Who Needs SPIR?

District Coordinators, Curriculum Specialists, Principals and Superintendents with interest in providing an exemplary science instructional program will consider NSTA’s topnotch evaluation and assessment process to build student achievement.

WHAT IS IT?
Based on NSTA’s definition of program excellence and best practices, SPIR is a standards-based, comprehensive assessment with recommendations for improvement.

WHAT IS IT FOR?
Our trained, expert reviewers collaborate with your administrators and school leaders to gather data for assessment and evaluation. Measuring your program against the NSTA standards gives leverage to the leadership to bring consensus to all participants for change.

WHERE?
Site visits are scheduled in your district offices and sample schools.

WHEN?
NSTA provides a one year matrix covering assessment tasks, required personnel and time needed per task with materials due dates.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?
SPIR fees are determined by the unique needs of the client and can be negotiated to support those needs. The base fee of $15,000 for one school review includes work with district/school leaders, surveys of key stakeholders, on-site observations of up to 8 classrooms, focus groups and the final report with recommendations. Most districts choose to sample more than one school. The cost of a district review depends on the size of your district and decisions you make about how many schools will participate in on-site classroom observations and focus groups. NSTA staff will guide you through the rationale and process for picking a sample of schools that will receive on-site observations. During that process, the costs can be negotiated while the benefits and constraints are considered. Visit www.nsta.org/spir for more details.

Visit www.nsta.org/spir for more details on Science Program Improvement Review (SPIR). Contact Wendy Binder at 703.312.9390 or wbinder@nsta.org.

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NSTA believes that the essential elements of science education are aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment with national, state, and local standards; implementing professional development with national, state, and local needs and objectives; and ensuring that an infrastructure is in place to sustain the program over time.

Trained and Experienced Science Reviewers

Nationally-recognized experts in science education, selected for their expertise, education, and analysis are trained for the reviewing process. The team conducts the reviews through classroom observations, interviews, surveys, and focus groups. After compiling the data, a comprehensive report is created that measures the program against standards goals and provides recommendations for improvement and advancement.

Areas of Assessment

- Policy and administrative support of the science program
- The status of comprehensive strategic plans, an organized and accountable leadership team, a rigorous curriculum and high-quality instructional materials, and adequate resource allocations
- Classroom implementation of the science curriculum, which includes school leaders who provide guidance, support and accountability; instruction that results in student understanding; and a material management system.

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Assessment Report

Comprehensive and annotated, this confidential report clearly identifies areas for improvement and recommendations for expanding student learning opportunities. This report is organized around 15 practice-based standards and the instructional program is rated on scales for 3-4 objects for each.

Benefits for Your School or District

- SPIR provides a benchmark assessment to inform your strategic planning
- Administrators and teachers will be able to identify areas of strength and build on that competency.
- Administrators and teachers will identify areas of concern and implement a plan for improvement.
- Achievable goals aligned with state and national standards can be established.
- Science instruction can be aligned to current research in “best practices.”
- A culture of learning can be established which supports improved teacher knowledge and skills.
- Your school community can be engaged and encouraged.
- Student science learning improves to meet NCLB requirements.

“SPIR is the best tool I have found for improving the science program. By implementing the recommendations from SPIR, our students’ science scores have dramatically increased. In fact, some schools that were in academic emergency have now been recognized as effective and excellent.”

The Battle Creek Math and Science Center conducted an NSTA Science Program Improvement Review (SPIR) and used the comprehensive report generated as the foundation for program improvement plans in three middle schools. Here is what BCMSC Director Connie Duncan says about the SPIR analysis and recommendations.

“We have to know where we are before we can determine how far we have to go.”

Duncan continued, “The SPIR statements were professional and knowledgeable. They were correct in their evaluations. Seeing both strengths and areas for improvement with matching resources. Having an unbiased evaluation at the base is critical. The Battle Creek Math and Science Center are thrilled with the new after-school opportunities for their children. Parents are very pleased and engaged. They are excited about science, teachers are comfortable teaching it, and parents are encouraged to bring their children. In one year our science teachers have implemented these after-school activities in science fair, rocks, clubs, science reviews, and Saturday science for families. The NSTA SPIR program is one of the very few ways to identify strengths and challenges of district science programs. Our team highly recommended it to the district that this tool is honest feedback and assistance.”

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