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To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors, Heads: Curriculum Support, Circuit Managers, Chief Education Specialists; Heads: Management and Governance, Deputy Chief Education Specialists, Assessment Coordinators, Subject Advisers, Heads of educational institutions, Principals and Teachers

Short summary: *This circular serves to communicate a support matrix aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning at every school.*

Subject: Supporting quality teaching and learning

1.   The vision of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) of "quality education for every child in every classroom, in every school" places the focus of all activities in our schools, but especially in the classroom where most of the teaching and learning happen, on teaching methods that will enhance learning.

2.   The 21st century in which our learners will have to function, demands competencies far beyond just acquiring subject content knowledge. While literacy and numeracy remain the key building blocks to understand, use and create knowledge, we are already seeing that the world today requires everyone to be competent communicators, effective collaborators, be able to solve problems and to use creative and critical thinking skills to sustain the world we live in.

3.   In order to support learners to attain these competencies in the short time they spend in school, we need to focus on effective teaching that will result in the best possible learning. This becomes possible when quality teaching and quality assessment occur in supportive school/classroom environments, underpinned by a culture of reflective practice for continual improvement.

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4.   Most research studies indicate that sound instructional leadership and quality teaching, informed by pedagogies that have the best chance of deepening learning, is critical in realising our stated vision. Likewise, research also found that teachers, supported by expert instructional leadership from School Management Teams (SMTs), have a significant impact on helping our learners, who come from different backgrounds and have different learning needs, to maximally optimise their learning gains.

5.   In an effort to support both instructional leadership and teaching for improved learning, the attached support matrix highlights the key components that we would like teachers to focus on in every classroom. For each of these components, a pedagogical question is posed to guide the thinking concerning teaching methods used. This matrix is not a replacement for the IQMS criteria nor does it have anything to do with the IQMS process. Its sole purpose is to support day-to-day quality teaching and assessment in every classroom and has nothing to do with teacher evaluation.

6.   Any attempt aimed at improving teaching competence requires honest self-reflection on your current teaching practices (its successes and weaknesses) and then taking informed decisions about the next logical steps to grow as a professional. In order to help this process, the matrix also highlights typical teaching characteristics that a developing, an effective or a highly effective teacher may demonstrate. In this way, every teacher can reflect on his/her own practice and get a sense of the level at which he/she is performing in terms of each teaching component. The matrix also helps to identify what the next developmental level of competence is that the teacher can work towards.

7.   Within subject context, our Subject Advisors will provide curriculum and pedagogical support to teachers around the eight teaching components to ensure improved learning.

8.   Another critical dimension of this support initiative is the instructional leadership that must come from principals, departmental heads and subject heads. As curriculum leaders, the principal and his/her management team should initiate processes to ensure that learners learn in the best possible ways and that school-based assessment (formal and informal) is used to improve both teaching and learning. It is in this leadership dimension that circuit managers and other district officials will play an important role in supporting the leadership teams at schools.

9.   The matrix provides us with a vocabulary to talk and think about quality teaching and to find better ways for staff to envisage how our schools can contribute more significantly to help develop and prepare learners to take up the opportunities after school and to make their contribution to society.

10. This year is declared as the Year of Values-driven Learning. Many of the elements in the support matrix are aimed at inculcating values that will help learners to build their self-esteem and mediate the challenges we face as a society. By demonstrating those values in our teaching and in how we design and use assessment, we will facilitate learners' assimilation of those values.

11. Principals and teachers are encouraged to engage with this support matrix for quality teaching and assessment to sustain the conversation about attaining better learning outcomes for every learner. It is therefore recommended that discussions on the teaching components become part of the professional development programme at schools.

12. Our learners are our future. Let us do everything in our power to improve the quality of our teaching and what and how they learn. Be assured of the support of Head Office and district officials as we journey together to continually improve the learning experiences offered at our schools.

13. The matrix, which is available in the three official languages in the Western Cape, is attached. For the best use, it is advised that it be printed on A3-size paper.

