

CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGHS: DOES SUCH AN APPROACH TO SUPERVISION
CONTRIBUTE TO DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT?

by

CARY FIELDS

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Educational Leadership Program of the College
of Saint Elizabeth in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Cary Fields for the degree of Doctor of Education in the Educational Leadership Program presented May 2013.

Title: CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGHS: DOES SUCH AN APPROACH TO SUPERVISION
CONTRIBUTE TO DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT?

The purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning.

In fulfilling this purpose the following research questions guided the study: (1) What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies to enhance teaching practice? (2) What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement? (3) What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected that would assist teachers and school leaders in their overall improvement planning processes?

This study utilized qualitative and quantitative data sources. Quantitative research data was collected through an online teacher survey. Qualitative research data was collected through in-depth interviews with the superintendent of schools, director of curriculum, district supervisors, building principals, middle school and high school vice principals, middle and high school teachers and a teacher focus group interview. A combination of both methods was used to ensure a greater understanding of the research problem and to sufficiently inform the research questions. The essential finding of this study revealed that classroom walkthroughs, if used

correctly, were a meaningful component of the district's evaluation system. This outcome was apparent in all aspects of the data collection process. Teachers at the grade levels studied, grades 7-12, indicated that classroom walkthroughs could contribute to teacher effectiveness, student achievement, professional development and the overall improvement of the school. The workload of the administrator greatly contributed to the depth and frequency of feedback provided to teachers.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful family. To my husband, Michael, your patience, love, and guidance have served as my inspiration. Thank you for surviving on take out dinners, for staying up late to keep me company while I studied, and for keeping me together. You made this journey possible, and I am eternally grateful.

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Chapter I

Introduction to the Study

Schools rely on teachers to provide effective instruction that results in student learning and achievement. According to Good and Brophy (2003), however, because of the complex nature of the classroom, teachers are required to respond to the individual learning needs of students. Consequently, teachers may not have the time to adequately reflect on what they are doing in the classroom and on whether they are effectively enhancing student learning. One way to provide feedback to teachers about their effectiveness is through systematic observation.

The purpose of observation is to add greater precision to the teacher supervision process than that provided by the more traditional forms of teacher supervision. Classroom observations have been used throughout the history of educational practice for the purpose of determining what teachers were competently doing in the classroom and what students were effectively learning. As early as the 1600s observations were conducted in American schools by visiting committees made up of town selectman, ministers and prominent citizens (Wragg, 1999). In the 1800s classroom observations were conducted mainly by head or principal teachers or superintendents (Wragg, 1999).

Formal classroom supervision conducted by educational administrators did not begin until the formation of the common school in the late 1830s. Superintendents inspected classrooms to make sure teachers were following the prescribed curriculum and that students were able to recite their lessons. In the early 20th century methods of classroom supervision were influenced by Taylor's (1911) time and motion studies and Dewey's (1929) scientific method of reflective inquiry (as cited in Nolan, Nolan, & Hoover, 2010). However, using the same supervisory techniques in the classroom that were used on the factory floor posed competing

priorities for supervision. School supervisors often found themselves conflicted between the demand to evaluate teachers scientifically and the need to help teachers develop instruction that would help students learn as opposed to teaching students using mechanistic teaching protocols (Nolan et al., 2010).

In the 1960s the focus of classroom supervision turned to clinical supervision practices. This approach was developed by Cogan (1973) and Anderson and Snyder (1993) and others. The clinical supervision approach was a blend of objective and scientific classroom observation and collegial coaching and a focus on student learning. Clinical supervision practices are still prominent in teacher supervision and evaluation and consist of adaptation of Goldhammer's (1969) five-stage process of clinical supervision: pre-observation, observation, analysis and strategy, supervision conference and post-observation conference analysis. Typically, teacher evaluations consist of the three steps of a pre-observation conference, classroom lesson observation, and a post-observation conference (Acheson & Gall, 2010).

Traditional forms of teacher evaluation, which often rely on rating scales, were established in the 1970s and do not reflect newer research and teaching practices. Thus, observation assures teacher quality and promotes professional development (Danielson, 2006; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Danielson (2002, 2007) designed an observation rubric that outlined a set of teaching skills and performance levels in four different teaching domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. These levels of performance provide criteria for discussions about instruction that are evidence-based and involve a teacher-supervisor dialogue. As a result, the quality of feedback is more specific and constructive than feedback in the more traditional forms of teacher supervision. Observation also facilitates the development of what Glickman (1990) referred to as collegial

schools. Collegial schools are schools in which there are purposeful interactions between adult professionals to improve teaching and learning. Collegial schools have a “covenant of learning” that includes a mission, vision, and goals; a “charter” for democratic decision making throughout the school; and a process for study that is the basis of decisions and action research (Glickman, 1990, p.12).

Currently, the superintendent, principal, department supervisors or other school administrators may conduct classroom observations. The purpose of classroom observation is to help teachers grow, to develop their teaching practices, to promote interaction among teachers and improve their problem-solving abilities (Zepeda, 2003). According to Ziegler (2006), supervision of instruction should also include opportunities for collaboration between administrators and teachers and should have as an objective the gathering of data that will help to improve instruction and student learning and achievement.

The State of New Jersey is currently reforming the teacher and principal evaluation system. The new evaluation system is intended to provide meaningful, actionable feedback to teachers, school and district leaders (New Jersey Department of Education, 2011). The new system will require that at least fifty percent of the teacher evaluation be determined by measurable student outcomes, such as student growth on state standardized tests, school measures or other measures. The remaining portion of the evaluation is based on teacher practice (New Jersey Department of Education, 2011). The new evaluation system will be implemented in all districts in the 2013-2014 school year.

One type of systematic observation that has become increasingly popular in recent years is the classroom walkthrough (also referred to as a learning walkthrough). This form of observation has become an increasingly popular strategy in recent years for informally

supervising teachers and observing classroom activities (Protheroe, 2009). Gathering, examining, and analyzing data obtained from walkthroughs can be helpful in examining teaching practices in assessing student achievement and in developing professional development plans that contribute to continuous school improvement.

One tool that is used to change teaching practices to enhance student achievement is the walkthrough observation. In general, a walkthrough is a process of observing classroom instruction. The purpose of walkthroughs is to determine how well standards are being implemented, how well teachers are teaching, and how well students are learning (Ginsberg, 2001). Kachur, Stout, and Edwards (2010) noted that there are various definitions of a classroom walkthrough, and all have a number of common elements. Walkthroughs are informal and brief; involve the principal and/or other administrators, instructional leaders, and teachers, and are quick snapshots of classroom activities (particularly instructional and curricular practices). Walkthroughs are NOT intended for formal teacher evaluation purposes; rather, they focus on “look-fors” that emphasize improvement in teaching and learning, provide an opportunity to give feedback to teachers for reflection on their practice, and have the improvement of student achievement as their ultimate goal (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010, p. 3).

Consequently, some of the key issues surrounding walkthroughs revolve around answering insightful questions such as: How can walkthroughs improve instruction? Is there a connection between walkthroughs and student achievement? What aspects of walkthroughs should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness? This research study focused on addressing these questions.

The benefits of walkthroughs can be noted from both the teacher and administrator perspectives. Schomburg (2006) states for teachers, data gathered from walkthroughs provide

information about professional development needs and can foster collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and administrators. For administrators, walkthroughs allow them to display instructional leadership by being more consistently present in classrooms (Schomburg, 2006).

Several studies have demonstrated that walkthroughs have a positive effect on classroom instruction and student achievement. Elementary and high school principals reported increases in student achievement as indicated by test scores (Keruskin, 2005; Rossi, 2007; Ziegler, 2006). In the Edmondton (Canada) Public High Schools, walkthroughs contributed to higher graduation rates (Ziegler, 2006). Teachers indicated that walkthroughs made them more aware of best practices for instruction and that principals were more aware of what took place in classrooms (Keruskin, 2005; Rossi, 2007).

