



Sector-Specific  
**PACA**  
Tools

# EDUCATION



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## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

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This ED-specific PACA Booklet serves as a supplement to—not a replacement of—the PACA Field Guide for Volunteers. In this booklet, there are several ED-specific tools that will enable you to adopt a more participatory approach with your work. However, remember that **nearly all tools in the PACA Field Guide can be used or adapted** in order to support successful ED projects.

### Adapting PACA Field Guide tools for your ED projects

You don't have to use all PACA tools to be successful, though with careful consideration selecting and using a few of them can make all the difference in how effective, relatable and lasting your impact will be. For example, adapt the **Question Ladder** tool in the Discover phase for Education by adding the questions below to get specific insights into education in your community. Thoughtful, intentional and small adjustments help you use standard PACA tools for the Education lens:

1. What behavior change (or teaching practice change) do you want to see among teachers?
2. With whom will you identify the desired change in behavior or teaching practice?
3. What things might be needed to support the changes in teacher's behavior?
4. When will you know when the behavior has been changed?
5. Who will be involved in the process?

### Key PACA considerations for ED Volunteers

As you begin collaborating with school and community members by using the tools in this Field Guide, keep in mind the following key ED considerations:

- In addition to the school, what education facilities, services and service providers are available in your community? At district level?
- Are there linkages in the community between schools, community organizations, and family and health services, etc.?
- Who has access to educational opportunities, resources and services? How are learners with special needs accommodated? Inclusion? Special materials available?
- How does gender, or age considerations, play a role in educational services?
- What cultural expectations affect males and females in schools and educational settings?
- What are the cultural expectations that affect the learning of youth? Of teachers?
- Are there other individuals in the community that you can work with to support broader educational opportunities or needs? After school learning opportunities? English practice?

ED sector PACA tools ensure Volunteers establish credibility, navigate chain of command, build trust, learn about existing resources and professional pathways to access them, and successfully approach work with teachers, students and parents from a place of informed understanding and empathy.



## Informal Interviews with School Stakeholders: Strengths and Challenges

Informal interviews with various school stakeholders (i.e. teachers, school administration, parents, caregivers, students, school employees, ministry staff, etc.) are a great way to both connect with the individuals that contribute to a school's performance and to hear them describe their contributions in their own words. Although an informal interview is less structured than a formal interview—for example, it can take place over coffee or in an unplanned moment when timing for the conversation is right—your aim as the “interviewer” is the same: to develop relationships with school stakeholders while beginning to uncover key insights about the school environment. You'll still need to plan in advance by identifying key stakeholders and thinking through the type of questions you'll want to ask. Be sure to use an assets-based approach and focus on both strengths and challenges (i.e. opportunity for improvement) instead of taking a purely problem-based approach.

**Time:** 2 months (on and off)

**Difficulty:** moderate

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensils

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Summarize/analyze others' responses

### Steps:

1. Create a list of strategic people to informally interview. Ideally, the list will include all or some of the teaching staff and principals/headmaster at your school, janitors or guards, cooks, anyone who works at the school.
2. Next, identify other stakeholders: PTA leaders and members, parents, business persons involved in the school community and others who have a stake in and are involved in the school community.
3. Create a list of questions to ask ahead of time, simple things like:
  - What is your involvement in the school?
  - How many years have you been involved?
  - What's your favorite thing about the school?
  - Why do you work in education?
  - What is the importance of education? Why is it of value?
  - What do you see as the strengths of this school community?
  - What are its challenges (opportunities for improvement)?
  - What can we do to address some of the challenges (opportunities for improvement)?
  - Any advice for me in my role?



## Annual School Calendar

A School Calendar captures major activities for a given school year. Head Teachers/Principals typically post an annual calendar in their office and the staff room. However, dates are often subject to change, and helping to update the school calendar is a great way to offer up your time through a useful task that also allows you to understand the flow of the school year.

Referring to the school calendar is instrumental for Volunteers and Counterparts when planning instructional activities, student assessments, professional development, parent outreach events and planning for events that happen between terms, like camps.

This activity is best completed during your first 1-2 months at site, so that staff has access to the calendar throughout the year when planning other group activities.

