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Panel participation study 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides advice that may be useful to the Board's effort of increasing the participation of high quality committed educators on its district review panels.

This report offers information based on data about the composition of 66 panels representing 61 subjects in the 11 Board districts gathered by the Board agents and on responses to a telephone survey of a total of 63 teachers who have had varying degrees of participation in panel work. Of these, 27 have never been on a panel, 19 are long-serving panellists and 17 are teachers who have been on a panel but have not completed a term or have not reapplied for membership. In addition, the report presents information from an independently conducted school survey of 20 teachers who are panellists.

The study findings suggest that the district panels are made up largely of teachers who are highly experienced and who are longstanding panellists, many with experience on more than one panel and more than one subject. Teachers mostly seem to view the review system favourably and many value personal and professional benefits of panel membership highly. However, many find the work involved to be onerous and the material rewards inadequate. They have offered a number of suggestions for attracting more high-quality, committed teachers to serve on the panels.

The following directions seem recommended by the study findings:

- provision of more information about the review process and the benefits of panel membership to teachers and preservice teachers, placement of advertisements for new panellists in educational publications and personal invitations to selected teachers to apply for membership of a panel
- provision of a one-year introductory or temporary membership of the panel and encouragement of observers, especially those who are less experienced teachers, at panel meetings
- provision of rewards and incentives for panel membership by such means as more realistic payment for the work that panellists do out of school hours, cheaper rates for panellists to attend the Board's professional development activities (not just subject-specific workshops), and increased formal recognition of the contribution to the review system made by panellists
- reduction of the work of the panel chair
- development of expertise of panellists by providing more frequent training for panellists and establishing a mentoring system to support new panellists
- continued review of the panel procedures to ensure openness of the process and consistency of decision making and to foster the climate of collegiality that exists on the panels.

AIM

This report is presented in response to a request from the Director to assist in providing information about the present composition of the Board's district panels and the perceptions that teachers hold of service on panels. The aim was to present for the Board's consideration some recommendations for strategies to increase membership of district panels.

METHOD

This study was planned as a short investigation of limited scope. The findings were not expected or intended to be conclusive. The following steps were undertaken:

- Board agents for the 11 districts were asked to forward some specific pieces of information gathered from an analysis of application forms for about 20 per cent of the panels for each district. This randomly selected sample comprised 66 panels and represented 61 subjects (see appendix 1 for instrument used for the compilation of data). Owing to the demands on the time of Board agents they were advised to gather as much of the data as they were able. As a result, the information they gathered ranged from data for the full 20 per cent requested from most panels to only part of the data. This indicates that the results of this study cannot be seen as definitive.
- Board researchers conducted a telephone survey with a random sample of three groups of teachers, 63 in all. These were 27 teachers who have never been on a panel, 19 long-serving panellists and 17 teachers who did not complete a term on a panel or did not reapply for a second term of membership of the panel (see appendix 2 for instrument used for the telephone interview).
- A school survey was carried out with 20 teachers who are panellists on the staff of a large state high school (see appendix 3 for instrument used by the principal of the school).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the present composition of the Board's panels?

Board agents provided information about the composition of panels focusing on aspects such as the teaching experience of panellists, their academic qualifications, and their previous experience on other review panels. The information provided was based on the Board agents' analysis of application forms for membership of the selected panels. The data gathered were analysed across the 11 districts.

2. How is service on panels perceived by those who:

- *have never been on panels?*
- *have a record of long service on panels?*
- *were on panels but left before completing their term of service or did not apply for a second term?*

A total of 80 teachers representing these three groups were randomly selected for inclusion in the telephone survey. Of these, the 63 who could be contacted provided their perceptions of service on panels by means of a short telephone survey. These teachers were also asked to offer advice on strategies that could be used to encourage high-quality, committed teachers to apply for membership of panels.

Independently of this study, a school survey was carried out by the principal of a large state high school with 20 teachers who are members of district or state panels for a range of subjects.

FINDINGS

1. Analysis of district panel applications: What is the present composition of the Board's panels?

The following information is drawn from data provided by the 11 Board agents based on their analysis of application forms for a random sample of about 20 per cent of panels for each district (see appendix 1 for the research instrument). It is worth noting that panels in the districts outside the south-east corner of the State are mostly smaller than say, panels in Brisbane South. In a study so small the data were not sufficient to analyse across subjects. The information provided by the Board agents for the selected panels may be indicative of the remaining district panels across the State (see appendix 4 for the details of the data).