Teachers also believed that walkthroughs facilitated self-examination of and reflection on teaching practices (Ziegler, 2006). Walkthroughs provide an opportunity for principals and teachers to engage in a two-way dialogue about instruction and learning in the classroom. This two-way communication is likely to lead to more reflection about teaching practices on the part of both the principal and the teacher, and in turn, leads to greater support of instruction and increased student achievement (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, 2004; Skretta, 2007). Skretta (2007) noted that the most effective walk-throughs give teachers relevant, real-time data on their instruction and address specific observed behaviors. According to Ziegler (2006), reflective questions from the principal (or observer) that are neutral and nonjudgmental, such as “how will you know if you have been successful with students following a small group activity?” encourage teachers to reflect deeply on their instructional practices (p.55).

The Local Context

District profile.

This study took place in Park Place Town, a pseudonym, a suburban community located in central New Jersey. Using data from the 2009 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), Park Place Town has a population of approximately 28,000 residents.

Approximately 53.4% of the population is White, 28.6% is African-American, 20.9% is Hispanic or Latino, and 2.9% is Asian.

Park Place is a K-12 school district servicing approximately four thousand students in four neighborhood elementary schools (Pk-6), one middle school (7-8) and one high school (9-12). The district factor grouping, DFG, for Park Public Schools is CD. The DFG classification system was created by the New Jersey State Department of Education to compare student's performance on statewide assessments. The DFG indicates the socioeconomic status of residents in each district and is used for comparative reporting of test results from New Jersey's statewide testing programs. The DFG was developed in 1974 using demographic variables from the 1970 U. S. Census. In 1984 the DFG was revised to account for the 1980 U. S. Census and again updated in 1992 to reflect data from the 1990 U. S. Census. The DFG uses the following demographic variables: (a) percent of adult residents who did not complete high school, (b) percent of adult residents who attended college, (c) occupational status of adult household members [11 categories ranging from laborers to professionals], (d) population density, or persons per square mile, (e) median family income, (f) percent of those in the work force who received some unemployment compensation, and (g) percent of residents below the poverty level. Eight DFGs were created based on the 1990 United States Census data. They range from A (lowest socioeconomic districts) to J (highest socioeconomic districts) and are labeled A, B,

CD, DE, FG, GH, I, J. Updating the DFGs has not changed any district's designation as Special Needs or not Special Needs (New Jersey Department of Education, 2010).

Present district walkthrough practice.

The purpose of using walkthroughs in Park Place School District is to improve student achievement. The administration believed it would encourage administrators to visit classrooms regularly, hence potentially contributing to improving instruction. Administrators at the Park Place school district are encouraged to perform classroom walkthroughs on a daily basis. They are required to log their walkthroughs on the district server. The superintendent and director of curriculum accompany school principals on walkthroughs sporadically; however, walkthroughs are discussed at each curriculum meeting. Each week the focus of the walk may differ from looking at activity transitions to instructional strategies. Administrators are encouraged to provide teachers with feedback. E-mail is the preferred method for most; however, walkthrough patterns are to be discussed at monthly faculty meetings. Additionally, observations and findings are discussed at weekly building administration team meetings, which may be attended by the superintendent or director of curriculum. Since the concept of walkthroughs was new to many in the district, the Office of the Superintendent trained administrators and created an information pamphlet (appendix D) which was distributed to teachers and administration. The pamphlet covers the purpose, focus, and goal of the walkthrough. The pamphlet also provides questions to guide the walkthrough relative to how teachers know students are learning, how students are assessed, whether students assess themselves, whether teachers monitor and adjust based upon student learning, the appearance of the learning environment, whether lessons are differentiated based upon student learning style, the nature of student feedback, the use of “best instructional practices”, and the role of all adults in the classroom.

Student achievement in park place.

In 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act was signed into law by President George W. Bush. NCLB represented the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and contained a number of changes to the Federal role in public education. A key provision of NCLB is accountability, which means that schools are accountable for student learning. NCLB requires that all students be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014. NCLB sets standards for and requires assessments. Schools and districts must demonstrate proficiency in the form of adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting goals. All states are required to test all of their students. Schools in which students do not show AYP are subject to sanction and must provide additional educational opportunities for these students. NCLB requires each state to apply and report AYP for all public schools, not just those receiving Federal NCLB funds. For Title I schools, the accountability provisions are stricter, although all U.S. public K–12 schools, including charter schools, are subject to NCLB requirements (Cronin, Kingsbury, McCall, & Bowe, 2005).

Under the Title I law, New Jersey schools that do not meet AYP must identify themselves as a school in need of improvement. There is a scale that starts from an early warning up to year eight. As schools continually do not meet AYP, they remain in *school in need of improvement* status. The Department of Education has created a list of interventions depending on the status year. In 2011, Park Place school district was labeled as a district in need of improvement because of ongoing low test scores. The school district is required to notify parents, allow public school choice or provide supplemental educational services, and complete a district improvement plan. Given these test scores, it is all the more potentially beneficial to collect specific data on

classroom instruction and student achievement using walkthroughs. District leaders chose learning walks as a method to improve student achievement.

Park Place school district notifies parents of the district status as required by law, they also offer an annual supplemental educational service fair where parents are able to select a provider to work with their child throughout the year. The services are available for students who scored partially proficient on the high stakes test and receive free or reduced lunch. The district plan focuses on providing assistance to students in grades two through eight with a variety of services including additional in class support, before and after school programs, and additional classes.

The preliminary research, conducted by the researcher, examined the 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), October and March, and the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) 7, 8 assessment data. The HSPA and NJASK 7 test students' proficiency in mathematics and language arts. The NJASK 8 assesses students in mathematics, language arts, and science. Standardized testing scores are divided in three categories: advanced proficient, proficient and partially proficient. Students who achieve advanced proficiency scored in a range of 250 or above, proficient students scored between 200-250, and partially proficient students scored below 200. Currently, the passing score for these standardized tests are set at 200. For the purpose of this study, the researcher combined advanced proficient and proficient scores to attain the proficiency rates.

For the 2008-2009 school year, grade seven students achieved proficiency rates of 62.3% in language arts and 54.7% in mathematics on the NJASK. In the 2009-2010 year, the proficiency rates were reported as 58.1% in language arts and 52.6% in mathematics. Proficiency rates in both areas were lower in the 2009-2010 school year than in the 2008-2009

school year (Table 1). In the 2010-2011 school year, grade seven students achieved proficiency rates of 51.3% in language arts and 53.6% in mathematics. In the 2011-2012 school year, grade seven students achieved proficiency rates of 46.8% in language arts and 55.7% in mathematics. The language arts scores decreased slightly by 4.5% from 2011 to 2012. The mathematics scores increased by 2.1% from 2011 to 2012 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Grade 7 NJASK Proficiency Rates in Literacy and Mathematics: 2008-2012

Subject	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Language Arts Literacy	62.3	58.1	51.3	46.8
Mathematics	54.7	52.6	53.6	55.7

Grade eight students achieved proficiency rates of 74.8 % in language arts, 68.4% in mathematics and 79.1% in science for the 2008-2009 school year on the NJASK. In the 2009-2010 school year, students achieved proficiency rates of 75.3% in language arts, 61.4% in mathematics, and 80.9% in science. Proficiency rates increased in language arts and science while decreasing in mathematics. In the 2010-2011 school year, grade eight students achieved proficiency rates of 73.5% in language arts, 59.4% in mathematics and 72.8% in science. In the 2011-2012 school year, grade eight students achieved proficiency rates of 72.5% in language arts, 56.2% in mathematics and 78.8% in science (see Table 2).