**Time:** 90-120 minutes

**Difficulty:** moderate

**Materials:** current academic calendar from Ministry of Education (or previous year), large pieces of paper (optional, you could also do this digitally), writing utensils (pens or pencils), list of “important dates”

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask follow-up or clarifying questions; Ask questions; Summarize/analyze others’ responses

### Steps:

1. Connect with your counterpart and supervisor to determine if developing the annual school calendar is something they would like to do. If so;
2. Identify a date, time and place for the meeting with administrators, notify and remind colleagues.
3. Prepare by creating a list of “important events” that includes when the term/semester begins and ends, annual exams, holidays and so on.
4. Welcome participants and explain that they will be helping to create a master school calendar.
5. Divide participants into subgroups (i.e. principals, teachers by grade, community leaders, students).
6. Show chart or give each group a copy of the “important dates.”
7. Ask each group to think about activities in which they participate throughout the year.
8. Have each group reconstruct a normal school year noting the activities that they do, and a rough estimate of the time necessary for preparation and planning. For instance, if your school conducts a spelling bee, you may include not only the date of the spelling bee but also the weeks leading up to the spelling bee since staff and students will be engaged in preparations.
9. Post the calendars where everyone can see them and have each group report out their results.
10. Combine the calendars into one master calendar.
11. To wrap up, reflect as a group. Discuss the busiest time of the school year for teachers. Discuss when students are the busiest.

If the school has another mechanism for developing the annual school calendar, ask the administration to engage you (the Volunteer) in this so you can learn how the school year flows.

Alternatively, a Volunteer can prepare a personal version of an academic school calendar to orient themselves to the activities that unfold during a school year.

### Helpful Tips

Use the following to prompt discussion and generate items to include on the annual school calendar:

- Beginning and end of each term or semester
- End of term exams, national exams, promotional exams
- Days that grades are due
- Dates to submit schemes of work or lesson plans
- National holidays
- Religious holidays
- Cultural or seasonal events (e.g. coming of age rituals like circumcision, agricultural cycles, rainy season that can affect attendance)
- Sports days or weeks
- Events where instruction is suspended such as health screenings, spelling bees, science fairs, etc.
- Planning time—blocks of time where a staff would be preparing for special events, holding preliminary events, etc.
- Visits by District Inspectors or other stakeholders
- Meetings with School Board, Board of Governors, or Parent Groups
- Staff appraisals or evaluations
- Professional development activities, peer observations, student teaching
- Special events where select students or staff may leave the school or remain at school, but be absent from the classroom
- Celebrations, competitions, field trips, elections, etc.

It may be helpful to create symbols or icons for activities or events that repeat or are part of the series (term exams, submission of lesson plans, etc.).

Program Managers can generally provide a copy of the official academic calendar issued each year by the Ministry of Education to Volunteers during Pre- Service Training. If the academic calendar for the current year is not yet available for release, Program Managers can share the previous year as dates for past precedent.



## School Profile Tool

Go on a fact-finding mission that helps you to deeply understand the demographics, local geography, operational practices, and history that make up the context of your school. You may need to connect with several key colleagues or access records to accomplish this. Head Teachers, Principals, veteran teachers, board members, school secretary, and parent group chairpersons are all great resources. Much of this information can be unearthed by connecting with fellow teachers informally. Be sensitive in your approach so that your questions aren't perceived as an interrogation, but simply helping an outsider to understand their new environment. This information will ground your future activities and projects and help you to do quality monitoring and reporting of your work.

Find out, write up and share back what you have discovered with the staff at your school. This will help to establish your credibility as an educator in a new context and build trust with your new colleagues.

**Time:** 4-8 hours (over a couple weeks)

**Difficulty:** moderate

**Materials:** Notebook, writing utensils, or can be completely digital

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Understand responses

### Steps:

1. Connect with your counterpart and/or supervisor and arrange to be introduced to your new colleagues at a staff meeting.
2. At the staff meeting, introduce yourself and tell the staff you will be working hard to learn how their school operates and finding the best ways to collaborate with them. Tell them that you will be learning about the school's demographics, local geography, and history so that you can work professionally and effectively.
3. Set meetings with various staff members, or gather information during informal chats in the staff room to do your research.
4. Write up a brief School Profile paper that highlights the following information:
  - What is the school's mission, vision and/or values (guiding principles)?
  - Who were the founding educators?
  - Is there a school motto? Mascot? Song? Cheer or chant?
  - When was the school opened?
  - How is the school funded? Government funding? Sponsorships for learners? Private, parish or donated funds? Student paid school fees?
  - Is there a governing board?
  - Is there a parent's group?
  - What are the current and historical enrollment rates? Boys? Girls? Per grade level?
  - Does enrollment vary by grade levels? During times of the year? For girls? For boys?
  - What is the age range of learners in each grade? How does promotion and retention work?
  - How many teachers are there? Male? Female? Teaching which grades? Subjects?
  - What extracurricular activities happen at school? Clubs? During or after school?