Membership of district panels is made up largely of teachers and heads of subject departments. There are very few others, the remaining members being deputy principals or in the case of Study of Religion, perhaps ministers of religion. The sample of district panels selected is made up of 58 per cent teachers and 39 per cent heads of subject departments or subject coordinators. For a few panels, almost all members are heads of departments. However, in a few small subjects or relatively new subjects there appear to be few heads of departments or subject coordinators on the panels.

For 83 per cent of panellists, the highest academic qualification is a first degree. More than 5 per cent of panellists have a PhD or other higher degree. The remainder have diploma or certificate qualifications.

Panellists are generally very experienced teachers, 95 per cent having taught for at least four years and 26 per cent for over 20 years. More than 68 per cent have at least 10 years experience. Only 14 per cent of panellists have fewer than four years experience of teaching the particular subject of the panel or a closely related subject. More than 82 per cent of panellists have relevant subject experience of more than three years and over 38 per cent have relevant subject experience of more than 12 years.

Almost 50 per cent of the panellists surveyed have worked on other panels previously, almost all having been on a panel for the same or a closely related subject. However, 9 per cent have worked on panels for subjects unrelated to the present one. Although most of these panellists have worked on panels in the same district as they are at present, 29 per cent have also had experience on a panel in a different district.

It appears likely then that, generally speaking, district panel members are very experienced teachers, well qualified, knowledgeable about the subject area for which they are panellists, and that around half of them have worked on other panels previously, either for another subject or in another district.

2. Telephone survey: How is service on panels perceived by teachers?

Teachers randomly selected from the three groups offered their responses to the following questions (see appendix 2 for the research instrument).

2.1 How is service on panels perceived by those who have never been on panels?

2.1.1 Do you see any advantages in being on a district review panel? What are they?

Despite their current lack of involvement in panel work, these teachers were all of the opinion that there were advantages in being on a panel. Some were in their first or second year of teaching and were ineligible to join a panel, but they shared the opinion that panel work would provide valuable experience¹. Their comments covered such things as the benefits of panellists' seeing current practices, gathering new ideas for activities and assessment from other school work programs and submissions, keeping informed about what is expected in the subject and seeing effective ways to present submissions (27). Other comments were that this helps teachers to evaluate their own work and develops their confidence in applying standards accurately and dispassionately.

Some commented that the professional development gained and the contact with the district panel chair and other "good professionals" are very helpful to panellists (7). One said that the experience of being on a panel helps one "to do the right thing by students".

2.1.2 What do you see as disadvantages of being on a district review panel?

Some of these teachers indicated that they saw no disadvantages in being on a panel (5). However, others saw the extra work and time involved in reviewing work programs and school submissions as a disadvantage in view of the other school commitments that most teachers have, especially at the time of verification (17). One pointed out that not enough time is allowed for panellists to do a thorough job of prereviewing.

A few said that some panellists complain about the time away from school that is necessary (3) and about being out of school on the student-free day in October when others are able to be involved in professional development or with their own preparation and correction of work. Some commented that there is not enough monetary compensation for the work and travel involved so that the only benefits are professional and personal. Teachers in more remote places like Miles, Charters Towers, Capella, and Cooktown particularly commented on the problem of distance.

A few pointed out that as a panellist "You have to *know* what you are talking about", perhaps indicating some lack of confidence. A few also suggested that some could become a little rigid if they were on the panel for a while.

2.1.3 What would make you apply to be on a district review panel?

The majority of these teachers were interested in being on a panel but were mostly prevented by some practical reason such as distance, e.g. Mt Isa², Cooktown, or there

¹ Board agents assess applications for membership of district panels made by teachers in terms of the selection criteria, rejecting those who do not meet the mandatory criterion for panel membership of teaching experience of two years (decision of the Board, May 1997).

² A limited number of panellists from Mt Isa may be appointed to district panels. A teacher from a remote school may be eligible for membership of a panel if the principal of the school is agreeable to the school funding any costs incurred for travel and accommodation in excess of \$400 p.a. for that teacher. A remote school is defined as one that is more distant than 280 km from the nearest district Board centre.

being no panel in the district. In a few cases there was another teacher of the subject in the school already on the panel or the school administration did not encourage panel membership. Others were first or second year teachers who had not yet considered applying.