SIGNED: BK SCHREUDER
HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 2018-02-26

SUPPORT MATRIX FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

TEACHING COMPONENT	PEDAGOGICAL QUESTION	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE	DEVELOPING
1. Planning and preparation	**Lesson preparation** Does the lesson planning show systematic and logical sequencing of activities that lead learners to attain the lesson objectives?	• The lesson topic captures the curriculum theme that is being covered in a creative and captivating way, even if some work is retaught due to observed misunderstandings. • Lesson purposefully planned to use lesson time optimally and to enhance learning in an innovative and learner-centred way. • The learning activities have a high surprise effect, encourage enquiry and self-activity, and are aligned with the teaching objectives. • The learning activities and experiences are appropriately differentiated for individual learner needs and remedial support is given. • The teacher selected a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches that helped to mediate learner misconceptions and inability to show understanding. • The teacher prioritises curriculum coverage in the teaching time available and has initiatives in place to help learners who fall behind.	• The lesson topic ties in with the current curriculum theme and builds on work that was completed earlier. • Lesson plan is well structured with good concept and skills progression and reasonable time allocations. • Most of the learning activities that capture the attention of the learners are aligned with the teaching objectives. • The planning includes some differentiation for different groups of learners and varied use of instructional groups. • The teacher demonstrates familiarity with the subject and effectively uses a range of pedagogical approaches to teach the subject. • It is clear that the teacher will cover the required curriculum in the time available; however not all learners have mastered the work.	• The lesson topic does not link clearly to the particular CAPS theme that is being discussed or work completed earlier. • The lesson plan is not structured, does not follow a logical sequencing of activities and has unrealistic time allocations. • The learning activities are not stimulating learner interest and/or not well aligned with the teaching objectives. • No differentiation is planned for learners with different learning needs. • The teacher displays limited or no understanding of the range of pedagogical approaches suitable to teaching the content. • There is no evidence that the teacher will attain the required curriculum coverage in the teaching time available.
2. Intellectual quality of teaching and learning	**Deep knowledge and understanding** Does the lesson cover key subject ideas, concepts and relationships to understand the topic and the world in depth?	• There is a sustained focus throughout the lesson on the key concepts/ideas related to the topic as well as the interrelationship between them. • The in-depth understanding of prerequisite relationships between related concepts (even from other subjects) is used by the teacher to challenge learners to think of other interrelationships and applications in real life.	• In dealing with the content topic, the focus on key concepts and ideas is not sustained throughout the lesson and unrelated ideas/concepts are also weaved in. • The teacher demonstrates a clear understanding of prerequisite relationships between concepts as he/she helps learners to master the new content.	• Almost all of the content knowledge of the lesson is shallow because it does not deal with the key subject concepts/ideas/skills. • The teacher displays little understanding of the prerequisite relationships between concepts needed for learners to grasp the content.
	Higher cognitive skills Are learners using higher-order thinking and critical analysis during the lesson?	• Practically all learners are engaged in higher-order thinking and critical analysis and are expected to use these competences frequently in their learning processes.	• Learners are mostly required to use lower and middle order thinking skills. In at least one question or activity learners are expected to perform some higher order thinking and/or critical analysis.	• Learners demonstrate mainly lower-order thinking. They either receive or recall pre-specified knowledge or participate in routine practice.
