Observe

Perspective

Interpretation

Learning
Walking the talk:
Providing powerful instructional leadership through effective school and classroom walk-through visits
(or)
The five-minute principal meets the one-minute manager:
Making a difference, one contact at a time

A component of the
Principals Module
National Center for Reading First Technical Assistance
Overview

- School purpose & instructional leadership
- Classroom visits: What gets in the way?
- Breaking through the barriers
- Setting up for success
- The difference is in the details
  - observation
  - feedback
  - follow-up
- Walking the talk
Purpose

- What is your school’s mission?
  - (purpose, reason for being)
  - What is “Job #1” in your school?
  - What return do taxpayers expect on their investment?
  - What do employers want from schools?

- What would you say is the best indicator of your school’s success in fulfilling its mission?
- How will you access that information?
Beliefs

- Given this mission (purpose) what do you think is your role with respect to classroom instruction?
- What is the purpose or rationale for principal presence in the classroom?
- As a principal, the three most important roles I have to assure effective teaching and student learning are ..... 
  1.
  2.
  3.
Why do walk-throughs?

- “The walk-through’s connected to the.....”

- walk-through
  - instructional leadership
    - teacher effectiveness
      - student achievement
Instructional Leadership

“Very effective schools and districts consistently have high degrees of:

- purpose and focus
- engagement
- collaboration…

“…particularly around

- learning
- teaching
- instructional leadership”

Wagner, et al, 2006
Best practice

Instructional leadership is, perhaps, the single most important role for principals to play when increased achievement is the goal.

from

NAESP’s Leading Learning Communities:
Standards for What Principals Should Know and be able to do.
Why Walk-Throughs?

- We focus our time on what we think is most important

- “If student learning is the most important function of schools, then instruction is where we focus our time and attention.”

Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
Why Walk-throughs?

- “Performing a learning walk (instructional walk-through) is a step that should be informed by an understanding of what constitutes quality instruction.”

- “This clarity is key to actually making that instruction happen.”

“Leaders can vastly increase their leverage by becoming coaches.

“Each of the other roles the leader plays is enhanced by the abilities s/he develops when learning to coach, because ...

“coaching is a communication process that connects people to performance.”

(Crane, 2002). The Heart of Coaching
Why walk-throughs?

- “The data were clear: ...  
- “… the higher the level of response and follow-up (by the supervisor), the higher the staff rated their supervisor’s effectiveness.”

(Crane, 2002). The Heart of Coaching
Purposes of walk-throughs

- to improve instructional outcomes
- to strengthen instructional leadership
  - be visible
  - be supportive
  - be engaged
  - be knowledgeable
- to reinforce recent training teachers have had
- to support the coaching process
- to assure that time planned is actually delivered
- to assure that RF elements are being implemented
Purposes of walk-throughs

- enhanced student achievement
- instructional leadership
- teacher support
- supervision/coordination (fidelity to plans)
- principal learning
- **NOT** for evaluation
Empowerment

- “Empowerment is the natural complement to accountability.”

(Sergiovanni, 2002)

Empower your teachers through strong instructional leadership.
Imagine this scenario:

You are retired and are reflecting on your career... You think to yourself, ‘While I was a principal, I wish I had spent more time . . .’
Think of a strong reading leader you have known. What do they do that makes them a strong reading leader?
If “getting into classrooms” was one of your greatest strengths as an educational leader, what would it look like? sound like?
What gets in the way of being in classrooms?

- meetings
- district tasks
- student discipline
- staff needs
- parent requests for time
- phone/e-mail
- organizational details
How can we improve our “in class” presence and support?

- schedule classroom walk-throughs into your personal calendar on a daily/weekly basis
  - make an “appointment with yourself” to be in classrooms
    - mostly during reading instruction
    - cover the range; differentiate your time
  - use self-monitoring (goal-setting & feedback) to lend motivation & track your progress in meeting this goal
How can we improve our “in class” presence and support?