It was clear that teachers wanted to be on panels mostly for the professional benefits they can gain for themselves. For inexperienced teachers, and for some who are fairly new to Queensland, these included developing a knowledge of what is required by the system. Other reasons included becoming a better teacher of a senior subject, learning about a new syllabus or subject new to the school, gaining new ideas and helping their own students by seeing what other students are doing (9).

One teacher said that he would apply to be on a panel if he were in a smaller or “easier” school³ and another said that he would apply if he were having problems with the review of his school submissions. Only three mentioned money as a reason for applying, perhaps because they know that the financial return is small. One teacher said, “I haven’t been asked. I might apply if I were invited.”

2.1.4 What are some of the things that you think might prevent teachers from applying to be on a district review panel?

The reason most frequently cited was the amount of time required for the work and the stress of reviewing for teachers who are already heavily committed at school (18). Some said that the payment is not enough for what the panellists do (4). Some practical reasons noted were the lack of vacancies on some panels, a reluctance on the part of some school administrators to encourage membership, and the fact that teachers do not necessarily teach a particular subject consistently.

There were a few comments about the perceptions that some teachers have of some panels or of panels generally. Among these were the view that that some see panel membership as something for “experienced” teachers and that some teachers see the panel as the “baddies” with set ideas and so don’t want any part of what they do. One commented that the prestige seen in being on a panel is declining and that the professionalism of teachers is also declining. There was a suggestion that some teachers were sensitive to criticism or afraid that their own failings would be discovered and that these teachers tend to withdraw rather than participate and improve.

2.1.5 What advice would you give the Board about how to encourage more high-quality educators to participate in the work of district review panels?

This question drew the response from some that teachers need to be given more information about what people do on panels, one adding that the work of reviewing is not “magical” but in fact quite simple. Strategies suggested were to talk to teachers outlining the benefits of being on a panel, to advertise positions vacant in *Education Views* and other publications, to invite teachers along as observers to see how panels operate, to ask for recommendations from schools, to invite schools that appear to be doing things well to provide a panellist, to make personal contact with teachers and

³ This teacher pointed out that his school is large and is especially demanding in terms of its diverse student population and the ensuing number and complexity of decisions that are made at the time of year when review panel work is at its heaviest.

invite them to join maybe for one year only to begin with, and to provide more preparation and training for new members. Some commented that current panellists have a role and responsibility in encouraging other teachers to join panels.

Some advised making the panels more attractive by developing more open communication between panels and teachers and sharing more information about assessment items and standards. They also urged that the panel experience itself should be enjoyable and that the meeting days should provide some fun for teachers who currently see the work as tedious rather than something they want to do.

To make the task more reasonable some suggested that more time should be allocated for the work that has to be done. They proposed that the Board should encourage the idea that there is prestige in being on a panel by providing increased formal recognition of the work that panellists do as well as certification of becoming credentialled⁴. Other incentives suggested were to give time off in lieu or to pay more, although some pointed out that people don't do this work for the money. Another suggestion was to appoint more teachers from distant schools to the panels.

2.2 How is service on panels perceived by those who have a long record of service on panels?

2.2.1 What do you see as the advantages in being on a district review panel? What made you want to be on a district panel?

These long-serving panellists were definite that the advantages of being on a district panel far outweigh the disadvantages. One pointed out that, "the longer I am on the panel the more I can help students in my own and in other schools."

The advantages most frequently cited were that seeing examples of good materials, good assessment tasks and work programs from other schools helps one to be informed about current thinking developments and initiatives in the subject and to stay on track (15) and that panel membership helps to keep one's own standards clear and accurate (9).

These teachers were very definite that panel membership has an inservice role, saying that the professional development opportunities are enormous and that contact with the district panel chair is valuable for getting information directly from the state panel and the Board. They maintained that it is very useful to discuss, liaise and network with other teachers, pointing out that this helps to overcome isolation and is especially necessary if one teaches in a country town.

2.2.2 What do you see as disadvantages of being on a district review panel?

Some long-serving panellists maintained that there are no disadvantages in being on a panel (5). However, others agreed that it is difficult to find time for the extra work involved in monitoring and verification at what are extremely busy times of the year (10). These teachers commented that the task of reviewing is hard work (5), the work of prereviewing school submissions is onerous and has to be rushed if the panellist is to complete the prereviewing of a submission within the recommended two hours (3),

⁴ Currently, panellists who have had 10 years or more of service on a panel are presented with a certificate acknowledging this when they resign from the panel. Panellists are credentialled when they satisfy the requirements of seven key areas. The requirements for being credentialled include satisfactory attendance at the panel training sessions provided.

that some panellists have to travel long distances and that for some panellists the meeting day can be stressful and frustrating (3).