- What is the homework policy?
- Are there activities on the weekend? Do teachers come to school on the weekend?
- Do any students board/live on campus?
- How far are students walking to school on average? Where are they coming from? What are they passing by? Other transport services?
- What are the responsibilities and activities of female students at school? Teachers?
- What are the responsibilities and activities of male students at school? Teachers?
- What time do most students arrive at school? Depart?
- What assets does the school have? Land? Buildings? Sponsorships, partnerships or affiliations?
- Do parents come to school? Are there events for parents to assist the school?
- When do teachers get paid? What is the pay schedule or cycle? Is it consistent?
- Has the school ever suspended operation or shut down for a time? Why?
- How are teachers appraised or evaluated? When does this activity occur and who is involved?
- How are educators acknowledged or appreciated? How are they encouraged to improve?
- When are staff meetings held? Are there professional development or teacher trainings that happen?
- Do pre-service teachers, other volunteers or interns work at the school? When, how often?

### **Helpful Tips**

Ask your supervisor or administrator if they would like you to compile any salient information into a representational document for the school, such as an informational brochure or handout for visitors or new parents/students. This helps your colleagues to identify a tangible result of your research, share with others, and they can brag on how much their Volunteer knows about their school.



## Materials Review

A materials review can be a helpful activity for a Volunteer to conduct with his or her counterpart. The purpose of the materials review is for staff to take a broad inventory of resources, materials and supplies available across the school that are available to use during instruction. In doing so, Volunteers and Counterparts will be better able to plan lessons. A full materials review involves speaking with or interviewing key staff at local schools, and, sometimes even a trip the district education office, which can help identify materials like braille typewriters or science kits that are loaned out on rotation.

Before jumping into teaching or co-teaching, identify and explore past and current materials available at the school. Teacher colleagues and students see this as an indicator of a serious and professional teacher. Whether a Volunteer is a seasoned educator or teaching for the first time, this will help to establish credibility. This helps a Volunteer get started with lesson planning, determining if additional materials are needed, and discovering if materials can be procured through existing school mechanisms.

**Time:** 60-90 minutes

**Difficulty:** moderate

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensils

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Understand responses

### Steps:

1. Create a list of people to informally interview. Ideally, the list will include the teaching staff, librarian, secretary and administrators at your school. If it is not possible to speak with every teacher at your school, try to speak with one teacher from each grade.

Option: if speaking/interviewing the staff is not possible or culturally appropriate, consider making a simple one-page survey to pass out at a faculty meeting.

2. After speaking with the teachers, create a chart and list of the materials. Indicate whether the material is frequently used, how many teachers use the material, and how it's aligned with the curriculum.-
3. After completing the chart, make it available as a resource to the staff at your school, so that they can incorporate more materials into their instruction.
4. As a follow-up, you could conduct a staff development activity with your counterpart and have a sharing of the various materials and cross-reference them with the curriculum being used. In this way, teachers can learn from their peers how to enhance the curriculum.

### Helpful Tips

Ask colleagues if the following items are available or used at school, and if so, how to access them:

- previous exams (past papers)
- syllabus
- schemes of work (planning guides)
- copy of national curriculum
- purchased or adopted curriculums or manuals
- teacher's guides or subject area notes

- trade, picture, or chapter books
- text books
- charts, posters
- student workbooks
- staff sign-in book or register
- chalk/erasers
- special needs resources (e.g. Braille typewriter)
- learning manipulatives (literacy, numeracy, science kits)
- laboratory materials inventory
- materials requisition request forms
- attendance sheets
- subscriptions (professional journals, magazines, newspapers, etc.)
- marking guides
- visitor's book
- online subscriptions
- videos/digital resources

You will need to connect with a variety of colleagues to access these materials. The head of your department is a good start, though anyone friendly and present will do! The school secretary might have keys if these items are locked in storage. In many cases, there may only be a few very carefully guarded copies of any book, teacher's guide or curriculum.

Rarely are staff allowed to take these items off the school campus. Spending time in the staff room can connect you with people who know where to locate these items. Make sure to ask what the policy is and use this as an opportunity to build trust with your new team. For example, in some countries department heads submit a materials requisition request at the beginning of each year or term. If a Volunteer learns about this procedure, they can add requests for materials and supplies to the request.

### Sample Questions for Interview/Survey

Suggested questions include:

- What type of teaching materials do you use (books, computer programs, home-made materials)?
- What materials are you currently using?
- Are the text books standard or did you select these materials on your own?
- How long have you been using your current books/text books?
- Are there books listed in the Ministry of Education's curriculum that are required?
- Are there books that have been donated to the school available for use?
- Is there a computer lab available? Is there a printer? Copier? Wi-Fi? How do teachers use it?
- Do you use home-made materials?
- Do you use online resources? If so, what are they and for which subjects?



## Organizational Chart

Creating a chart that maps out the roles of each member of the school community will ensure that the chain of command is understood, build trust with colleagues and help a Volunteer get things done in a way that host country colleagues view as professional. Schools tend to operate in a similar way all over the world. However, there are very different titles for the roles that Americans are familiar with, and there are instances where titles have high status in one country and lower status in another, or very different associated duties and responsibilities.