- Have your school secretary or another office person “kick you out of the office” and “send you to the classroom”
  - share your calendar of planned times with office staff
  - ask staff to remind you, if needed, that it’s time to go to the classrooms
  - ask staff to protect this time from intrusions
  - ask staff to help you track & self-monitor visits

- Pair up with the coach or a teacher periodically to walk through a few classrooms and debrief together (a great learning experience)
Make yourself accountable to someone else for being in classrooms

- make classroom visits part of the annual goals you set with your supervisor
  - report to him/her monthly on your progress
- use public posting of this goal and your progress in meeting it
  - in the staff room, with feedback from staff
  - on a tally which students keep in the classroom
- set a group goal where everyone (two or more principals) contributes to the group goal (WY ex.)
Make yourself accountable to someone else for being in classrooms

- Set up an arrangement with another person (administrator) to follow-through on being in classrooms
  - set up a friendly competition with a colleague (e.g. a principal at another school) on # of classroom visits in a week or month as a percentage of a goal
  - set up a relationship with a mentor who will prompt you periodically and provide support, ideas and feedback
  - invite the superintendent, district administrators, school board members or others to join you
Identify one or two of these strategies that could work for you.

Put a mark by them so that you can find them easily when we come back to them in a later activity.
### Sample Class Visit Log

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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>3/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>3/4</td>
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<td>totals</td>
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75 %
## Self-monitoring of Walk-throughs

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<td>10/15-19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22-26</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>average</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>81.25</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Before you go in to the classrooms

- cultivate a team culture focused on student improvement in reading
- build a teaching-learning collaboration
- communicate the norm of continuous learning for students and adults
- focus on the purpose of supporting strong instruction for all students
- state purpose and plans for classroom visits
- share observation tool(s) you will use
Before you go in

- talk about the process--what to expect
- ask teachers what would be most helpful for them as part of the classroom visit process
- defuse anxiety
  - be positive, affirming, supportive & collaborative
  - state that you are learning, too
  - ask for their feedback on the process
  - **clearly** separate evaluation from instructional support
Before you go in:
Coordinating with the coach

- schedule regular weekly meetings with the coach
- try setting a standing meeting time
- have spontaneous check-ins as needed “on the fly”
- Coordinate observation schedules
  - schedule some observations together (joint walk-throughs)
  - arrange for complete classroom coverage
- Coordinate observation focus & feedback
  - make the process consistent across principal and coach
  - coordinate differentiation of feedback
  - use data and previous walk-throughs to plan your visits
    - Who needs more support?
Before you go in:
Plan & coordinate observation

- Coordinate schedules, observational focus & feedback with others who visit classrooms (coach)

- Coordinate observations across staff:
  - Differentiated across staff, based on need for instructional support
  - Include all who teach reading (e.g. assistants)
  - Include observations of all instructional groups
  - Guard against “convenient location” as a factor
  - Guard against tendency toward “comfort zones”
Observation/Evaluation

- **differentiate CLEARLY** between these functions:
  - evaluation
    - formal
    - required
    - “summative” (like the state assessment)
  - observation
    - informal
    - collaborative
    - formative
    - not evaluative
Balancing principal roles

- evaluative (1%)
- collaborative (99%)
  - formative
  - relationship-based
  - student-oriented
  - outcomes-focused
Concerns-Based Adoption Model

Component: Stages of Concern
Unaware ― ― ― ― ― Actively engaged

A model for understanding how people (e.g., teachers) respond to change initiatives

Component: Levels of Use
Resistant (OMDB) → Willing to try it → Expert
Levels of Use--Instructional improvement:

- Changing adult behavior-One teacher and one skill at a time

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model

"Stages of concern"

unconcerned    seeking solutions    actively engaged

non-use    learning    expert use

"Levels of use"
Activity: Reflecting on “Levels of Use”

- What are the key instructional strategies that determine student learning?
- Each strategy can be placed on a “levels of use” continuum
- Each teacher falls somewhere on each continuum
- Our role as instructional leaders is to help teachers move along each continuum
- Walk-throughs provide a valuable tool for doing this

“Levels of use”

1. Non-use
2. Learning
3. Expert use
“Levels of Use” Activity (cont.)

- Think about one skill continuum.....
- Think of one of your teachers.....
- Think about where this teacher is on this skill continuum.
- Think about how you can use the walk-through model to move the teacher along the continuum with feedback, a prompt, a question, or a suggestion and some follow-up.
Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.