Some panellists commented on the disadvantage of being away from school for the meeting days, pointing out that although the student-free day in October is intended to make this easier, while panellists are reviewing, other teachers are doing their own preparation or participating in useful professional development activities back at school.

2.2.3 What keeps you serving as a district review panellist?

Most of the replies to this question reiterated the responses to the first question. Panellists again cited the maintenance of confidence in one's own standards, knowing how to present a submission well, being able to deal with one's own school submission problems on the spot, keeping in touch with the district panel chair "who is in direct contact with the Board", staying informed about developments in the subject, gaining inservice training, and networking.

One panellist commented, "I see it as a responsibility that experienced teachers have to their subject and to students," and another said, "I cannot imagine *not* being on the panel. It helps me to make small modifications year by year to what I am doing". Two responded that they felt obliged to continue serving on the panel because "we are short of panellists in my subject". Most commented that they did not do it for the money.

2.2.4 What do you think are some of the reasons that some teachers do not want to be on a district review panel? Why do some panellists not attend panel training very consistently?

Many panellists suggested that a major reason for teachers not wanting to join a panel is a lack of confidence in their own abilities and judgment. They said that some feel threatened by the situation and find it very stressful. They also suggested that teachers' perceptions of the panel were not always accurate because, "some see it as more time consuming than it is" and that, "some don't realise it's quite basic and that you get training". A few said that they felt that the principals and deputy principals of some schools were not supportive to teachers wanting to apply to be on panels (3).

Other factors cited were a reluctance to take on the extra work and responsibility involved in being a panellist because teachers have many other school commitments in an increasingly demanding profession (17), the perception that the payment is low for what some see as a consultancy job (5), the inconvenience of travel involved for some (2), and a reluctance to give up days for monitoring and verification meetings (1).

Panellists also suggested that some teachers lack interest, professionalism or ambition and that some have a philosophical opposition to checking other teachers' work. They said that there is a perception by some teachers that the review system is not fair and so they are reluctant to be part of it, and that there are some feelings of negativity towards panels and questions about the qualifications of those making judgments (3).

When asked why some panellists did not attend panel training very regularly, most of these teachers had little to suggest except that at times panellists were prevented from attending by illness, distance, other school commitments and perhaps the fact that some feel that they know enough already and may not need the information.

2.2.5 What advice would you give the Board about how to encourage more high-quality educators to participate in the work of district review panels?

Most long-serving panellists suggested that the best means of increasing interest in joining panels is to advertise the benefits, since many teachers really know little about the panel work (12). They suggested that the emphasis should be on the fact that panel membership provides opportunities to stay informed about one's subject and to network with other teachers in the district. They suggested that a more effective strategy than relying on print materials would be a personal approach from Board personnel, school principals and deputy principals or from teachers who are panellists themselves. One said, "Talk to teachers. They don't read junk mail in pigeon holes."

These panellists proposed inviting teachers to join the panel for a limited time, say, a year, to see what it is like before making any further commitment, and inviting as observers, teachers from schools that have not previously had panellists in the subject. This shorter period may also be attractive to teachers who would otherwise not join a panel in what they may see as a second teaching subject. They also suggested trying a "buddy" system in the panels to help new members feel comfortable. They suggested ensuring that observers attend the meeting held on the student-free day in October, see the finished submissions that are approved, and have an opportunity to talk with the panellists.

A few proposed an increase in the payment for prereviewing so that panellists are paid for the time they really spend on prereviewing rather than for only two hours per submission (4). Amongst the individual suggestions was the proposal that panellists and their schools could be offered incentives such as a lower cost for panellists to attend professional development seminars and workshops offered by the Board (not just subject-specific workshops as at present)⁵. Other suggestions included increasing the amount of training to upgrade panellist knowledge, holding the verification meeting on a Saturday and paying panellists an extra day's wage, allocating some school time for prereviewing, or abandoning student-free days and instead, funding relief teachers to allow panellists time out of school. One teacher emphasised the importance of keeping the meetings pleasant and choosing a venue that is light and bright, as the day needs to be made enjoyable and light-hearted, even though the task at hand is a serious one.