During the first two weeks at school arrange to meet with 1-2 top administrators to get the official explanation of each role as you draft your version of the school's organizational chart.

**Time:** 60-90 minutes

**Difficulty:** moderate

**Materials:** Notebook, writing utensils, or can be completely digital

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Understand responses

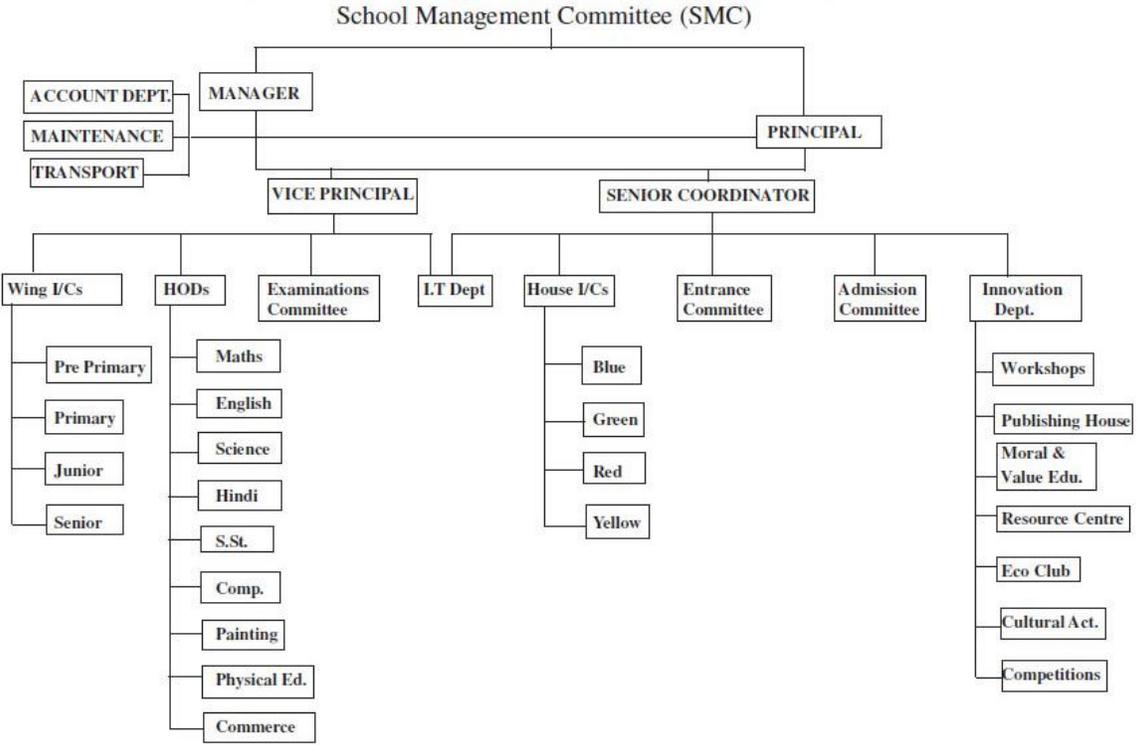
### Steps:

1. Connect with your counterpart, supervisor, and/or administrator and set a time to meet and discuss the staffing structure of the school.
2. Generate a list of titles for all the people who have a role in school operations. Include teaching and nonteaching staff and student positions who may have a key role. Spending time in the staff room and casually asking colleagues can help.
3. Meet with an administrator to get the official explanation of the chain of command. Be sure to identify where you fit within the staff structure (e.g. within the Science Department, parallel to your co-teacher, under your supervisor, etc.).
4. Create a graphic representation of the human structure at your school that reflects the operational hierarchy within. Write in the names of colleagues and try to meet them in the staff room or other places at school.
5. Share the organizational chart with your counterpart and supervisor. Discuss a couple scenarios where using the chain of command would help to get something done at school (e.g. procuring materials for class, starting a girls' empowerment club, planning a field trip, etc.).

### Helpful Tips

The following terms may help you get started: Head Teacher; Principal; Deputy, Vice, Assistant; Head Woman/Head Man; Head of Department; Dean; Head of Discipline; Prefect; Bursar; Secretary; Teacher on Duty; Student Guild; Coordinator; Inspector; Education Officer; Manager; Professor; Tutor; Caterer/Cook; Matron/Patron; Head Boy/Head Girl; Nurse; Security Guard; Cleaner/Janitor; Student Teacher (pre-service); Counselor; Chaplin

### Sample Organizational Chart





## Community Language Profile

Uncover the dynamic linguistic environment of your school and surrounding community. This will help you to accurately plan the amount of content that can be covered in an activity, collaborate with a colleague who can support translation if needed, and prepare materials in the most appropriate way.