Table 2

Grade 8 NJASK Proficiency Rates in Literacy, Mathematics and Science: 2008- 2012

Subject	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Language Arts Literacy	74.8	75.3	73.5	72.5
Mathematics	68.4	61.4	59.4	56.2
Science	79.1	80.9	72.8	78.8

In the 2008-2009 school year, grade eleven students achieved proficiency rates of 75.3% in language arts and 53.4% in mathematics. In the 2009-2010 school year, HSPA scores for grade eleven students indicated proficiency rates of 75.1% in language arts and 56.5% in mathematics. The language arts remained relatively the same as the previous year and there was an increase of 5.8% in mathematics proficiency from 2009 to 2010. In the 2010-2011 school year, HSPA scores for grade eleven students indicated proficiency rates of 79.5% in language arts and 59.0% in mathematics. In the 2011-2012 school year, grade eleven students achieved proficiency rates of 84.7% in language arts and 67.6% in mathematics. The language arts scores continue rise with an increase of 5.5% from 2011 to 2012. The mathematics scores increased by 8.6% from 2011 to 2012 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Grade 11 HSPA Proficiency Rates in Literacy and Mathematics: 2008-2012

Subject	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Language Arts Literacy	75.3	75.1	79.5	84.7
Mathematics	53.4	56.5	59.0	67.6

Given the increase in the grade eleven scores and the decrease in the seventh and eighth grade scores, it is all the more potentially beneficial to collect specific data on classroom instruction and student achievement using walkthroughs. The lack of significant increases in test scores led district leaders to a new supervisory approach. The learning walk method was selected to improve student achievement through increasing direct administrative interaction in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

While the literature indicates that walkthroughs are used extensively to improve school planning, teaching and learning, and student achievement, few studies have examined the specific aspects of walkthroughs that should receive the most attention. Such a focus could help to maximize their effectiveness, enhance student achievement, and improve the process of collecting data from walkthroughs that could provide this information. This study attempts to fill this gap in the research by examining the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to the improvement of instruction; the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers; and their contribution to on-going professional development planning.

By more fully exploring the process of walkthroughs, the results of this study may help educators focus more specifically on their classroom practices, instructional practices, and student learning experiences. Such an investigation may create or enhance a dialogue about teaching and learning among school officials, administrators, teachers, and other school staff. This study may also create more consistent and higher-quality teaching and learning experiences, and may enhance student achievement on standardized tests.

Problem Statement

Walkthroughs can provide valuable information on how existing teaching strategies and classroom practices influence student achievement (Protheroe, 2009). In the Park Place school district in which this study took place, walkthroughs are conducted and teachers may receive feedback about the walkthrough verbally or through an informal e-mail. However, not enough data that provided meaningful information were collected as a result of the walkthroughs. The problem this study focused on was examining the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to the improvement of instruction; the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers; and their contribution to on-going professional development planning.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. In fulfilling this purpose, the researcher examined (a) the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to improving instruction, (b) the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers and (c) aspects of walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness for overall school improvement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies to enhance teaching practice?

2. What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement?

3. What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected that would assist teachers and school leaders in their overall improvement planning processes?

Research Approach

With the approval of Park Place School District, the researcher used a mixed methods research design to study the experiences and perceptions of the school superintendent, director of curriculum, both middle and high school principals, vice principals, teachers, and supervisors. It is a primary job responsibility of the principals, vice principals and supervisors to conduct walkthroughs on a daily basis. It is possible for more than one administrator to see the same teacher in a given week or day. They are also required to provide feedback to teachers.

Interviews, a focus group and a teacher survey were the primary methods of data collection. In depth interviews were conducted with the middle and high school principal and vice principals, district level supervisors as well as the superintendent and director of curriculum. The researcher facilitated a focus group with high school faculty. The researcher attempted to conduct a focus group with middle school teachers, however participation was low. The researcher conducted interviews with middle school teachers as an alternative. It was important to the study to collect data from both groups of teachers. The researcher used the same questions for the focus group and teacher interviews. An anonymous on- line survey was also distributed to both middle and high school teachers.

Assumptions

Based on the researcher's experience as a teacher and administrator, three primary assumptions were made regarding this study. First, administrators are not properly trained to conduct walkthroughs. This assumption is based on the educational background of the administrator. Many master's programs do not specifically cover walkthroughs; rather they focus on conducting formal observations of teachers. Second, administrators provide adequate and helpful feedback to teachers. This assumption is based on the job requirements of administrators. Many, however, do not have the time to meet with teachers on a regular basis to provide feedback that will improve teaching. Third, administrators do not use the data collected from learning walks toward improving student achievement. This assumption is based on the lack of data collection tools provided to administrators. Administrators are only required to maintain a log of who they saw, not what was seen. Without a formal data collection tool, administrators must rely solely on their memory and notes of what they saw when analyzing test data and planning professional development. Teachers also are open to constructive criticism from administrators and welcome regular visits from administration. This assumption is based on the requirements of the State Department of Education for teacher evaluation. By law, tenured teachers must have at least one formal observation, while non-tenured teachers are required to have five formal observations. In addition to the mandatory observations, both tenured and non-tenured teachers receive a summative evaluation at the end of the year.

Summary

Chapter I provided an introduction to this dissertation that examined observational walkthroughs. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a

walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. The research questions for the study examined (a) the extent to which information gathered in walkthroughs improve instruction, (b) what relationship, if any, exists between information gathered in walkthroughs and student achievement, and (c) aspects of information gathered in walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness to contribute to a school's overall improvement planning process. The significance of the study was also discussed. The operational definitions of terms that will be used in this study appear in the section that follows. Chapter II reviews the literature relevant to walkthroughs.

Operational Definitions

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): AYP is how the Federal law No Child Left Behind (NCLB) measures the achievement of schools.

High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA): A state standardized test used to determine student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics as specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. The test is given to first-time eleventh grade students. Students who fail the HSPA in March of their junior year will have an opportunity to retest in October and again, if needed March of their senior year (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009).

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK): A state standardized test for students in grades 3 through 8. The test is designed to provide students and schools information about how well students are achieving in the required New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): NCLB was signed into law on January 8, 2002. It reauthorizes the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*, the main Federal law

regarding K-12 education. The four main pillars of *NCLB* are: accountability; flexibility and local control; enhanced parental choice; and a focus on what works in the classroom. *NCLB* requires state governments and educational systems to help low-achieving students in high-poverty schools meet the same academic performance standards that apply to all students (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009)

Student achievement: For the purpose of this study, a narrow focus on successful academic performance, as measured by standardized test scores, specifically the NJASK and the HSPA.

Reflective practice: Acquiring data to help teachers make decisions about their classroom and instructional practices to enhance student achievement (Aneess, Barnett, & Allen, 2007).

Walkthrough: An instructional supervision practice that includes brief, focused classroom observations by principals or other instructional leaders to obtain information about the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008).

LearningWalksSM: Is more formal and focuses on improving core functions of learning and what teachers teach, what learners learn, what gets taught, and how a school is organized to foster achievement (Glennan & Resnick, 2004). Many times the terms walkthrough and learning walk are interchanged.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The problem this research study examined rests on investigating what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. Specifically, the researcher sought to examine (a) the extent to which information gathered in walkthroughs contribute to improving instruction, (b) the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers, and (c) aspects of information gathered in walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness for overall school improvement. To conduct this study it was necessary to complete a review of the current literature. This review was ongoing throughout the study.

The term *walkthrough* describes a process of classroom formative supervision in which observations using this approach are brief, usually informal, and conducted by school leaders. Walkthroughs also gather data for school improvement (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008). The chapter begins with a discussion of the definitions of walkthrough. The sections that follow present the purpose and benefits of and the criteria for walkthroughs. The role of data-informed decision making is also discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Definitions of Walkthroughs

Walkthrough methods attempt to capture teacher classroom instructional practices and instructional leadership approaches. Walkthroughs also assist in gathering data to inform school decision making. The term “walkthrough” is attributed to Frase and Hetzel (2002); their

description of walkthroughs reflects “an active person-to-person process that relies on deeds, involvement, and participation to create better schools” (p. ix). Frase and Hetzel believed that walkthroughs involve well-planned observations that seek to evaluate instructional effectiveness, indicate areas of improvement, and reinforce good teaching.

Davidson-Taylor (2002) and Rossi (2007) described walkthroughs from the perspective of a principal’s instructional leadership as an activity whereby the principal must visit all classrooms and observe instructional practices and student learning. Rossi’s definition of walkthroughs is similar to Davidson-Taylor’s. Rossi described walkthroughs as brief and focused visits to classrooms so that principals can see firsthand what goes on in the classroom.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2010) described walkthroughs thus:

Learning walkthroughs are a systematic and coordinated method of gathering data to inform district-and school-level decision making. They involve establishing a focus and then engaging strategically selected teams of individuals in collaborative observations of classrooms and the interactions among teachers, students, and academic content.