A few were of the opinion that the Board is "probably doing it right" already and one pointed out that there needs to be a process of careful selection as "sometimes hard workers who are not right are on the panel and actually make it more difficult".

2.3 How is service on panels perceived by those who have been on panels but left before completing a term or did not renew?

2.3.1 What might have kept you serving longer as a district review panellist?

Many of these teachers had been long term panellists previously. Some of the teachers who had been randomly selected could not be contacted because they were on some form of extended leave or they had left the last school recorded for them. A number of

⁵ Currently, teachers who are panellists may attend subject-specific syllabus workshops providing inservice training in their own syllabus area at no charge but must pay the same rate as other teachers for all other inservice training.

those who had already served on panels said they would like to be on a panel again now. There were few disaffected panellists amongst these teachers. For the few who had resigned because of their dissatisfaction with some aspect of panel work, the reasons given were the perception that there was a certain amount of subjective decision making and “sniping” and that there were inconsistencies in decision making amongst panellists from year to year.

For most of the teachers in this group, the reason for leaving a panel was not of their choosing. They had resigned because they had been promoted to a non-teaching position, had been transferred to another school or district, no longer taught the subject, or because the subject had been replaced by another. Other reasons were the fact that another teacher of the subject in the school was on the panel or that they wanted to give others an opportunity to be on the panel. One who had been on the panel for 20 years had had a baby and now found the travelling difficult. One could not continue because the verification meeting coincided with the school’s biennial trip to Japan and another had had a serious accident and was now teaching part-time and was a reserve on the panel.

Given this range of reasons for leaving the panels, it is probably not surprising that these teachers had views about panel membership that were very similar to those of the other two groups. They suggested that more time should be allocated for prereviewing and that a bigger panel could do better work. One commented that the district panel chair has a difficult task. One said that higher pay would make it more attractive to be a panellist.

2.3.2 What made you want to be on a district panel originally? What are the advantages of being on a panel?

The views of these teachers on the benefits of panel membership were similar to those of the other two groups. Like these teachers, they said that being on the panel provides one with new ideas for assessment items (15) and helps one to “know the standards being applied” (5). They felt that being on the panel helps to give one’s students the best chance possible (2) and that, “the review process is very satisfying” and is “a stimulating experience”. One said that he was a better teacher when he was on the panel.

They commented that the networking opportunities were very valuable (7) and that panellists benefit from the professional development they gain from the meetings (5), especially when thrust into a new subject or when writing a work program for a new school. One said it was an honour to be on a panel.

2.3.3 What do you see as disadvantages of being on a district review panel?

The disadvantage most frequently mentioned by these teachers was the unavoidable but tedious and time-consuming task of reviewing work programs and school submissions (9). They pointed out that verification folios are almost twice the number of monitoring folios and come at the busiest time of year. A few said that some school submissions are very difficult to deal with, frustrating and time consuming (3). One said the review process relies heavily on the good nature of teachers.

Other disadvantages mentioned were that the financial compensation for the time spent on reviewing is not really sufficient (3), that panellists miss out on the benefits of school inservice training on the student-free day in October and that for some panellists the travel is a disadvantage. Three said there are no disadvantages.

2.3.4 What do you think are the main reasons that some teachers may not want to be on panels or may not attend training meetings very regularly?

The reasons most frequently suggested by this group for teachers' reluctance to apply for membership of a panel were the thought of the time commitment required (9) and the workload involved in reviewing (3). Some suggested that some teachers lack confidence in their own ability to make the necessary decisions about submissions from other schools and feel that they don't have enough experience in their subject (5). Other comments were that some teachers may not see professional value in being on a panel or may not be interested in extending themselves beyond their own classroom teaching (2).

Some said that some panels have reputations for being very negative (5) and therefore potential members don't want to be part of the system. Some panels are perceived to be inconsistent in the advice they give, suggesting that there could be a need for more panel training. Also, one said that some teachers don't understand the panel's role and its limits. Another reason given for some teachers not applying was the possibility of there being another teacher from the school on the panel for the subject and some teachers' reluctance to focus on a second teaching area. One pointed out that the financial reward for the work involved is insufficient.

When asked why some panellists did not attend panel training very regularly, the suggestion was that the demands of other work commitments sometimes prevented attendance.

2.3.5 What advice would you give the Board about how to encourage more high-quality educators to participate in the work of district review panels?