**Time:** Varies (30 minutes to a few hours over a few weeks)

**Difficulty:** easy

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensil

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Understand responses

### Steps:

1. In conjunction with your PST trainers, counterpart, or other initial contacts in the community, assemble a small group of community members to lead you on “guided tours” of the community. Explain that you would like to learn more about the community. Some potential destinations for your walk include markets, stores, water sources, community forests, agricultural areas, health centers, cemeteries, garbage dumps, ports, bus or train stations, municipal parks, churches, and so on.
2. As you walk, look at signs and language use in the community. Are there street signs? Business signs? Other Billboards and signage? What language do they speak? Are there multiple languages?
3. Think of some questions (perhaps in advance) that are associated with each place you visit.
4. For example, at a religious institution, you might ask which languages are used for instruction, reading and chanting prayers, etc. Make note of how and which languages are used. Ask if there is a need for written language and if so, who writes and in which language.
5. Begin developing an informal table or matrix that characterizes the language uses in the community and its institutions.

### Helpful Tips

This data will be useful as you construct lesson plans, classroom activities and for extra-curricular clubs and camps.

Spelling and word lists, simple communicative tasks appropriate to the setting are all important language skills for English language learners as well as students mastering their first, second or third language.

### Community Language Profile Example

Institution/Location	Language (s) spoken	Language(s) written
College	French, Shikomor, English	French, English
Arabic School	Shikomor, Arabic	Arabic
School yard	Shikomor	N/A
Market	Shikomor	N/A
Mosque	Arabic	Arabic



## Community Walk

This is an organization development tool for identifying and assessing an NGO's capacity to connect with and/or enhance services that strengthen the school, and/or formulating strategies for strengthening an existing collaboration. The same steps can be used to identify other entities in the community that might be a resource to the school.

**Time:** Varies (30 minutes to 2 hours)

**Difficulty:** easy

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensil

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask follow-up or clarifying questions; Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Summarize/analyze others' responses

### Steps:

1. In conjunction with your PST trainers, counterparts, or other initial contacts in the community, assemble a small group of community members to lead you on "guided tours" of the community. Explain that you would like to learn more about the community. Some potential destinations for your walk include markets, stores, water sources, community forests, agricultural areas, health centers, cemeteries, garbage dumps, ports, bus or train stations, municipal parks, churches, and so on.
2. As you walk, let your questions flow based on what you see, taste, feel, hear, smell, and pursue a line of questioning that follows what is pointed out to you. Mentally note what generates discussion, even if you don't understand what is being said. Pick out words you hear often.
3. Think of some questions (perhaps in advance) that are associated with your sector.

For example, an Education Volunteer might notice a sign for an NGO office, like Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC) in their village and want to discover if there is any activity between BRAC and the school. Here are sample questions for such an inquiry:

- What does this BRAC chapter do?
  - What is BRAC's overall goal or aim?
  - Are they active? How long has BRAC been here? Are they in contact with the school?
  - What services do they provide? What are the current activities and projects?
  - What other groups or individuals collaborate with BRAC?
  - Would it be possible to attend a meeting to observe?
4. Be aware that what you see may vary according to the time of the day, season of the year, or the festival. Repeat walks to the same places and note the differences.

**Source:** Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). 2003. An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers. No. M00070. Washington D.C.: Peace Corps.

### Helpful Tips

Be aware that you will get different (often complementary or conflicting) information from different people depending upon their roles, personalities, and positions in the community. You may consider setting up walks with a few different groups of various genders, ages, or ethnic makeup and repeat the walk while wearing different "lenses" (gender, power, language, etc.). If appropriate, ask your counterpart, trainer, or host family to help you set up these walks.



## Facilities Assessment

This activity can fit several purposes. It can help a Volunteer to get oriented to the school and determine the best location for activities they are involved in. It can also be used to generate staff buy-in if enhancement or creation of a new learning space is desired. Map and discuss current facilities and their uses. At a staff meeting, colleagues can indicate how spaces are used using dot stickers or markers. This visual exercise can help school staff determine how to best use current space and/or if and how to create a new space.

**Time:** Varies (30 minutes to 2 hours)

**Difficulty:** easy

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensil

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask follow-up or clarifying questions; Ask questions; Brainstorm and elicit ideas; Solicit ideas/responses; Summarize/analyze others' responses

### Steps:

#### Getting Oriented

1. Make an appointment with a staff member who knows the school well to do a walk through—a Deputy Head Teacher often has access to everything at the school and it might be easier to get time with them.
2. As you do your walk through of the campus, draw a birds eye view of the buildings, label buildings, outdoor spaces and other points of note. You can also make notes on the things you see (e.g. gutters and water tanks on classroom blocks, latrines for boys and girls with door locks, handwashing stations, desks, etc.) but refrain from going into problem solving mode, this exercise is really just to get the lay of the land and uncover the physical layout and resources of the institution.
3. Ask if there are any buildings or land off the campus that the school uses.
4. Redraw your map to make it tidy and share it at the next staff meeting, asking the staff to tell you about the various activities that each space is used for.