Marcus Aurelius
“The places you’ll go...”

- classroom (for observation)
  - during reading instruction
    - all groups over time
    - strategic & intensive needs groups more often
  - hallway/classroom “rounds” (to confer with teachers)

- common areas (for conversations with students, parents and staff about reading)
  - cafeteria before/after school
  - playground hallways
“The people you’ll meet...”

- teachers
- educational assistants
- volunteers
- students
- parents
- district leaders
Choose a tool

- Choose an observational tool with which you are familiar and which “does the job”
  - focuses on instruction and learning
  - makes data objective, not judgmental

- The Five Minute Observation Form
  (http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu)

- Florida grade-specific observation forms
  (http://fccr.org)
Cool Tools: Technology-assisted walk-throughs

- digital data collection devices

  - Google for “classroom observation software”
    - software can be used on a hand-held or laptop
    - some versions can generate instant feedback reports
What to look for

- What to look for?
  - What are the students doing?
    - correlates of learning & achievement
  - What is the teacher doing?
    - indicators of effective teaching
A basic model for classroom visits

- What do you see? (the observed facts)
- Why might that be? (the present context)
- What can you learn? (the available lessons)
- What might you say?
What to look for

- “Are teachers providing explicit, well organized and engaging whole-group instruction?”
- “Is small-group instruction differentiated appropriately by student need?”
- “While the teacher is teaching a small group of students, are the other students involved in independent learning activities that are appropriate and engaging?”

Kennewick’s instructional framework; What to look for in classrooms

- **Purpose**: Teacher intentionally plans & instructs for student achievement of essential learning

- **Rigor**: Each learner is appropriately challenged as the teacher moves students to higher levels of achievement

- **Engagement**: Tchr. & student actively participate in the learning & are focused on the lesson

- **Results**: The intended learning is achieved
  - from Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
What to look for
(Also, see handout: What to look for...)

- transitions into and out of instructional time
- readiness to teach (materials prepared/organized)
- appropriate instructional pacing
- management of student behavior
- student opportunities to respond
- teacher positive instructional interactions
- appropriate student placement
- instructional modeling/practice/feedback
- effective use of correction procedures
- positive feedback and other motivational procedures
“The things you’ll see...”

- Teacher-led instruction
  - teacher with whole group
  - teacher with small group
  - teacher in tutorial (one-to-one with a student)
  - teacher in monitoring mode
  - other scenarios

- students during instructional time
  - during whole group
  - during small group
  - during seatwork or center (independent) times
“The things you’ll see...”

- **teacher use of time & plans**
  - Is the teacher “on plan”? (adherence to calendar)
    - lesson maps
    - where in program)
  - Is the instruction “on time”? (adherence to schedule)
    - allocated (planned) time
    - actual time

- **teacher management of transitions**
  - students know transition routines
  - teacher actively monitors transitions
  - transitions are highly efficient to avoid loss of instructional time
“The things you’ll see…”

- teacher knowledge of programs (context)
  - what training and support have they had?
  - does the instruction reflect the training and support?
  - are programs implemented with fidelity?
“The things you’ll see...”

- student engagement
  - on-task, academic engaged time
  - opportunity-to-respond
  - “positive instructional interactions”
    - model-demonstrate-practice-feedback
    - correct as needed, then re-present task, praise improvement
  - 100% participation
  - teacher pacing (# instructional responses/min.)
  - student skills are “firm”
“The things you’ll see...”

- teacher is.....
  - on plan (following plans)
    - lesson plans (daily, weekly plans)
    - curriculum maps (skills by time of year)
    - CSI maps (group instructional plans)
  - on program
    - evidence of training
    - fidelity to program
  - on time
    - allocated time (planned time--90+’)
    - actual time
“The things you’ll see…”

- teacher feedback to student responses
  - APE--affirmation, praise, encouragement
    - specific
    - genuine
  - corrective feedback
    - tone
    - on point
  - check for understanding following correction
    - immediate test
    - delayed test
  - positive to corrective ratio
What if..... “The things you’ll do”

- school hasn’t started
- class hasn’t started
- class is over
- class is in transition
- class isn’t doing what you thought they would be doing
- it’s a social setting
  (cafe, playground, before-after school)

What questions, probes to issue?
What can be learned?