Learning walkthroughs can be a powerful means of helping educators learn more about the ways in which instructional practices support student learning and achievement. (p. 2)

In Park Place school district, a walkthrough or “learning walk” is defined as a visit from an administrator. Walkthroughs are meant to inform instructional leaders on what instructional strategies are occurring in the classroom and what impact these approaches have on student learning. Written or oral feedback is provided, however, it is never to be used as a part of a formal observation.

Purpose of Walkthroughs

Walkthroughs may form the basis of district level or school-based instructional supervision to confirm that District initiatives are being properly implemented and to evaluate student progress and teacher needs (Ancess, Barnett, & Allen, 2007). Walkthroughs may also be used to monitor instruction, to find out what is happening in classrooms, and to determine if professional development is needed or if professional development initiatives are effective (Finch, 2009).

There are a number of other purposes for walkthroughs. According to Overstreet (2006), the purpose of the walkthrough is to give and receive safe, non-threatening, qualitative evidence-based feedback to stimulate in-school dialogue. Walkthroughs reinforce attention to a focus on teaching and learning priorities within a standards-based environment. Walkthroughs assist administrators to gather and provide qualitative data about instructional practice and student learning to supplement other data about school and student performance. Walkthroughs stimulate collaborative, professional conversations about teaching and learning through the gathering of evidence related to the instructional expectation/focus. In such exchanges, teachers learn from each other and from colleagues outside of the school through observing peers, asking questions, sharing experiences, and providing a variety of perspectives. Such a process deepens an understanding of teaching and learning through ongoing, formative feedback related to school improvement that supports the school's instructional focus (Overstreet, 2006, p. 2). Teachers in Park Place school district do not conduct walkthroughs regularly; however, teachers are encouraged to visit another classroom on the recommendation of the department supervisor. This is usually done with new teachers for the purpose of professional development.

Benefits of Walkthroughs

A number of benefits are associated with walkthroughs. These include four essential dimensions. First, walkthroughs support continuous school improvement. School administrators view walkthroughs as dynamic evidence of school improvement. Administrators can use walkthroughs to gather data and to monitor strategies that have been implemented to improve student achievement (Skretta, 2007). These data can help administrators identify staff professional development needs, encourage staff collaboration, and improve instructional practices. According to Dexter (2004), walkthroughs are practical, focused and save time, factors that also support the school improvement process.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2010) differentiated between walkthroughs and traditional classroom evaluation methods. In walkthroughs a focus of inquiry is the basis of the classroom visits and determines what data will and will not be gathered. School leaders and interested educators establish the focus prior to the walkthrough. Data and first-hand observation of classroom activities align with the focus and ensure that the walkthrough will result in significant information about an area or areas for improvement.

Second, walkthroughs ensure that administrators are aware of everyday happenings in the classroom. When principals visit classrooms regularly, they are in a better position to notice instructional issues and patterns, can show interest and expertise in the teaching and learning process, and have a basis for discussion with teachers about classroom activities and student learning (Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2009).

Schomburg (2006) advocated walkthroughs as a way for superintendents to increase visibility in the schools and to make a greater contribution to instructional improvement and to

increase engagement with staff. Schomburg described his system for observing teachers in the classroom: develop a coding system that allowed observation and coding of key area; establishing a brief list of classroom characteristics and activities that could be quickly be identified during a walkthrough, and noting whether technology is being used in the classroom. Schomburg suggested that for superintendents who are interested in conducting walkthroughs, some effective strategies to employ include identifying gaps in their weekly planners that could be filled with walkthrough opportunities, informing teachers of their walkthrough observation systems prior to the walkthrough, and using classroom visits as opportunities to engage staff, ranging from the principal to custodial workers.

Third, walkthroughs provide an opportunity for quality reflection on teaching and learning. When the principal and teacher engage in dialogue about instruction and learning in the classroom, a likely result is greater reflection about teaching practices, which, in turn, leads to greater support of instruction and increased student achievement (Downey et al., 2004; Skretta, 2007). According to Skretta (2007): “The best walk-through gives teachers relevant, real-time data on their instruction. Feedback on the walk-through should be specific to observed behaviors, focused, and descriptive of the level of performance observed” (p. 18).

Finally, walkthroughs create additional opportunities for professional dialogue among colleagues. Classroom walkthroughs can “move staff from a culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration and support” (Ziegler, 2006, p. 53). A more collaborative relationship among colleagues fosters support for the demands associated with teaching. Collaborative inquiry among teachers helps teachers focus on what works and does not work in teaching and learning (Love, 2009).

It appears that the benefits of walkthroughs would convince teachers and administrators that this informal observation technique is an easy, doable approach to improving student achievement.

Criteria for Walkthroughs

In the literature the criteria for walkthroughs address time parameters for observations; who should be involved in the observations, what should be observed, and how feedback from the observations should be communicated. The recommended amount of time spent in each classroom observation ranges from three minutes (Downey et al., 2004), to between four and five minutes (Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002), to five to seven minutes (Protheroe, 2009; Ziegler, 2006), to as many as twenty minutes (Skretta, 2008). According to Protheroe (2009), whatever amount of time is used, it is more important that the walkthroughs be routine and consistent.

In terms of what should be observed in a walkthrough, Downey et al. (2004) developed a three-minute classroom walk-through model consisting of five steps: (a) notice whether students are task-oriented, (b) review the curricular objectives and ensure that what is being taught matches the objectives, (c) observe instructional practices, (d) look for information on what has been taught previously or may be taught in the future, (e) observe any safety or health issues in the classroom.

According to Pitler and Goodwin (2008), principals should ask a number of questions when conducting a walkthrough. For instance, are teachers using research-based strategies? This supports Downey's (2001) suggestions for reflective questions school leaders must ask regarding instructional practices in the classroom. Observers should question teachers' grouping strategies (i.e., collaborative, small groups, pairs) and whether teachers and students are using technology to support learning. This latter question is consistent with Schomburg's walkthrough system in

which he observed whether technology is being used in the classroom. Observers should note whether students can articulate what they are doing relative to their goals. Ginsberg (2001) offered some appropriate probing questions: What are you working on? Why are you doing this work? Is what you are working on interesting to you? Is what you are working on in other classes interesting to you?

Pitler and Goodwin (2008) also suggested that observers evaluate student learning according to Bloom's taxonomy, which consists of six cognitive hierarchical action components—remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Finally, observers should determine if student achievement data correlate with walkthrough data. When observations are placed in the context of student achievement data, decisions about improving teaching and learning become more data-driven.

These questions are similar to those provided to the teachers and administration during a district training session on walkthroughs; however Park Place school district leaders do not regularly lead discussions that analyze data collected from walkthroughs.

Much of the literature on walkthroughs recommends that the superintendent, principal, or administrators be involved (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008; Protheroe, 2009; Rossi, 2007; Schomburg, 2006; Skretta, 2007). An important aspect of who conducts the walkthroughs is that the individual involved determines the purpose of the walkthrough, agrees to the criteria for the walkthrough, conducts the observations, and provides feedback to individual teachers and staff (Protheroe, 2009). These aspects are essential to the problem of establishing a data collection component that will provide information about whether there is a relationship between the data

collected during walkthroughs and how it influences teachers' attempts to improve student achievement.

Issues Surrounding Walkthroughs

While walkthroughs as an observation tool and a potential source for school improvement have numerous benefits, there are also some issues surrounding the use of walkthroughs. Some of the issues include the need for agreement from all participants about their use, addressing teachers' union concerns, time constraints of observers, training for teachers and administrators about the nature and purpose of walkthroughs (Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002; Rissman, Miller, & Torgesen, 2009; Schomburg, 2006), and personnel concerns (Dexter, 2004; Valli & Buese, 2007).

Process of understanding.

To obtain agreement from all participants about the need for and purpose of learning walkthroughs, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2010) suggested strategically selecting teams of individuals to observe classrooms and the interactions among teachers, students, and academic content in a collaborative manner and to develop a Focus of Inquiry to define and guide the team's efforts. Such a focus would ensure that learning walkthroughs help educators prioritize and identify changes the school may want to implement, particularly in the areas of student achievement. To develop a Focus of Inquiry, the MDOE suggested observers ask questions about the priorities and strategies outlined in School and/or District Improvement Plans that may benefit from new insight and/or progress monitoring. This approach also emphasized looking at how aspects of the school and/or district vision and mission statements come alive in the classroom and which aspects need attention, what various data reveal about student learning and opportunities for improvement, what is known about root

causes of low student achievement, and what educational research and knowledge of best practices show to be key to improvement (MDOE, 2010, p. 9)

Interactions with the teacher's union.