3. Language use and enrichment	**Using subject terminology and developing language** Is subject terminology used and aspects of language, grammar and technical vocabulary given prominence and mediated?	• The teacher sets the example and insists on the correct use of language by learners. • There is conscious thinking about language and subject terminology. The teacher or learners provide relevant commentary on aspects of language at several points during the lesson. • The teacher uses the learners' language and numeracy skills, as well as their ability to graphically illustrates and analyse things so that they can develop a deeper understanding of the lesson content.	• The teacher encourages, but does not insist, that learners use correct language. • At the beginning of the lesson, or at some key juncture, the teacher or learners stop and explain or discuss some aspect of language, e.g. roots of terminology, genre, signs, vocabulary or symbols. • The teacher develops the learners' ability to spell, read and write and where appropriate also other language and numeracy skills.	• Learners use language incorrectly and the teacher does not correct them. • The lesson proceeds without the teacher or learners stopping to discuss, to comment on or to request or provide clarification and guidance about aspects of subject terminology or language. • The teacher does not afford learners opportunities to read, write or apply language and numeracy skills in subject context.
	Stimulate conversation To what extent are learners regularly engaged in sustained conversations about the ideas and concepts they are encountering?	• Substantive communication, with sustained interactions occurs throughout the lesson, with the teacher and/or learners scaffolding the communication and/or interactions.	• Substantive communication among learners and/or between the teacher and learners occurs occasionally and involves at least two sustained interactions.	• Almost no substantive communication occurs during the lesson. Communication in the class is mostly one-directional (coming from the teacher).
4. Assessing for learning	**Questioning and tasks** Are the assessments activities (formal and informal) aligned to the teaching objectives and used to determine the extent to which learners grasp concepts/facts/skills?	• All the teaching objectives are included in the assessment in a creative and authentic manner. • The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting learners to think and/or offer a range of possible answers. • The teacher makes effective use of wait time and discussions to enable learners to talk to one another, without ongoing mediation by teacher. • The teacher builds on and uses responses to questions in order to further deepen learners' understanding.	• Most of the teaching objectives are addressed in the informal and planned assessments. • The teacher frames some questions so that it promotes thinking, but only a few learners are involved. • The teacher invites learners to respond directly to one another's answers or ideas, but few learners respond. • The teacher asks learners to justify their reasoning and most learners attempt to do so.	• The nature of and how the assessments are done is not aligned to teaching objectives. • Questions are rapid-fire and focus mainly on recall of facts that does not require any further thinking. • The teacher allows learners only to respond to him/her and only indicate whether the answer is right or wrong. • The teacher does not ask learners to explain their thinking.
	Explicit quality learning criteria Are learners provided with explicit criteria for the quality of work they are to produce?	• Detailed criteria regarding the quality of work are made explicit or reinforced throughout the lesson and there is consistent evidence of learners examining the quality of their work or improving it in relation to these criteria.	• Detailed criteria regarding the quality of work are provided during the lesson, but there is limited evidence that learners are using the criteria to do the activity/task and examine the quality of their work.	• Only general statements are made regarding the desired quality of the work. The assessment criteria are not shared with the learners.
	Feedback and outlining expectations Are learners' answers responded to timeously in honest and humane ways and are the next steps explained to close the gap between "not knowing" and "knowing"?	• The teacher provides specific learners with detailed feedback, indicating weaknesses, but also what the learner can do inside and outside the class context to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. The learners use this feedback effectively. • Teacher identifies and support any learner who is falling behind, and enable almost all to catch up.	• Broad general comments about strengths and weaknesses are provided to the whole class. Learners use this feedback well and they know what they need to do to improve. • Teacher effectively identifies and supports those learners who start to fall behind and intervene promptly to help improve their learning.	• Learners receive no feedback, or the feedback is general or directed to one learner. • Lack of detailed and timeous feedback means that teaching fails to meet learners' needs to be helped to overcome their learning problems.