- Ask teacher to highlight progress with students
- Ask kids.....
Activity: Observation tools

- Look at the observation tool(s) you use now.
- How do they fit with what we have discussed?
- What are they missing?
- How can you customize them?
One Minute Follow-up

- The One Minute Manager:
  - one minute positive feedback statements
  - one minute corrections or teaching interactions
  - one minute goals

(from Blanchard & Johnson, 1982)
Follow-up

- ask questions/reflective probes
  - regarding program guidelines
  - to get them thinking about teaching & learning
- give feedback ("1’ manager")
  - positive (for encouragement)
  - developmental (reflection for growth)
- make suggestions
  - set it up (training, demonstrations, etc.) peer observation
  - follow-up (to provide support & ensure it happens)
- share an idea/insight
  - the 1’ workshop
  - idea (what), rationale (why), conditions (where/when), steps (how)
  - instruction, demonstration, practice, feedback, follow-up
Follow-up/Feedback

- differentiating
  - by teacher
  - by situation or context
  - by training and experience
  - by skill and confidence (developmental)
Follow-up Format

- one positive comment
- one prompt, question or suggestion
- one follow-up component
  - “Where do we go from here?”
  - “Let’s touch base in a day or two.”
Follow-up: Not a monolog, but a dialog

- dispel the myth of “one-way” observation
- it’s a two-way street
  - principal can learn from teacher
  - teacher can learn from dialog
- goal is a collaborative exchange about the teaching & learning process
Reflective prompts

- delivered orally
- done within 24 hours
- non-threatening, non-judgmental
- reflective, not directive
- student-oriented
- open-ended
- stimulate thinking
- specific focus
- present or future tense (not past)
- no answer expected
- support offered

(all rights reserved, used with permission)
Reflective questions?

- What strategies do your students use to help them comprehend?
- How can students make the leap from decoding nonsense words to decoding real words?
- What do you think is most helpful to students in increasing their fluency toward benchmark levels?
When suggestions are needed...

- 2-3 positives for each suggestion
- tie feedback to elements of your reading model
- offer rationale for suggestions
- offer context and situation for suggestions
- teach the concept or skill
  - reduce to the “big idea”
  - instruction, demonstration, practice, feedback
- What are your ideas? What is your style?
When you need more structured feedback...

- not reflective, but directive
  - disruptive behavior
  - chronic loss of instructional time
- your level of concern determines type of feedback
- consider context and urgency
- pattern of behavior vs. uncommon occurrence
  - (e.g. infrequent late start vs. consistently or excessively late start)
- timing of addressing an issue (priority issues)
For starting discussions & supporting teachers

- “And how are the children?”...(doing in reading)
- Would you be willing to share _ with others?
- When are you doing _, would you let me know? I want to learn more about it.
- Are the changes made at the last grade level meeting working?
- What’s going well in reading?
- What is still a struggle in teaching reading?
- How can I support your work in reading?
- What are your expectations for your students in reading? What is your vision for them?
How will you provide feedback?

- face-to-face conversation
- leave a note on their desk (handwritten)
- leave a note in their mailbox (typed)
- send them an e-mail
- leave them a voice-mail
- if in writing, follow-up face-to-face
- What are your ideas?
When a teacher resists feedback...

- check your style
  - supportive or evaluative?
- appeal to core values
  - mission/vision
- depersonalize the feedback
  - let the data convey the message, then follow-up
Where to from feedback?