Schomburg's (2006) strategy for learning walkthroughs included discussing the idea with union leadership before performing an initial walkthrough and then informing teachers how walkthroughs would work. Schomburg emphasized that all who conduct walkthroughs must be clear about the purpose and outcomes of walkthroughs. Marsh, Pane, and Hamilton (2006) underscored the importance of involving unions in decisions to conduct learning walkthroughs. For example, in one district that was part of their study, union officials stopped learning walkthroughs for several years because such walkthroughs were viewed as an unnecessary evaluation of teachers and principals.

The issue of agreement was dealt with before the introduction of walkthroughs to Park Place teachers. Union leaders, board members and district administration met to ensure that the walkthrough protocol fell within the parameters of the Park Place Educational Association. Once the protocol was agreed upon, it was shared with teachers. Teachers were also provided with an informational pamphlet (appendix D) to clearly define the purpose, expectations and impact on evaluation.

Administrative time constraints.

Ginsberg and Murphy (2002) noted that administrators may be reluctant to conduct walkthroughs, not because of a lack of desire to do so, but because they are not adequately prepared or trained and have little practice. As a result, administrators tend to visit classrooms two or three times a year and conduct their observations and evaluation according to a state or district mandate. The urgent matters facing administrators in the course of the school day also

limit their time. When faced with a decision to attend to matters that require their immediate attention versus visiting classrooms, administrators tend to place priority on the former. Scheduling walkthroughs as part of their daily agenda may assist administrators with balancing the time spent dealing with daily issues and time spent in the classroom. Park Place school district requires building administrators to meet weekly with the Superintendent or Director of Curriculum to discuss walkthrough patterns. Administrators are asked to share the best and worst walkthroughs as well as feedback provided to the teacher. Often, administrators are asked to revisit particular classrooms to determine if the teacher has made adjustments based on the feedback provided.

Training approaches.

According to the MDOE (2010), school leaders should provide training for observers who will be conducting walkthroughs so that they understand how to effectively gather and analyze evidence and generate discussions about improving instructional practices and student learning. Overstreet (2006) indicated that principals, assistant principals, and other instructional support staff such as coaches must first be trained by the school district. Staff who will conduct walkthroughs must then receive the same training and orientation. An important component of the training is that principals work with school improvement teams to develop the walkthrough process. Factors such as the school accountability plan, achievement data, and professional learning of the school should be taken into consideration. The school improvement team determines the instructional focus of the walkthroughs, the focus questions, and a description of the instruction expectations. Walkthrough teams are then oriented about how to conduct the walkthrough, how to complete walkthrough observation forms, and are provided with a date for the walkthrough and a schedule of rooms to be visited by each team member. Among the

specific items the MDOE (2010) suggested should be included in the training are reasons why the school is committing time and resources for walkthroughs; reasons why team members were asked to participate; time required for participation, training, and follow-up; when, how, and from whom they will receive additional information. The guidelines also recommended developing norms for group participation, including the importance of confidentiality of discussions. They also suggested looking at instructional focus and its relationship to the school or district improvement plan; guidelines for writing observations; protocols for visiting classrooms, and the schedule for the observation day (MDOE, 2010, pp. 15-16).

Personnel concerns.

For teachers, the prospect of a walkthrough can create anxiety and a sense of being threatened, even though the purpose of the walkthrough is to offer constructive support (Dexter, 2004; Valli & Buese, 2007). Teachers may believe that when observers come into the classroom their purpose is to point out teacher weaknesses and what they are doing wrong. This anxiety may be especially heightened if the observer is from outside the school (Valli & Buese, 2007). The MDOE (2010) recommends that school leaders avoid using learning walkthroughs as part of the teacher evaluation process or to criticize instructional staff; keep information about individual teachers confidential, and have a specific plan for conducting the walkthroughs and for collecting and analyzing information gathered from the walkthroughs.

The solution is for administrators and teachers to work together to create a walkthrough protocol that emphasizes improvement (Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002). Overstreet (2006) described a protocol that clearly outlined what teachers can expect from a walkthrough. In Overstreet's protocol a team of five to six people is selected, each team member is assigned specific classrooms to visit; and one to two observers are assigned to each classroom. Observers have

specific chairs in the classroom for observation. Observers may also circulate throughout the room and examine student work or interview students. When observers ask question, they do so as unobtrusively and discretely as possible. Classroom visits are approximately ten minutes each. The specifics of what is to be observed or asked are recorded on walkthrough observation forms and responses to questions are recorded word for word. Observers do not provide feedback to teachers while they are observing; feedback is provided after the walkthrough and on the walkthrough observation forms. All walkthrough observations are confidential (Overstreet, 2006, p. 10).

Koerperich (2008) examined whether classroom walk-through observations are an effective supervision technique for increasing the professional growth of teachers and the effects of walkthrough observations on teachers' confidence levels based on their years of experience and grade level taught. Five schools that used the Teach For Success Observational Protocol developed by West Educational Services were studied over a twelve week time period. Administrators received training on the protocol and teachers received training on the walkthrough protocol indicators. Three classroom walkthrough observations by qualified evaluators were conducted over the twelve week period, and each classroom walkthrough observation was followed up with reflective feedback provided to the classroom teachers within twenty four hours of the observations. Teachers ($n = 106$) were surveyed pre and post visit to measure their level of confidence in their effectiveness as a teacher, how classroom walkthrough observations affect their capacity as a teacher, and the teacher's implementation of research-based practices. Comparing means of pre- and post-survey results, Koerperich (2008) found that walkthroughs with administrative feedback have a positive impact on teacher's level of confidence in instructional practices (p. 98). Common trends and patterns that influence teachers'

levels of confidence were evident from the results. These included feedback, professional development, and student achievement. Koerperich concluded from the results that having a systematic classroom walkthrough process increases teachers' confidence levels.

The purpose of a quantitative study by Lucich (2009) was threefold: first, to determine the relationship between the use of identified high-yield instructional strategies in grades five and eight mathematics and student achievement in schools using the classroom walkthrough process; second, to determine the correlation between the use of high-yield strategies and student achievement in mathematics as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and third, to examine the difference in mathematics TAKS scores between schools using the classroom walkthrough process and comparable Texas schools not using the classroom walkthrough process. Lucich compared forty-five elementary and eleven middle schools that used walkthroughs with forty-five elementary and eleven middle schools that did not. Elementary and middle schools conducting walkthroughs used Teachscape's Classroom Walkthrough Tool (Teachscape, 2006) to observe whether nine high-yield instructional strategies in grades five and eight math instruction were used. In the schools that conducted walkthroughs, administrators conducted ten walks per week and central office staff conducted ten walks per month.

Lucich (2009) found a statistically significant difference in math TAKS scores for grades five and eight; however, there was no statistically significant difference between the uses of the nine identified high-yield instructional strategies in grade five compared to grade eight that could explain the difference in student achievement scores for the same grade levels. According to Lucich, in a high-stakes testing environment that characterizes schools today, even a moderate difference in student achievement can be important. A difference of 0.1 in student performance

outcomes can mean the difference between earning an academically unacceptable school rating and an acceptable rating, or between a recognized rating and an exemplary rating. Lucich's study shows that data can be collected that provide information about whether there is a relationship between walkthroughs and student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. This relationship was also explored in the present study.

Skretta (2008) examined principals' perceptions of the use and feedback processes of walkthrough teacher observations in their respective schools. Walkthroughs were defined as unscheduled, informal classroom observations of three to fifteen minutes in length followed by some form of feedback to the individual teacher. Skretta used a self-designed web-based survey to gather data from ninety one public high school principals representing all sizes of high schools in Nebraska with a variety of years of service as principals. Of the ninety one participants, seventy six principals indicated that they used walkthroughs and reported completing between five and ten walkthroughs each week. The principals who conduct walkthroughs indicated that fitting them into their schedules was "somewhat difficult" or "extremely difficult." Of the fifteen principals who indicated they did not conduct walkthroughs in their school, twelve stated they would like to conduct walkthroughs but their managerial responsibilities, student discipline issues, and demands of the formal teacher evaluation process prevented them from doing so. Only three principals reported not being familiar with walkthroughs.