#	Aspect	Criteria	(Highest)	(Middle)	(Lowest)
5.	Supportive classroom environment	**Respectful classroom environment** Is the classroom atmosphere characterised by mutual respect and collaboration between teacher and learners and among learners?	• Learner behaviour is generally appropriate as the standards of conduct appear to have been established and are successfully applied by the teacher and learners. • The teacher responds to disrespectful behaviour with decisiveness and learners exhibit respect for the teacher and fellow learners.	• The teacher attempts to maintain order in the classroom, referring to classroom rules, but with uneven success. • The teacher's response to learner misbehaviour is inconsistent: sometimes very harsh, other times too lenient.	• The teacher doesn't monitor learner behaviour. It results in a chaotic classroom environment, with no standards of conduct evident. • Some learners disrupt the classroom, without apparent teacher awareness or an effective teacher response.
		Learner engagement in lesson Are learners, most of the time, seriously engaged in the lesson?	• Virtually all learners are intellectually engaged in the lesson as lesson activities require high-level learner thinking and explanations of their thinking. • Learner engagement is enhanced by the teacher effectively incorporating a variety of teaching styles in the lesson to address different learning preferences.	• Some learners are intellectually engaged in the lesson as learning tasks are a mix of those requiring thinking and those requiring recall. • The teaching approach focus primarily on one learning style that addresses the learning preferences of most learners.	• Few learners are intellectually engaged in the lesson as learning tasks/activities only require recall or have a single correct response or method. • Most learners, most of the time appear apathetic and indifferent as their learning preferences are not catered for in the teaching approach.
		High expectations To what extent are high expectations of all learners communicated to them and risk taking encouraged and rewarded?	• Most or all learners participate in challenging work throughout the lesson. They are encouraged (explicitly or through teaching processes) to try hard and to take risks and are recognised for doing so.	• Many learners participate in challenging work during at least half of the lesson. They are encouraged to try hard and recognised for doing so.	• A few learners participate in challenging work during certain times in the lesson. Learners are not encouraged to try hard and neither are they recognised for trying.
6.	Significance of teaching	**Background and cultural knowledge** Do lessons build on learners' background knowledge and do lessons incorporate values?	• Learners' background knowledge is consistently incorporated into the lesson, and there is substantial connection to out-of-school background knowledge and values. • Substantial cultural knowledge is recognised and valued throughout the lesson and this knowledge is accepted as equal to the dominant culture.	• Learners' background knowledge is used in the lesson and there is at least some connection to out-of-school background knowledge and values. • Some cultural knowledge is recognised and valued in the lesson, but within the framework of the dominant culture.	• Learners' background knowledge is not connected to the lesson and values are not addressed. • No explicit recognition or valuing of other than the knowledge of the dominant culture is evident in the substance of the lesson.
		Knowledge integration Does the lesson integrate a range of subject areas?	• Meaningful connections are regularly made between topics or different subjects by the teacher and/or the learners during the lesson.	• Some meaningful connection is made between topics or different subjects by the teacher and/or the learners during the lesson.	• No meaningful connections. Knowledge is mostly restricted to that of a specific topic or subject.
		Inclusivity Are learners from diverse backgrounds and abilities actively engaged in teaching and learning processes?	• Learners from all groups and diverse needs are included in all aspects of the lesson and their inclusion is both significant and equivalent to the inclusion of learners from other groups/needs.	• Learners from all groups and diverse needs are included in most aspects of the lesson, but the inclusion of some learners may be minor in relation to others.	• Some learners are excluded, or exclude themselves, from lesson activities throughout the lesson.
7.	Using resources to deepen learning	**Use of WCED provided Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) or facilities** Are WCED subject resources or facilities available and used appropriately to strengthen teaching for diverse learning needs?	• The teacher provides a variety of appropriately challenging resources that are differentiated for learners in the class. • The teacher's knowledge of using a wide variety of resources that will address the diversity of learners, is extensive. • Texts, graphics, maps, etc. are matched to learners' level of skill and the resources are multi-disciplinary.	• Learning resources are suitable, but there is limited variety. • The teacher selects LTSM in the school to enhance understanding of certain concepts/skills, but does not search beyond the school for resources. • The teacher acknowledges one or two specific learning needs and selects LTSM that will support those learners.	• The LTSM is not engaging learners nor does it strengthen the teaching. • The teacher uses only WCED/district-provided materials, even when more variety would assist some learners better to attain the lesson objectives. • Although the teacher is aware of some student needs, he/she does not inquire about possible resources.
		Use of digital technology and resources Are digital technology and resources purposefully integrated to deepen understanding and to accommodate different learning abilities and learning styles?	• The teacher integrates digital technology and resources flexibly and seamlessly during the teaching in which learners use 21st century skills to construct knowledge. • The teacher guides learners to make decisions about when and how to use digital technology and resources; to use it innovatively to achieve specific learning goals and to be self-directed in combining the use of various tools. • Learners recognise and explore connections between classroom knowledge and realities outside in ways that create personal meaning and highlight the significance of the knowledge and skills application to contribute towards a better world.	• The teacher incorporates digital technology and resources as an integral part of the lesson and lead learners in the conventional and procedural use thereof. • While the teacher makes most decisions about digital technology and resource use, he/she guides the learners in using it independently, as well as exploring different ways of using it. • Learners explore connections between classroom knowledge and the world beyond the classroom, which include basic development and application of 21st century skills.	• The teacher begins to use digital technology and resources, although sometimes isolated, to explain curriculum content to learners. • Learners may not have direct access to digital technology and resources. Decisions about how and when to use digital technology as well as which resources to use are made by the teacher. • The lesson has no clear connection to 21st century skills and the use of digital technology and resources in preparation for the world beyond the school.
8.	Reflection aimed at improving teaching	**Reflection before, during and after teaching a lesson** Does the teacher continually evaluate the success of planned teaching and is he/she willing to change her/his teaching practice to enhance learning for more learners?	• The teacher makes a thoughtful and accurate assessment of the lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which it attained the teaching objectives, citing many specific examples from the lesson and weighing the relative strengths of each. • The teacher offers specific alternative lesson approaches which is based on an extensive repertoire of teaching skills and the ability to substantiate the probable success of these courses of action.	• The teacher has a generally accurate impression of the lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which the teaching objectives were attained. • The teacher makes a few general suggestions of what could be tried another time the lesson is taught.	• The teacher does not know whether the lesson was effective or achieved its objectives or the teacher profoundly misjudges the success of the lesson. • The teacher has no suggestions on how the lesson could be improved.

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