- connect to coach
- connect them to others
  - facilitate networking among teachers
  - broker a mentoring model from one teacher to another
- connect to discussion or training (past, future)
- connect to a concept, “big idea”, principle,
- connect to the culture (common purpose, vision, belief, agreement, etc.)
- connect them to “why they became a teacher”
  - inspire (help them envision student success)
  - reconnect with the passion of teaching
Follow-up

- follow-up as indicated:
  - ask how it’s going
    - stop by to see for yourself
  - ask how you can support
  - affirm teacher effort to implement suggestions
  - ask them to think about connections
Dialog activity

- Watch a video segment of instruction
- With a partner:
  - provide a positive comment
  - pose a prompt, question or suggestion to engage the teacher in reflecting on instruction
  - suggest a follow-up activity
- Reverse roles and repeat the process
…”Expertise in educational excellence and instructional leadership, which is foundational for (our mission) is the craft at which our principals (must) excel.”

from Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
Kennewick’s Two-Ten Goal

- “Each administrator is expected to spend
  - Two hours per day or
  - Ten hours per week
  on instructionally focused activities”
- “60% of these are to be direct classroom observations”
  - Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
Kennewick’s “Learning Walks”

- 3-4 principals & one or more district administrators
- Convene at least 1 x/year at each school
- Visit several classrooms, looking for indicators of good teaching & learning, then debrief
- Purpose is to
  - learn from each other
  - to develop the competency of the observers
  - to calibrate what is understood to be good teaching

- from Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
Kennewick’s culture shift

- Administrative “talk”
  - Less focus on athletics & “administrivia”
  - More focus on instruction
- General agreement on what constitutes “quality instruction” & what evidence supports it
- Culture of excellence has emerged
  - Common vocabulary around effective instruction
  - More highly uniform level of quality instruction
  - from Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
Communities of Practice

“Networks of **principals** that exist to:

- Develop members’ skills
- Build and share knowledge
- Transfer best practices
- Solve real problems of teaching & learning

Communities of Practice

“Characterized by:

- Commitment
  - Focus, passion & identification w/common purpose
- Standards of practice:
  - Common definitions, expectations & practices
- Job-embedded collaboration
- Greater sense of efficacy among members”

Questions for reflection & discussion

- What are the expectations for quality instruction in our school or district?
- How consistently do teachers and principals in our district agree with what constitutes quality instruction?
- How can we more firmly establish these expectations, definitions and commitments in our school or district?

- from Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007
Planning activity

- Set a goal for increasing classroom walk-throughs--communicate it to a colleague

- Choose a strategy for helping you get into the classrooms more often (see what you marked in the earlier brief activity)

- Identify and contact a support person to help keep you motivated and moving toward your goal

- Keep track of your classroom visits and note your success!
A Challenge

- Make a commitment to increase your visibility as an instructional leader.
- One effective way to do this is by increasing your classroom walk-through visits.
- Collaborate with one or more colleagues to learn from each other & add motivation.
- Set a goal & track your progress. (Wyoming ex.)
  (e.g. visit each classroom 1 x/week = 50+/month)
- this = a lot of visibility, a lot of involvement, a lot of instructional leadership & more teaching/learning
Planning for practice...

- groups of 3-4
- visit designated classrooms
- 5 minutes in the classroom
- convene in hallway for 5 minutes
  - what did you see?
  - what questions or probes would pose?
  - what can be learned from the scenario?
7 disciplines for strengthening instruction

- Urgency for instructional improvement--from data
- Shared vision of good teaching
- Discussions about the work
- Shared vision of student results
- Effective supervision
- Professional development
- Diagnostic data w/collaboration & accountability
Summary

- **We can** find ways to get into classrooms more often, thereby enhancing our role as instructional leaders.
- **We can** positively impact teaching & learning by doing so.
- How we...
  - spend our time
  - focus our attention
  - spark teacher reflection & change...
    all speak volumes about what we stand for.....
- As we build a culture of collaboration around student achievement, we empower each other to do our very best work and thereby give students their very best chance for success--in school and in life.
Thanks to...

- Katie Tate, for artistic & technical support
- Marianne Oakes, for content support
- Oregon Reading First
- Ohio Reading First
- Teachscape, Inc.
Resources


- Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd

- Phi Delta Kappa (Professional Association in Education) http://www.pdkintl.org/

- Oregon Reading First web site:
  - http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu

- Florida Center for Reading Research:
  - http://www.fcrr.org
References


The motto of the best classroom walk-through specialists could be:

“Veni, vini, confero”

I came, I saw, I conferred