#### Repurposing a Space

1. Use the school map, dot stickers, markers or other supplies to create a visual analysis of how various spaces at the school are used.
2. Look to see if there are overlooked spaces, spaces that could be swapped or converted to better support a desired activity.

**Source:** Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). 2003. An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers. No. M00070. Washington D.C.: Peace Corps.

### Helpful Tips

Sensitivity about who feels ownership of a space is absolutely critical to success. A well intentioned Volunteer who has been tasked to work on developing a school library may think that the large storage room where the “library” currently exists would be much better suited for the Grade 7 class, where there are only 12 students and that the Grade 7 classroom, which can accommodate 60 people, would make an excellent library. This could be a much better use of space, but the idea should come from the staff, or be gently seeded so that all stakeholders are a part of the decision, and no one is losing status or being put out. Using the Facilities Assessment in a collaborative way could set up an “aha” moment where compromise is reached democratically and owned by fellow teachers.



## Peeling the Onion—Developing a Problem Protocol

Provide a structured way to develop an appreciation for the complexity of a problem in order to avoid the inclination to start out by “solving” the problem, before it has been fully defined. Most of us are eager to solve problems before we truly understand their depth. This protocol is designed to help us peel away the layers in order to address the deeper issues that lie underneath the surface—to get to the root. If the problem were easy to solve, it would not still be a concern to the group. The facilitator should keep to the times strictly and gently remind people when they are giving advice too early.

**Time:** Varies (45-90 minutes)

**Difficulty:** difficult

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensils

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask follow-up or clarifying questions; Ask questions; Brainstorm and elicit ideas; Solicit ideas/responses; Summarize/analyze others' responses

### Steps:

1. The keepers of the problem describe the problem/dilemma and ask a question to help focus the group's responses.
2. Clarifying questions from group members to the presenters (these must be purely informational).
3. A round where everyone says: “What I heard [the presenters say] is ...” (The presenters are silent and take notes.)
4. A round where everyone says: “One assumption that seems to be part of the problem/dilemma is...” OR, “One thing I assume to be true about this problem is ...” (The presenters are silent and take notes.)  
Another round where everyone says: “A question this raises for me is...” (The presenters are silent and take notes.)
5. [Perhaps] another round where everyone says: “Further questions this raises for me are...” (The presenters are silent and take notes.)
6. Another round where everyone asks: “What if...?” Or, “Have we thought about...?” Or, “I wonder...?” (The presenters are silent and take notes.)
7. Presenters review their notes and say, “Having heard these comments and questions, now I think...” (The group members are silent and take notes.)
8. Now what? Together, the presenter and consultants talk about the possibilities and options that have surfaced.10. Debrief the process. How was this like peeling an onion? What about the process was useful? Frustrating?

**Source:** National Education Association

### Helpful Tips

As with all protocols, it is important to identify a facilitator who is responsible for keeping the group to the allotted time. This allows the group to maintain focus, keep on track, and frees the group to do its best thinking. The facilitator reviews the process with the group and then it begins. The times for each step can be adjusted to fit the available amount of time and the number of people in the group.



## Home Visits

Strategic home visits serve many purposes such as increasing parent engagement or providing academic outreach. Ultimately, home visits ensure that academic activities planned by a Volunteer and counterpart (e.g. project-based learning, homework) fit the realities of learners' lives at home. The expectation here is that a few thoughtfully conducted home visits with students who might paint a representative picture of the overall student population can lead to well-designed activities during and after school.

**Time:** Varies (45-90 minutes per visit)

**Difficulty:** moderate

**Materials:** transportation

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask follow-up or clarifying questions; Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Summarize/analyze others' responses

### Steps:

#### Preparing for a visit:

1. Don't visit only kids in trouble. That puts a stigma on getting a visit, so be sure to include at least some students who are doing well.
2. When you call to set up a visit, offer alternative times—few parents will say no if you're flexible. Most visits are in the afternoon or on weekends. If the parents are uncomfortable inviting you into their home, meet at a shop, a library, community center, or even a park.
3. Go with a partner—two teachers or another colleague from the school. Always notify your counterpart and/or supervisor by text or phone call.

#### At the meeting:

1. Introductions. Have everyone explain his or her relationship to the student. Usually, the student is there.
2. Getting to know you. Find out whether the parents have other children in school. What's been their experience in schools up until now?
3. Most important. The hopes and dreams conversation. Ask the parents about their dreams for their student, and share yours. You will probably discover you have much in common. "To stop and say why you do what you do—that can be very powerful for the teacher, not just the parent," says Carrie Rose, who directs the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project.
4. Expectations. Explain what you need from the parent, and ask what the parent would like you to do. (Often, parents ask how they can contact you.)

