision for improved schooling in the form of 27 goals for strengthening areas in the education system that have been identified as needing support.

**Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025**

Department of Basic Education (October 2011)

This link leads to the short version of the Action Plan.

The 27 goals describe improved performance for:
- learners
- teachers
- principals
- parents
- learning and teaching materials, and
- school buildings and facilities.

This gives the reader an overview of the factors that play a role in effective schooling and raises awareness of areas requiring support.

**School Functionality Rapid Diagnostic Assessment (RDA)**

Tshikululu Social Investments (2014)

Designed for use in primary schools, to be completed within 24 hours, the RDA provides a summary of the levels functionality in schools against 8 key factors that have an impact on school functionality.

The indicators and the ratings applied against the indicators are used to classify schools as highly functional, medium functional or dysfunctional.

The RDA covers the following 8 key factors:
- Learner outcomes
- Teaching and curriculum delivery
- Contextual environment
- Resources
- Administration
- Governance
- Community
- Professional development

The Rapid Diagnostic Assessment Instrument and the School Functionality Checklist Tool are available for download from the BRIDGE website. These tools are available under creative commons licensing for practitioners, funders and educators.

For more information about the RDA approach click here to go to the Bridge Maths-and-Science-ME-CoP-Meeting-Highlight-20141022. This document includes links to the tools and a video on the rationale for the RDA.

Click here to go directly to the School Functionality Checklist Tool and here to go directly to the Rapid Diagnostic Assessment Instrument.

Tshikululu Social Investments presenting their Rapid Diagnostic Assessment tools
School Turnaround Strategy

Presentation by Dr Muavia Gallie to the BRIDGE Maths and Science Community of Practice (February 2015)

The model identifies eight school readiness components with related performance descriptors ranging from under-performance to functionality, for evaluating the conditions for teaching and learning in a school.

The eight school readiness components identified for the School Turnaround Strategy model are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Attendance - Teachers</td>
<td>Tick name</td>
<td>Sign name</td>
<td>Record time in &amp; out</td>
<td>Principal monitors daily</td>
<td>Absence submitted &amp; processed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Attendance - Learners</td>
<td>Record at end of the week</td>
<td>Record daily</td>
<td>Record per period</td>
<td>Record per subject</td>
<td>Record engagement in classroom per subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Teacher Information</td>
<td>Biographical information</td>
<td>Personal information</td>
<td>Academic information</td>
<td>Professional information</td>
<td>Performance information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Learner Information</td>
<td>Biographical information</td>
<td>Personal information</td>
<td>Socio-economic information</td>
<td>Achievement information</td>
<td>Expectations &amp; aspirations information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Annual Planning</td>
<td>Compliance planning</td>
<td>Administrative planning</td>
<td>Professional planning</td>
<td>Ethical planning</td>
<td>School improvement planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Timetabling</td>
<td>Compliance timetabling</td>
<td>Implement 40%;</td>
<td>Implement 60%;</td>
<td>Implement 80%;</td>
<td>Optimal, efficient, 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Teaching Schedules</td>
<td>CAPS planning</td>
<td>Schedules per quarter</td>
<td>Schedules per month</td>
<td>Schedules per week</td>
<td>Schedules per day (tasks, homework, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Organogram</td>
<td>No clear accountability, support or development agreement;</td>
<td>Accountability requirements are known</td>
<td>Accountability linked to positions only</td>
<td>Accountability linked to positions and functions</td>
<td>Clear accountability, support &amp; development at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Teaching &amp; Learning Support Materials</td>
<td>TLSM to teacher only</td>
<td>TLSM to teacher and selected learners</td>
<td>TLSM to all learners for use in classroom only</td>
<td>TLSM to all learners on first day for use beyond classroom</td>
<td>TLSM issued to all, &amp; returned every year (more than 90% return)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Click here to go to the presentation, and here for a video of Dr Gallie explaining the conceptual basis for his Turnaround Strategy.

“So-called ‘dysfunctional schools’ are often labelled as such because the current school system is designed for middle class learners, and makes a number of assumptions about context that often bear no relationship to reality. For example, the concept of ‘homework’ and all its implications has no ‘fit’ for children who have no homes, or who are themselves heads of households.” [Dr Gallie]
This book and the accompanying videos contain “good practice lessons” from effective schools, strategies for improving school performance and workshop guidelines and tools for using the material with school communities.