Teachers in this group suggested that the Board should work on motivating teachers to become panellists for the intrinsic rewards they would gain, namely keeping up with what is happening, seeing effective materials from other schools, interacting with other teachers and improving their standing in the teaching profession (6). One said that teachers should be reminded of the importance of panel work and that they "must keep on learning".

One suggested that panels should look again at their procedures and perhaps work on improving the climate of their meetings. This was because teachers should not have the feeling that panellists are there to "pick on" their work, and that it may help if panels met before the review meetings to encourage panellists to keep in mind the broader picture and to agree on what they will look for to help ensure consistency in decision making.

Other practical suggestions were to make the work of the panels more manageable by limiting the number of assessment items even more than at present, budgeting for more panellists to share the load, making the time allocation for reviewing more realistic, paying more or, alternatively, giving time off from school, making it cheaper for panellists to attend other professional development provided by the Board, and ensuring that there is good food at panel meetings.

The teachers offered some proposals for changes to the way in which panels work, such as providing more general feedback and advice to panellists during the year about what they should be doing, thus allowing for more networking and more training (4). Other suggestions included keeping panels small to overcome teachers' tentativeness

about joining, having two levels of panellists, experienced and inexperienced, and allowing each panellist to take a “junior” from their own school to the meeting, for example a first- or second-year teacher. One suggested having a small “reference group” instead of a chair or having a shorter tenure for the chair, as this role of panel chair is difficult.

They suggested that panel membership could be promoted by principals and deputy principals (3), by general training sessions for teachers not on panels (2), by subject associations, by panellists personally inviting other teachers to join a panel, and by presentation of information to preservice teachers. One suggested that the Board should produce and distribute widely a brochure aimed at pointing out the benefits of panel membership to one’s teaching. One commented that private schools don’t all have a student-free day at the time of verification and that the Board should convince principals of the need for this. In contrast, it was also noted that the student-free day work has backfired in a way, because teachers see that while some are working hard at the panel meeting, others back at school may be benefiting by getting a “free” day.

3. School survey

Teachers on the staff of Kenmore State High School who are panellists offered their responses to questions about panel service (see appendix 3 for research instrument). Although the questions were developed by the principal without any knowledge of the questions asked by the Board researchers for the telephone survey, the questions for both instruments are quite similar.

The research instrument was distributed by the principal, Ms Jenny Haddrell, who received 20 responses from school staff. The length of service on panels for these 20 panellists ranged from one to 23 years, two-thirds of them having been on a panel for at least five years. The research instrument did not ask teachers to indicate whether they were heads of department or subject coordinators.

Responses from these teachers to the questions asked seem generally to support the views of the teachers who were interviewed by telephone. Responses were as follows:

3.1 Why did you nominate to be a member of the panel?

The teachers most frequently gave as their reasons the opportunity to see what other schools are doing, to keep up to date with curriculum developments in the subject, to establish standards, to gain professional development and to network with other teachers in the district. Other reasons were to understand the review system, to learn ways to improve their own teaching and assessment.

3.2 Do you regret this decision? Please comment.

Twelve teachers said that they had no regrets, one maintaining that it was “an invaluable experience”. However, a few commented on the heavy workload involved in prereviewing school submissions for verification at a time that is already very busy and one said he did not like having to be away from school on the student-free day as he could not afford to miss the valuable professional development provided for other teachers on that day.

3.3 What do you see as the benefits of panel membership

The teachers most frequently gave the benefits of panel membership as being the opportunities to network and develop contacts with other teachers, to share ideas, to acquire “de facto” professional development and maintain an up-to-date knowledge of curriculum changes. Some also commented that it was valuable to see how decisions were reached and to develop an understanding of Board processes. Three said they wanted to be on the panel to provide advocacy for their own students and one said that membership helped to ensure equitable assessment.

3.4 What could make your panel work easier?

The suggestion offered most often was to provide more time for the reviewing that has to be done. Two teachers said it could be done in school time and one suggested that there could be a second student-free day to allow for the work involved. Related suggestions were that there could be more experienced panellists to share the load and that there should be a more realistic appreciation of the time that it takes to review submissions. A few of the teachers asked for more panel workshops and training. One said that well presented school submissions would make the work easier.