This study found that principals believe establishing visibility and creating positive relationships with teachers are important purposes in conducting walkthroughs. In addition, they experience greater job satisfaction from conducting walkthroughs. The majority of the principals reported that walkthroughs improved student learning, quality of teacher relationships, quality of student relationships, and quality of teacher instruction. Principals also reported that

walkthroughs improved teacher perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader, and two principals indicated that walkthroughs helped to improve student discipline. Analysis of the data revealed statistically significant differences between principals who document their walkthroughs and those who do not. Principals who document their walkthroughs perceive the walkthroughs' role in the appraisal process as more important than principals who conduct walkthroughs but do not document them. Principals who document their walkthroughs are also more likely to spend a longer amount of time in the classroom on a typical walkthrough than principals who do not document their walkthroughs (Skretta, 2008).

Models of Learning Walkthroughs

Several models of learning walkthroughs have been cited in the literature. The most often cited are the Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough (Downey et al., 2004), Learning Walks (Goldman, Bill, Johnston, & McConachie, 2004), and the Walkthrough Observation Tool (Graf & Werlinich, 2002). These are discussed in the subsections that follow. Some researchers (e.g., MDOE, 2010; Schomburg, 2006; Skretta, 2007; Ziegler, 2006) have described the walkthrough process in schools but have not named any particular models or conducted studies on the use of these models. Research that has been conducted regarding each model was also reviewed.

The Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough.

The Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough (Downey et al., 2004) is structured in five steps. The overall focus is for school administrators to observe classrooms and develop reflective questions for each individual teacher about their present and future instructional decisions. The observations are unannounced, informal, and use no checklists.

In the first step, administrators look for student attention to class work and immediately assess whether students exhibit attending behavior, listen, participate, and stay on task. In the

second step, which encompasses the next two to three minutes of the observation, administrators assess whether the objectives of the curriculum align with district grade level standards; in other words, observers determine if teachers are actually teaching what they think they are teaching. In step three, observers look for general instructional practices, such as kinds of feedback to the student, how homework is used, how teachers correct errors students may make, level of instruction, strategies employed that are identified as school district goals, and appropriateness of instructional strategies for the subject taught. If there is time during the 3-minute limit, observers proceed to step four and “walk the walls”, where they look on the walls of the classroom for evidence of student work and other indicators of learning. Walking the walls may also include reviewing student journals, portfolios, or graded papers on the teacher’s desk. In step five, which occurs naturally as part of the observation, observers look for potential safety and health issues, such as physical hazards (e.g., backpacks blocking aisles and broken furniture.) and environmental concerns (e.g., lack of adequate ventilation and cleanliness). During the three-minute observation administrators take informal notes and develop reflective questions for teachers to reinforce what is happening in the classroom or identifying areas for improvement (Downey et al.).

Downey et al. (2004) acknowledged that while the goal of the Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough is to encourage professional growth by developing teachers’ skills in reflective thinking, there are limitations. The method involves only occasional follow-up with teachers. In addition, classroom visits are not long enough to determine content accuracy and completeness. However, Downey et al. suggested that the brief three-minute time for observations will result in more frequent visits to more classrooms. The Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough method is based on the assumption that administrators either have or will develop content knowledge and

knowledge of instructional practices to make appropriate assessments in the three minute observations. To obtain more in-depth knowledge of the content, Downey et al. (2004) recommended that administrators download content curriculum electronically or print hard copies and bring to the classroom.

Administrators will then decide if content taught is accurate or complete, if not, a more extensive observation period may be necessary. Because teachers are not evaluated during the observations, the three minute walkthrough does not provide the opportunity to give teachers more direction to address instructional issues for teachers who need support. Thus, this method may only be appropriate for competent and experienced teachers; new or marginal teachers may not benefit (Downey et al., 2004).

In some schools, the change to a more collegial and reflective observation method from a more evaluative and directive style may raise some issues of teacher acceptance of the method. Downey et al. (2004) believed that providing more knowledge about the walkthrough process and emphasizing the collegial relationship between administrators and teachers as opposed to a superior-subordinate relationship may address these issues. Teachers also need to be trained in the reflective process so that they understand how to engage in reflective conversation and will be less resistant.

Bushman (2006) described how he used the Three-Minute Walkthrough instead of the school district observation process in his school. In these walkthroughs teachers were used as walkthrough partners to improve instructional practices, an approach advocated by McClain (2009). This collegial approach allowed for nonthreatening discussions about instruction and helped to create a collaborative culture among teachers. Bushman obtained agreement from math and science teachers to provide brief instruction on the Three-Minute Walkthrough.

Teachers then observed eight to ten classes of their colleagues within their content area during preparation periods. Bushman walked with each teacher while he or she conducted the observations and provided reflective questions for the teacher to consider. After the observations were completed, teachers met as a department to discuss their observations with Bushman as facilitator. Bushman focused on instructional decisions made in classrooms and on stimulating reflective dialogue. At the conclusion of these meetings, Bushman distributed evaluations based on the observations.

Bushman (2006) asserted that the Three-Minute Walkthrough provided insights to teachers about instruction they would otherwise have not received from the regular teacher evaluation process. He furthered the process to include math and science teachers observing one another and observing content colleagues at the middle school level. Working with another assistant principal, additional content teachers were included in this process. Bushman noted that there are limitations to walkthroughs. For example, some teachers expressed more comfort with the regular evaluation process and wanted to return to this process because of the one-on-one interaction with the administrator.

The Three-Minute Walkthrough model is a practical model that could easily be implemented in Park Place School District. In fact, although we do not have specific steps to follow, or a specific amount of time to stay in the classroom, this model is similar to what administration does in Park Place School District.

LearningWalks.

Unlike the Three-Minute Walkthrough, *LearningWalk*SM (Goldman, Bill, Johnston, & McConachie, 2004) is more formal, focuses on improving the core functions of learning and what teachers teach, what learners learn, what gets taught, and how a school is organized to

foster achievement (Glennan & Resnick, 2004). Further, teachers participate as observers and students are incorporated into discussions. The focus of *LearningWalk*SM is on how to deliver effective instruction that enhances student learning and not to judge individual teachers or the school (Glennan & Resnick, 2004).

To assist this approach of learning walks, the Institute for Learning (IFL), which resides in the Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh, developed a model of standards-based teaching called Principles of Learning (POL). The nine POLS emphasize organizing for effort, establishing clear expectations, developing fair and credible evaluations, defining recognition of accomplishment, creating academic rigor in a thinking curriculum, stating accountable talk, constructing socializing intelligence, monitoring self-management of learning, and advocating learning as apprenticeship.

Schools assume that students can learn and achieve with sustained and directed effort rather than assuming that aptitude determines learning and achievement. Schools set high minimum standards, curricula are matched to the standards, and assessments are geared to the standards. What students are expected to learn is clearly defined and communicated. In addition, descriptive criteria and models of work that meets standards are displayed so that students can refer to them when they analyze and discuss their work and set goals to guide their efforts. To support students' sustained effort over time, assessments are used that are fair to students, parents, and the community and credible for employers. To ensure fairness, tests, exams, classroom assessments, and the curriculum match the standards. Students need motivation through regular recognition of their accomplishments. This recognition can take the form of celebrations of work that meets standards or intermediate progress benchmarks that have been clearly articulated. Thinking cannot be taught without a solid foundation of knowledge. A solid

foundation of knowledge cannot be acquired unless students are engaged in thinking. Thus, curricula must be organized around major concepts that students are expected to know in depth and teaching must engage students in active reasoning about these concepts. Accountable talk encourages talk that is relevant to acquiring appropriate knowledge and to rigorous thinking. Accountable Talk[®] uses evidence appropriate to a particular discipline (e.g., proofs in mathematics, data from investigations in science, textual details in literature, and documentary sources in history) and follows established norms of good reasoning.