**Source:** National Education Association

### Helpful Tips

If possible, don't come with papers and don't take notes. Parents will feel you are evaluating them. If you must deliver information, like the bell schedule or graduation requirements, don't pull out any paper for at least 20 minutes.

The typical meeting lasts 30 to 45 minutes.

Some home visit programs do deal with academics, but many teachers say the most productive visits just focus on building relationships and developing understanding for student and parents' lives at home.



## Deep Dive for Dilemmas

A Deep Dive is a structured process for helping an individual or a team to think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma. Outside perspective is critical to this protocol working effectively; therefore, some of the participants in the group must be people who do not share the presenter's specific dilemma at that time. When putting together a Deep Dive group, be sure to include people with differing perspectives.

Dilemmas deal with issues with which you are struggling — something that is problematic or has not been as effective as you would like it to be — anything related to your work. Deep Dives give presenters an opportunity to tap the expertise in a group and to rely on the people in your Deep Dive group to provide respectful, thoughtful, experienced-based responses to your dilemma.

A couple of caveats — Deep Dives don't go well when people bring dilemmas that they are well on the way to figuring out themselves, or when they bring a dilemma that involves only getting other people to change. To get the most out of this experience, bring something that is still puzzling you about your own practice. It is riskier to do, but you will learn more and course correct in a more informed way.

**Time:** Varies (60-90 minutes per visit)

**Difficulty:** difficult

**Materials:** meeting space

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask follow-up or clarifying questions; Ask questions; Solicit ideas/responses; Summarize/analyze others' responses

### Steps:

1. Think about your dilemma. Dilemmas deal with issues with which you are struggling or that you are unsure about. Some criteria for a dilemma might include:
  - Is it something that is bothering you enough that your thoughts regularly return to the dilemma?
  - Is it an issue/dilemma that is not already on its way to being resolved?
  - Is it an issue/ dilemma that does not depend on getting other people to change (in other words, can you affect the dilemma by changing your practice)?
  - Is it something that is important to you, and is it something you are actually willing to work on?
2. Do some reflective writing about your dilemma. Some questions that might help are:
  - Why is this a dilemma for you? Why is this dilemma important to you?
  - If you could take a snapshot of this dilemma, what would you/we see?
  - What have you done already to try to remedy or manage the dilemma?
  - What have been the results of those attempts?
  - Who do you hope changes? Who do you hope will take action to resolve this dilemma? If your answer is not you, you need to change your focus. You will want to present a dilemma that is about your practice, actions, behaviors, beliefs, and assumptions, and not someone else's.
  - What do you assume to be true about this dilemma, and how have these assumptions influenced your thinking about the dilemma?

- What is your focus question? A focus question summarizes your dilemma and helps focus the feedback (see the next step).
3. Frame a focus question for your Consultancy group: Put your dilemma into question format.
    - Try to pose a question around the dilemma that seems to you to get to the heart of the matter.
    - Remember that the question you pose will guide the Consultancy group in their discussion of the dilemma.
  4. Critique your focus question.
    - Is this question important to my practice?
    - Is this question important to student learning?
    - Is this question important to others in my profession?

Source: National Education Association

### Helpful Tips

Come to the session with a description of a dilemma related to your practice. Write your dilemma with as much contextual description as you feel you need for understanding. One page is generally sufficient; even a half page is often enough. If you prefer not to write it out, you can make notes for yourself and do an oral presentation, but please do some preparation ahead of time.

End your description with a specific question. Frame your question thoughtfully. What do you REALLY want to know? What is your real dilemma? This question will help your Consultancy group focus its feedback. Questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no” generally provide less feedback for the person with the dilemma, so avoid those kinds of questions.

#### Some Generic Examples of Dilemmas and Questions for Consultancy:

**Dilemma:** The teaching staff seems to love the idea of involving the students in meaningful learning that connects the students to real issues and an audience beyond school, but nothing seems to be happening in reality.

**Question:** What can I do to capitalize on teachers’ interest and to help them translate theory into practice?

**Dilemma:** The community is participating in visioning work, but the work doesn’t seem to relate to the actual life of the school — it is just too utopian.

**Question:** How do I mesh dreams and reality?

**Dilemma:** Teachers love doing projects with the students, but the projects never seem to connect to one another or have very coherent educational goals or focus; they are just fun.

**Question:** How do I work with teachers so they move to deep learning about important concepts while still staying connected to hands-on learning?

**Dilemma:** We keep getting grants to do specific projects with students and the community, but when the money is gone, the work doesn’t continue.