3.5 Who/what kind of teachers should be encouraged to participate on panels?

Thirteen of the teachers cited experience, enthusiasm and commitment as being the most important attributes for panellists, suggesting that it was important for coordinators of subjects, heads of department and teachers who put the submissions together to join panels. However, a few advised that the more experienced panellists should be combined with newer, less experienced teachers who show promise and want to increase their knowledge base. One suggested that there should be a half roll of panels every two years. Other teachers who might be panellists were teachers who, because of their geographic location, have little contact with others. Two advised that beginning teachers and “at risk” teachers should be encouraged to attend as observers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The opinions offered about the panel system from the three groups of teachers interviewed and from the teachers at Kenmore State High School were reasonably similar. Their comments seemed to indicate that most teachers see the review system in a favourable light. Almost all emphasised the personal and professional benefits of panel work.

The various groups of teachers were fairly consistent in the kinds of suggestions they offered for encouraging teachers to apply for panel membership. The view was fairly widely held that many teachers, and especially first-year teachers, need a realistic knowledge of the review system. Some seemed to feel that a personal approach from a panellist inviting a teacher to join a panel would be more effective than general encouragement. It is worth commenting that some teachers said that the Board is probably “doing it right”, although the main theme of our data is the need for better support.

The following strategies⁶ are therefore recommended for consideration by the Board as ways of increasing the participation of high-quality committed educators on district review panels:

- Tell teachers and preservice teachers about how the review process works and about the benefits of panel membership. Do this systematically by means of general information sessions presented by Board personnel, and informally by means of current panellists talking personally to other teachers and by requesting school principals and deputy principals to inform teachers about the process and encourage membership of panels.
- Advertise systematically for new panellists in a Board-produced brochure or other publication distributed to schools, and advertise in publications such as subject association journals and *Education Views* as well as supporting subject association presentations and articles.
- Encourage panellists and Board officers to personally invite teachers to apply for membership of a panel, targeting particular subjects or districts if necessary and using the recommendations of current panellists and school principals to invite a range of experienced and less experienced teachers.
- Establish a one-year temporary or introductory membership of panels to help persuade teachers who are hesitant to join a panel or who are currently teaching at a senior level in their second teaching area.
- Systematically encourage and specifically invite observers, especially less experienced teachers, “at risk” teachers and teachers from schools not represented on a panel, to attend both verification and monitoring meetings, and encourage panels to involve these observers in some of the activities of the panel so that their experience provides them with useful professional development.
- Pay panellists at a more realistic rate for the work they do out of school hours, find some way to provide more in-school time for this, and allocate a more realistic time than two hours for prereviewing a school submission.

⁶ Elements of some of these strategies are already in place, which is why we use the words “systematically” and “continue to”.

- Acknowledge the work and the contribution to the review system made by panellists and enhance their status by some further formal recognition as well as credentialling.
- Provide financial incentives to schools to encourage panel membership by means such as charging less for panellists than for other teachers to attend professional development activities provided by the Board.
- Reduce the work and stress for the panel chair by sharing the work amongst a small “reference group” of panellists or perhaps by limiting the time of tenure as a chair.
- Systematically train panellists in the review process more frequently than at present and continue to provide a thorough initial preparation for new panellists.
- Establish a system of apprenticing new panellists to experienced panellists so that they are supported by a mentor or “buddy”, therefore helping to ensure that panels represent a balance of experience and that knowledge is shared and developed effectively.
- Continue to review and reinforce panel procedures to ensure that the review process is open and that decision making is consistent within and across panels and from year to year.⁷
- continue to foster the climate of collegiality that already exists amongst panellists and support the panel chairs in ensuring that the panel experience itself is enjoyable and rewarding for panellists rather than stressful and intimidating.

⁷ Currently, panel procedures are reviewed systematically in reports completed by the panel chairs after monitoring and verification meetings about aspects of the panel operation model. The need for the panels to follow this model is reinforced during panel training and, less formally, by state panel chairs at the annual state and district review panel conference.

APPENDIX I: FORM USED BY BOARD AGENTS TO GATHER DATA

District							
Subject							
Panel member	Present position	Academic qualifications	Total years teaching	Relevant years teaching	Previous panel experience		
					Years	Panel code	District
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

APPENDIX 2:
TELEPHONE INTERVIEW FORMS FOR USE WITH GROUPS OF TEACHERS

Teachers who have never been on panels

The Board is currently looking at ways of increasing the participation of high quality committed teachers on its district review panels. To assist in this, the Policy and Evaluation Section is conducting a brief telephone survey of some groups of teachers to gather some of their views about panel participation. Would you be prepared to answer a few questions for us? It should take only five to 10 minutes of your time.