Socializing intelligence means that students are called upon to use skills of intelligent thinking, which include problem-solving and reasoning capabilities and mental habits that help them use these skills regularly. To take responsibility for the quality of their thinking and learning, students must develop and regularly use self-monitoring and self-management strategies. These strategies include identifying areas of improvement and taking steps to enhance improvement, asking questions to obtain deeper levels of meaning, evaluating feedback from others, using their background knowledge to learn new things, anticipating learning difficulties, and judging their progress toward a learning goal.

In the past, people learned by working as apprentices alongside masters who modeled skills and practices and guided the apprentices. In today's more organized learning environments students can learn from mentors and coaches who model complex thinking skills and the ability to analyze and help students apply these skills to projects both in and out of the classroom (IFL, 2009).

The IFL then developed *LearningWalk*SM as a tool for school administrators to accompany the POLs. *LearningWalk*SM is “an organized walk through a school's halls and classrooms using the POLs of Learning to focus on the instructional core” (Marsh, Kerr,

Ikemoto, Darilek, Suttorp, Zimmer, & Barney, 2005, p. 29). *LearningWalk*SM has a twofold objective that focuses both on students and teachers: to assess student learning and develop rigorous and coherent professional development (Goldman et al., 2004). School administrators and teachers conduct the walkthrough observations.

There are six components in the *LearningWalk*SM process: staff orientation, observer or “walker” orientation, classroom visits, hall talk, debriefing, and staff reflection (Goldman et al., 2004). In this process the principal discusses the purpose for the *LearningWalk*SM with the staff and what observers will be looking for when gathering data. A data collection form is provided to guide observations. Each classroom visit lasts for five to ten minutes. As with the Three-Minute Walkthrough, observers “walk the walls” and review student work (portfolios, journals, posted work samples). Observers also talk with students about their learning, make note of how the classroom is arranged and of available classroom resources, and, if possible, talk with teachers about the learning they are observing and how it fits into the larger instructional picture. After each observation, observers meet to discuss the observation and to develop reflective questions that may help teachers improve instruction. All observers then gather to discuss commonalities they noted in their observations and common reflective questions with the principal. The principal may ask observers to develop goals for addressing concerns, plans for additional professional development, and plans for future walks. The principal shares the findings with the staff orally or in writing.

Marsh et al. (2005) conducted a study under the auspices of the RAND Corporation of three urban school districts that were working to improve instructional quality and performance. School districts used *LearningWalk*SM to monitor use of curriculum guides and hold teachers accountable for high-quality instruction (Goldman et al., 2004). Marsh et al. collected data from

4500 administrators, staff, principals, assistant principals, and teachers over a three year period (school years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004) with interviews and surveys.

In district one, supervisors and principals were provided with *LearningWalk*SM protocol and a required number of observations (Goldman et al., 2004). In district two, principals used school needs as the basis of the *LearningWalk*SM and conducted observations one to two times a month. They used a less formal protocol and did not schedule observations in advance. District three initially used *LearningWalk*SM as an evaluative tool for teachers and principals. As a result, *LearningWalk*SM was perceived negatively and the process was discontinued. A new principal restarted the use of *LearningWalk*SM at the time the study was conducted. Marsh et al. found that school administrators believed that *LearningWalk*SM was more useful than teachers. Teachers in the study reported that feedback they received from observers was not helpful or relevant, the observations were superficial, and the process was over-evaluative when conducted formally by external observers. However, teachers who participated in *LearningWalk*SM as observers reported the process as more valuable than teachers who did not participate as observers but who were observed. Results showed that the POLs affected broad organizational culture, norms, and beliefs of the districts and were the basis of developing instructional leadership skills of administrators. The extent to which the POLs and the *LearningWalk*SM affected teacher practice in the three schools districts was inconclusive (Marsh et al., 2005).

This model is very different from the expectations that were set for Park Place School District administration. Incorporating the POL's to the Park Place School District may be helpful because it provides everyone who does a walk through a framework for the lesson observed. The lack of focus is often discussed in the administrative team meetings, because more than one administrator may have visited the same teacher in the same day and both have

different views of what was accomplished in the classroom because the focus of the individual administrator was on two different components. The POL's set expectations for administration as far as what should be the focus of every walk through.

Walkthrough Observation Tool.

The Walkthrough Observation Tool, developed by the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania, is a 14-step process that guides the structure and protocol for data collection during observations (Graf & Werlinich, 2002). The 14 steps are:

1. Conduct a preliminary walkthrough to gather baseline data. Preliminary walkthroughs help principals learn more about the students and teacher instructional practices.
2. Conduct a preliminary meeting with staff. During this meeting, the principal must set clear expectations for the walkthrough.
3. Set guidelines for professional behavior. This includes the principal's expectations of the staff, confidentiality, and remaining nonjudgmental or negative comments.
4. Establish a focus for the walkthroughs. Principals and teachers work together to identify teaching strategies that can be implemented in classrooms.
5. Align the teaching strategies noted during the observations with district and state standards. Curriculum gaps should also be noted.
6. Create an agenda for the walkthrough and communicate it to the staff. Observers should know exactly what to look for and should be informed in advance of the walkthrough.
7. Identify the data that will be collected during the walkthrough. Data can include student work, learner objectives, classroom management, materials and resources, and physical arrangement of the room.
8. Collect the data.

9. Observe student work and student behaviors. Observers may also converse with students to get more information about instructional practices.

10. Validate effective teaching.

11. Debrief with teachers. Providing feedback to teachers and students can help to validate effective teaching.

12. Debrief with staff. Debriefing encourages collegiality and a professional learning community and also validates effective teaching.

13. Coach and engage teachers in discussion about effective teaching.

14. Make the walkthrough part of the school culture. Consistent walkthroughs are important to the using walkthrough observation as improvement tools (Graf & Werlinich, 2002).

Keruskin (2005) and Rossi (2007) both conducted qualitative studies in schools that used perceptions of principals and teachers to determine the impact of classroom walkthroughs on student learning and achievement. Both researchers studied schools that used the Walkthrough Observation Tool. Keruskin (2005) studied high school principals who used the Walkthrough Observation Tool and Rossi (2007) studied elementary principals.

Keruskin's (2005) study took place at five high schools in a Virginia school district. One principal from each school ($n = 5$) who had been trained to use the Walkthrough Observation Tool and five teachers from each school ($n = 25$) participated. At the time the study took place, the Walkthrough Observation Tool was in use for three years at all five high schools. The number of walkthroughs conducted during a year varied among the schools from weekly to monthly to once a quarter. Each classroom observation took from five to fifteen minutes. Common processes included staff members collectively deciding on the instructional practices and strategies observed during the walkthrough, sharing observables/look-fors with entire staff,

and providing feedback to staff following each walkthrough. Observers looked for instructional strategies that enhanced student engagement and higher-order thinking skills, written objectives or measurable goals, clear expectations, use of technology, and differentiated instruction.

Walkthroughs were conducted by administrators, lead teachers, and teachers. Principals used various forms of feedback, including giving the walkthrough form to the teacher observed, reporting results of the walkthrough in a weekly newsletter, and conducting small group round table discussions. Each principal emphasized that the walkthrough was not part of the teacher evaluation process (Keruskin, 2005).

Keruskin (2005) conducted one-on-one semi structured interviews with the principals and teachers to gather data about their perceptions of and experience with the Walkthrough Observation Tool and its impact on student achievement. Keruskin identified themes that emerged from the interview results, which he divided into three types: (a) consensus themes - the majority of principals stated the same theme, (b) supported themes - approximately half of the principals stated the same theme, and (c) individual themes -only one or two principals stated the same theme. Consensus themes included ideas to educate the staff about walkthroughs and the walkthrough process; collectively define what staff should look for when conducting walkthroughs and to share with staff; debrief the walkthroughs; principals, lead teachers, and all faculty should conduct walkthroughs; and share results of walkthroughs with all staff. Supported themes included statements regarding student engagement, clear expectations, higher order thinking skills, and written objective or measurable goals. The individual themes included the use of technology, blackboard configuration, active use of knowledge, and differentiated instruction (Keruskin, 2005).

