

# Walkthroughs: A Tool for School Improvement

## What are Walkthroughs?

Walkthroughs are “snapshots” of the educational settings, including the instructional strategies in use at a school and indicators of student learning. They informally collect data to promote school improvement and provide non-evaluative, actionable feedback to teachers to help improve their students’ learning as well as help principals pinpoint classroom and schoolwide needs.

## Match walkthroughs to District purpose / goal(s)

Walkthroughs are an effective way for instructional leaders to “play an active role in generating focused, qualitative data to inform schoolwide improvement efforts” School leaders must learn to capture data that can be put to use in a “meaningful, objective, and nonjudgmental” way.

## Everyone Can Benefit

Students	Teachers	Instructional Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collected data can “support changes in instructional practice in ways that are student-focused and foster achievement”</li> <li>● Identify most effective ways to teach lessons (more interactive) and what learning materials are needed</li> <li>● Identify trends and actions to change in order to support student achievement</li> <li>● Witnessing collaboration of school leaders and teachers “may lead students to do better work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teamwork</li> <li>● Mutual respect and development of trusting relationships</li> <li>● Sense of supportiveness</li> <li>● Teacher development</li> <li>● By informing PD efforts, may allow school to “arrive at better instructional practices” (5)</li> <li>● Increased satisfaction, self-efficacy, and positive attitudes</li> <li>● Teachers perceive principals as more effective when walkthroughs focus on improved classroom instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visibility of leadership - “one of 21 key responsibilities with a statistically significant correlation to student achievement”</li> <li>● Promotes feelings that leaders have a “greater awareness of the school setting, instructional practices, curriculum, and the ways that students and teachers are doing well or struggling”</li> <li>● Gain knowledge to inform PD needs</li> <li>● Builds rapport with students and supports their needs</li> <li>● Demonstrates commitment to school improvement and increases the likelihood of staff committing to efforts as well</li> </ul>

## Specific Types of Walkthroughs

Implementation Support	Coaching	Instructional Rounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practical way to “collect data on a school’s progress towards its goals”</li> <li>● SLT and faculty decide together on “look-fors”</li> <li>● Clarity on purpose and data being collected                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ex: student engagement, student ownership of learning, teacher use of learning objectives/success criteria, collaborative groups, technology integration, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focuses on individual teachers</li> <li>● Offers opportunities to identify resources and strategies</li> <li>● “Look-fors” may be related to teacher goals</li> <li>● Not evaluative, focus is on coaching and feedback to support professional growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Also called “learning walks” - “best-practices scavenger hunts”</li> <li>● Occur in groups of teachers and administrators looking for specific “look-fors”</li> <li>● Can be part of regularly scheduled walkthroughs or situational in response to a “newly discovered opportunity”</li> <li>● Focus on a specific trend or practice suggested by data review or informed by the school’s goals</li> </ul>

## Characteristics, Purpose, and Tips

<p><b>Characteristics of all good walkthroughs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Informal and Non-Evaluative             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not a performance assessment</li> <li>○ Potential to build trust &amp; confidence among teachers</li> <li>○ Engage teachers</li> <li>○ Student centered, culture of collaboration</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Consistent             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minimum 10 walkthroughs per classroom per year</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Look For             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Questions</li> <li>○ Support Student Achievement</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Feedback &amp; Sharing Evidence             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Feedback is essential</li> <li>○ Written or oral, within 24-48 hours</li> <li>○ Targeted to foster collaboration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Walkthrough Data to Serve a Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engagement of ELs</li> <li>● Student intrinsic motivation</li> <li>● Teachers' high expectations</li> <li>● Observing differentiation in instruction</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tips for Implementing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish as a practice and system within the building             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Integral part of a school improvement process</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Don't walk Alone             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can include: instructional coaches, teacher leaders, classroom teachers, and/ or district leaders</li> <li>○ Discuss what you see, what you are learning, and how it can support the entire school</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Build it Into Your Schedule             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Planned, not an afterthought</li> <li>○ Communicate why it is important and how it supports school improvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Use and Share a Template Tool             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teachers deserve to know what you're looking for</li> <li>○ Ideally teachers help develop walkthrough "look-fors"</li> <li>○ Be clear on your purpose: how you'll give feedback, and what the information will and will not be used for</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Set Challenging but Reasonable Goals             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructional Leadership = "working to reduce variability and increase quality in instruction across the school"</li> <li>○ Instructional leadership is a top priority for principals</li> <li>○ Make a plan and use it</li> <li>○ Brief immediate feedback</li> <li>○ Share trends observed across the school in staff meetings</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Look for Bright Spots             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accentuate the positive</li> <li>○ Communicate "what's possible"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Not a Formal Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Longer in duration, specific schedule defined in contract.</li> <li>● Conducted by a leader with positional authority to evaluate teachers' classroom practices using the district-wide evaluation system.</li> <li>● Viewed as a compliance activity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Not a Peer Observation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teachers learn from one another</li> <li>● Supportive, non-evaluative feedback</li> <li>● Often part of peer coaching process</li> <li>● Observation-feedback cycle to learn from and with one another</li> <li>● Helps teachers understand colleagues' practices and classrooms</li> <li>● Provide feedback on instructional practices aligned to school improvement goals</li> </ul>	

More information here: [Walkthroughs: Where data-gathering and relationship-building meet for school improvement](#)