Name _____ **School** _____

1. Do you see any advantages in being on a district review panel? What are they?

2. What do you see as disadvantages of being on a district review panel?

3. What would make you apply to be on a district review panel?

4. What are some of the things that you think might prevent teachers from applying to be on a district review panel?

5. What advice would you give the Board about how to encourage more high quality educators to participate in the work of district review panels?

Teachers who have a record of long service on panels

The Board is currently looking at ways of increasing the participation of high-quality committed teachers on its district review panels. To assist in this, the Policy and Evaluation Section is conducting a brief telephone survey of some groups of teachers to gather some of their views about panel participation. Would you be prepared to answer a few questions for us? It should take only five to 10 minutes of your time.

Name _____ **School** _____

1. What do you see as the advantages in being on a district review panel? What made you want to be on a district panel?

2. What do you see as disadvantages of being on a district review panel?

3. What keeps you serving as a district review panellist?

4. What do you think are some of the reasons that some teachers do not want to be on a district review panel? Why do some panellists not attend panel training very consistently?

5. What advice would you give the Board about how to encourage more high quality educators to participate in the work of district review panels?

Teachers who were on panels but left before completing a term or did not renew

The Board is currently looking at ways of increasing the participation of high-quality committed teachers on its district review panels. To assist in this, the Policy and Evaluation Section is conducting a brief telephone survey of some groups of teachers to gather some of their views about panel participation. Would you be prepared to answer a few questions for us? It should take only five to 10 minutes of your time.

Name _____ **School** _____

1. What might have kept you serving longer as a district review panellist?

2. What made you want to be on a district panel originally? What are the advantages of being on a panel?

3. What do you see as disadvantages of being on a district review panel?

4. What do you think are the main reasons that some teachers may not want to be on panels or may not attend training meetings very regularly?

5. What advice would you give the Board about how to encourage more high-quality educators to participate in the work of district review panels?

APPENDIX 3:
INSTRUMENT USED FOR SCHOOL SURVEY

Survey for teachers who are panel members

Name: _____ **Panel:** _____

Length of time on panel: _____

1. Why did you nominate to be a member of this panel?

2. Do you regret this decision? Please comment.

3. What do you see as the benefits of panel membership?

4. What could make your panel work easier?

5. Who/What kind of teachers should be encouraged to participate on panels?

APPENDIX 4:
DATA ON COMPOSITION OF DISTRICT PANELS

Dis- trict	Present position					Highest qualification				Total years of experience				No of years of relevant subject experience				Previous panel experience					
																		Other panel experience		Relevant panel		Same district	
	No.	DP	H	T	O	PhD	M	B	Dip	1+	4+	11+	21+	1+	4+	7+	13+	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
BS	118	5	49	63	1	0	9	89	20	8	31	47	32	34	16	24	44	37	81	31	6	20	17
BN	115	1	37	77	0	1	11	92	11	5	36	41	34	9	25	32	49	66	49	60	6	56	10
BI	38	0	12	24	2	0	8	26	4	7	11	11	9	12	7	8	11	23	15	16	7	16	7
GC	123	0	53	70	0	0	4	102	17	2	38	52	31	18	24	34	47	57	66	55	3	23	35
SC	66	1	23	42	0	0	2	51	13	3	26	16	21	4	8	26	28	59	7	46	0	46	0
TB	44	1	16	27	0	0	1	33	10	1	15	20	8	6	11	17	10	30	14	27	3	21	9
WB	50	0	20	30	0	0	0	36	14	2	9	23	16	4	5	20	21	28	22	28	0	18	10
RN	57	1	27	28	1	0	1	46	9	3	23	19	12	6	11	18	22	12	45	7	5	9	3
MK	38	1	16	21	0	0	1	31	6	0	14	12	12	3	6	15	14	6	32	6	1	2	5
TV	59	1	26	32	0	1	4	46	8	4	17	24	14	6	11	13	29	32	27	30	2	27	5
CN	6	1	1	4	0	0	0	4	2	0	5	1	0	1	3	2	1	5	1	1	0	1	0
TOT	714	12	280	418	4	2	41	556	114	35	225	266	188	103	127	189	276	355	359	307	33	239	101
%		1.9	39	58.5	0.6	0.14	5.7	77.9	15.9	4.9	31.5	37.3	26.3	14.4	17.8	26.5	38.6	49.7	50.3	90.1	9.7	70.1	29.7