These “things that work” are summarised in the following 10 key strategies (p128):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>What does it mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools establish and maintain firm routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schools extend the time for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers teach every day and in every class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students are confronted with high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students are provided with love and discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parents are involved in the life of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Principals are visible in their leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Principals (and some teachers) are social entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Principals act on (manage) the external environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Students are offered a life beyond the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School peer reviews, in the context of the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SAESC), are designed with the intent to bring about continuous development, change and improvement in the quality of the teaching and learning in member schools.

The process reviews the following four Domains:

- **Domain 1 – Leadership and Management**
- **Domain 2 – Teaching and Learning**
- **Domain 3 – Culture and Climate**
- **Domain 4 – School and Community**

Although it is primarily used in member schools, SAESC is making this Peer Review process and the associated tools open to anyone wanting to implement a School Peer Review Process in their school.

This link will take you to a document giving you access to all the components, tools and instruments of the SPR process. The *Purpose & Domains* document is a good place to start – it sets out comprehensive indicators for each of the four domains, which together provide insight into the meaning of school effectiveness in this context.

School Peer Review Team working on feedback from lesson observations

The SAESC School Review is a very intense 3 day process – BUT as a resource it provides valuable information on a variety of aspects of school functionality.
A number of reports, papers and articles serve as useful sources of information about aspects of school functionality. Some examples are:

Zenex Review Project (2013), compiled by the ERA Evaluation Research Agency
This report presents “the results of a comprehensive and systematic review of South African scholarship on schooling interventions and research that discusses particularly what makes a difference to learner performance” (p 5). It gives the reader valuable insights into a range of factors impacting on school functionality. Contact Zenex Foundation through www.zenexfoundation.org.za to access this report.

JET Education Services
A number of JET resources seal with aspects of school functionality. One such resource is a paper by Godwin Khosa: Sustainable School Improvement - A partnership between the state, the private sector and civil society (2010). Click here to go to the paper. It describes a school improvement model developed and implemented by JET and highlights the importance for school functionality of planning and organisation, teacher performance and

National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU)
The annual national NEEDU reports give the reader a rich understanding of the context of South African schooling. The 2012 report looks at the state of literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase, while the 2013 report provides information on teaching and learning in rural primary schools. Click here to download the 2012 report and here for the Department of Basic Education website which has a link to the 2013 report.

Stephen Taylor: Uncovering indicators of effective school management in South Africa using the National School Effectiveness Study (2011) Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 10/11. This paper examines features of school management and teacher practices that are positively associated with more effective school organisation and improved learner performance. Click here to go to the paper.

“An organised learning environment signified by curriculum planning for the full year, a functional timetable, good quality inventories for LTSM, low teacher absenteeism and up-to-date assessment records were all strongly linked to better student achievement...” p43

A key theme running through the sources listed in this resource is the recognition that to be effective, schools need to actively promote their learners' emotional, social, physical and academic well-being and development.

The extent to which ‘pastoral care’ is provided in a school can be linked to understanding its level of functionality, in that it is so central to the well-being of the learner.

Below you will find two resources which address this dimension of school functionality.
South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE)

**Creating a Caring School** (SAIDE 2009) is a guide for school management teams, linked to a number of practical toolkits. SAIDE notes that schools need to become centres of care and support which take into account the number of orphans and vulnerable children in the system. The guide promotes the idea of selected interventions, suggesting that “.... basic nutrition, aftercare and support with school work, and psycho-social support are preconditions for successfully learning and teaching to take place.” (p 7). The guide will help school leaders understand the ideas behind a strategy or method, while the full version of the Toolkit provides real case studies, checklists and management tools to help with practical and effective implementation.

A summarised version of the key principles of the Guide is also available as Guide 1: Vision for school as a centre of care.

The main tools that support the Guide are available here.

- **Tool 1**: Identifying possible support
- **Tool 2**: School Information Management System
- **Tool 3**: Mapping managing support
- **Tool 4**: Setting up aftercare

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**Pastoral Care: A 10 Step Plan** in the Australian Teacher Magazine is another example of an approach to understanding the various components of pastoral care. In this view, pastoral care takes on an integrated function, “.... one that is inextricably linked with teaching and learning and the structural organisation of the school – promoting students’ personal and social development and fostering positive attitudes.”

This article can be found here.

Visit the BRIDGE website for more on school functionality.