**Question:** How does sustainability actually work? What needs to change for it to work?

**Dilemma:** No matter how hard I try to be inclusive and ask for everyone’s ideas, about half of the people don’t want to do anything new — they think things are just fine the way they are.

**Question:** How do I work with the people who don’t want to change without alienating them?



## Personal Timetable

Volunteers sometimes express frustration that what is on the official school schedule is not what really happens. There are many reasons why, and it is important to take time to observe, accept, and find ways to operate effectively with certain realities on the ground at your school.

For example, a Volunteer might be assigned to teach a class at 7:45-9:00AM class every Wednesday morning, however, they find that students typically show up late, at 8:30AM, because they go to morning mass at the chapel across the street. Upon further observation, the Volunteer finds a “Library” period on the timetable and sees that learners do not have a library to go to, and teachers are not equipped for teaching library related content within the classroom. The Volunteer asks if she can use the “Library” period in addition to her assigned teaching time to make up for instructional minutes lost while students are at morning mass.

Explore what happens on a weekly basis in two ways; 1) observe what consistently happens on the posted timetable each week, and 2) observe what events consistently occur each week at the same time, that are not officially on the timetable.

This activity is not meant to be a “gotcha” that points out discrepancies between what is on the official timetable and what happens in the day to day. It is simply a key step in helping a Volunteer understand what is within their sphere of control, take note of local adaptations made by the school and community for cultural and logistical reasons, and understand how to work with them to get things done at school, or even flip those quirks to an advantage.

**Time:** 8-10 hours (over 1-2 months of year 1)

**Difficulty:** difficult

**Materials:** Paper, writing utensils, or can be done digitally

**Communicative language tasks:** Ask questions

### Steps:

1. Obtain or make a copy of the official weekly timetable.
2. Over the course of a month, observe to see which events happen according to the timetable (classes, assemblies, etc.)
3. Over the course of a month, observe and track the additional activities that happen at school during teaching times and non-teaching times.
4. Look for consistencies to identify additional activities regularly happening within the school timetable that might not be “official” so that you can effectively work with and/or around them.
5. Make a personal timetable that helps you track weekly (daily, monthly) events that impact your schedule. Include activities and events like; teaching, office hours, clubs, tutoring, lesson planning, library hours, sports/coaching, etc.
6. It can also be helpful to note sunrise and sunset times, so that extracurricular activities are planned so that you, your learners or colleagues don’t have to travel or walk in the dark.
7. Share your personal timetable with your counterpart and supervisor for their input, and revise as needed.

## Helpful Tips

Consider posting your personal timetable in the staffroom—this demonstrates to colleagues that you show up when you say you will, and helps them understand the routine activities that you are a part of at school and in the community.

It can take a school several weeks at the beginning of the year to establish the teaching timetable. Be patient with this process and ask how you can help. It can take the entire first year of service to understand how nuances of how a school truly operates. Learning about this sets you up for increased effectiveness in the second year of service.

Adjustments to your personal timetable are likely to happen each term or semester depending on what events happen for students and teachers at that time of year.

**Sample Weekly Timetable**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
Form 4, Stream A (English) 8:30-10:30	Form 4, Stream B (English) 8:30-10:30	Form 4, Stream A (English) 8:30-10:30	Form 4, Stream B (English) 8:30-10:30	Prep Period 8:00-10:30	Running Club 7:00-8:00
Prep Period 10:30-11:30	Prep Period 10:30-11:30	Prep Period 10:30-11:30	Prep Period 10:30-11:30	Co-teaching Science practical lessons 10:30-1:00	Office Hours* 9:00-11:00
Planning Period 11:30-1:00	Form 3, Stream A (Intervention Groups) 11:30-1:00	Planning Period 11:30-1:00	Form 3, Stream A (Intervention Groups) 11:30-1:00		
Form 3, Stream B (Intervention Groups) 2:30-3:30	Library Hours 2:00-4:00	Form 3, Stream B (Intervention Groups) 2:30-3:30	Library Hours 2:00-4:00	Co-planning or Staff development time 2:00-4:00	Girls' Club Activity 2:30-4:30 (*every 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday)
Tutoring 4:00-5:00	Girls' Empowerment Club 4:00-5:00	Tutoring 4:00-5:00	Tutoring 4:00-5:00	Movie Night 6:00-8:00pm (every 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Friday)	

## RELATED RESOURCES & CONTENT

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### **More participatory tools!**

The tools in this Sector Booklet are borrowed from the following sources, which collectively contain hundreds of additional participatory tools that can be used as part of sector-specific PACA.

#### **National Education Association**

[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

#### **An NGO Training Guide for PCVs**

Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). 2003. An NGO Training Guide for PCVs. No. M0070. Washington D.C.: Peace Corps.