As evidence of student achievement, principals and teachers cited increased Virginia Department of Education Standards of Learning scores, increased classroom test scores and grades, and less student failures (Keruskin, 2005). Principals also noted increased SAT scores and that acquiring full accreditation from the Virginia Department of Education showed that the Walkthrough Observation Tool had a positive effect on student achievement. During school years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 when the Walkthrough Observation Tool was implemented, four of the five high schools were not fully accredited. In school year 2004-2005, the third year of implementation, all five high schools were fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education. Keruskin (2005) concluded that principals and teachers perceived that the use of the Walkthrough Observation Tool affected student achievement.

A limitation of Keruskin's (2005) study was that only twenty teachers were interviewed. According to the school's website, which will not be named here to preserve anonymity, each of the five schools had approximately 100 teachers each, for a total of 500 teachers. Five teachers represent only about 0.1 percent of the total faculty; thus, the generalizability of these teachers' responses to all teachers in the five schools is questionable. In addition, Keruskin did not indicate the criteria used for choosing teachers to participate in the study or the subject matter areas in which they taught.

Rossi's (2007) study replicated Keruskin's (2005), only Rossi focused on elementary schools in Western Pennsylvania. Rossi also compared his results with Keruskin's. Seven elementary school principals from six different school districts participated in the study. Principals had between one and thirteen years of building administrator experience and had been conducting walkthroughs for one to seven years, for an average of three years and two months. Walkthrough time periods lasted between ten and fifteen minutes. Observers looked for time on

task, instructional strategies, curriculum issues, academic rigor, classroom management, student engagement, and clear expectations. Rossi asked principals to nominate teachers to participate in the study. Three of the seven principals nominated teachers, and a total of five teachers from three different schools participated. Rossi used the same semi structured interview process and questions as Keruskin.

Principals reported improvement in test scores, more teacher focus on best practices, increased student time on task, improved quality of student work, and increased dialogue between principal and teachers as evidence that the using the Walkthrough Observation Tool helped increase student achievement. Principals cited factors such as increased teacher time on task, better understanding of curricular gaps and inconsistencies for the principal, better understanding of staff development needs, improved quality of student work, better quality of conversations about instruction, and development of a common language around instruction as evidence that the using the Walkthrough Observation Tool helped to improve teaching. Teacher interviewees indicated that the Walkthrough Observation Tool held them more accountable for their teaching and students' learning. Teachers also expressed the belief that that the principal was more aware of what is occurring in the classroom.

In the comparison of his study to Keruskin's (2005), Rossi (2007) noted that overall, the Walkthrough Observation Tool affected achievement and instruction at both the high school and elementary school levels from both the principal's and teachers' perspectives, although the themes and results were specific to each level. Like Keruskin's study, Rossi's was limited by the fact that only three teachers participated and that many of the statements made by these teachers could not generalize to other teachers. In addition, some statements made by teachers that appeared to refute Rossi's findings were not explored more fully. For example, one teacher

stated: "...I really can't say that it [Walkthrough Observation Tool] has changed what I've done...I really can't say that it has changed me at all" (Rossi, 2007, p. 84). Rossi provided no evidence of exploring this response in more depth. Although Rossi's focus was on elementary schools and the focus of the present study was on middle and high schools, Rossi's study is relevant because implications can be drawn from Rossi's results about the extent to which walkthroughs improve instruction, student achievement, and overall school improvement.

In Park Place School District, the Superintendent and principals conducted a preliminary meeting with teachers and distributed the pamphlet (Appendix D) to set expectations for walkthroughs. The Walkthrough Observation Tool is a formal process unlike the walkthrough process in Park Place. Walkthroughs in Park Place rarely have one specific focus and the data collected is never shared with the entire staff. Creating a more formal process in Park Place may be beneficial to the walkthrough process.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Data collection plays a major role in school improvement efforts (Love, 2009). The idea behind data-driven decision making is that the more information school officials and teachers have about students, the more they are able to focus the schools' effort at improvement into a specific direction (Ancess et al., 2007). According to Ancess et al., schools all over the United States are recognizing the advantage of data-driven decision making based on accurate data collection.

Lewin (1946) viewed action research as a means for educators to gain access to valuable data that they may not otherwise collect and as leading to more formal types of collaboration to test academic theories and hypotheses in real-world contexts. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) described action research as a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social

situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (p. 5).

Action research is comparative research that uses a cycle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action. The cycle of planning involves identifying a problem, formulating questions about the matter or issue to be researched, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data to determine how the results support the research questions. The results are used to develop plans to solve the problem and to “close the loop” (Badham & Sense, 2006). As the term implies, action research is active—it generates knowledge that emerges as data are collected (Badham & Sense).

Hansen and Borden (2006) indicated that in a climate of school reform action research becomes increasingly valuable in providing insights into student developmental and learning processes. Action research also presents significant opportunities for teachers to learn more about themselves and their teaching styles as a result of data yielded from action research (Hansen & Borden, 2006). Action research is an alternative to traditional applied research. The cyclical and participatory nature of action research facilitates organizational change and linking program evaluation results with ongoing improvements. Action research allows a higher level of collaboration among colleagues than more traditional models. While producing data from the action research approach does not mean that recipients will use the information effectively to solve problems or develop appropriate programs and services, the action research model provides a useful framework for planning and implementing successful participatory program evaluations and, from a broader perspective, can prompt the interaction and dialogue necessary for overall change (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

Seo (2003) identified three barriers to action research and thus to learning and change: emotional, political, and managerial. Role ambiguity and work pressures, as well as individual underlying values and assumptions, may create emotional barriers. Political coalitions can inhibit collaboration at the organizational level learning unless individuals have a clear understanding of the organization's political dynamics and recognize their influence on change. Managerial barriers may be imposed by the larger socioeconomic environment and result in pressure for or control of leaders. To overcome emotional barriers, Seo recommended that win-win approaches be taken initially to solve problems and create a comfort level for change; later, deeper probing should be done to discover underlying values and assumptions that may be inhibiting change. To overcome political barriers, participants must recognize and use political dynamics in their discussions and actions. To overcome managerial barriers, Seo recommended using outside consultants to provide objectivity and facilitate change based on external realities.

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) resulted in a shift in focus in school communities across the United States toward meeting certain performance and assessment standards. Data-driven decision-making is part of this movement to assess students on a regular basis. Data are used to compare test scores across schools, districts, and states (Ancess et al., 2007). Marsh et al. (2006) described research conducted by the Rand Corporation that examined data-driven decision making policies and practices in large representative samples of educators at the district, school, and classroom levels. Marsh et al. found that in several districts, administrators used data gathered in learning walkthroughs to determine whether teachers and principals were implementing district policies such as district-mandated curriculum guides. They also found that test results were commonly used to identify students in need of interventions and support. In their research project Mullins and Williams (2007) identified what makes a

successful public, private, parochial, or charter school in thirteen schools in Cleveland, Ohio. At several schools (the authors did not specify how many, however), learning walkthroughs were used in which all members of the school community, including teachers, the principal, and union representatives, visited teachers' classrooms and provided immediate feedback to help strengthen teaching practices.

Simply implementing walkthroughs as a means for school improvement and enhancing student achievement does not guarantee success; benchmarking and metrics should be used as part of or as a result of the walkthrough process to determine in what areas improvements in teaching, learning, and student achievement can be made (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008).

Summary

Chapter II reviewed the literature regarding walkthroughs. There are several definitions of walkthroughs, which are defined in terms of teacher classroom and instructional practices, instructional leadership, and data gathering to inform school decision making. The purpose, benefits, and criteria for walkthroughs; issues surrounding the use of walkthroughs; and models of learning walkthroughs were also discussed. Data-driven decision making plays an important role in walkthroughs, as data can provide benchmarking and metrics to indicate in what areas improvements in teaching, learning, and student achievement can be made.

In the present study the focus was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. Specifically, the extent to which walkthroughs improve instruction; the relationship, if any, between walkthroughs and student achievement; and aspects of

walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness for overall school improvement was examined. The literature that was reviewed supported this purpose.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction and Overview

Chapter I highlighted the problem of the study, examining the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to the improvement of instruction; the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers; and their contribution to on-going professional development planning. The literature regarding walkthroughs was reviewed in Chapter II. The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the research methodology that was used in the present study to achieve the study's objectives and to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies that enhance teaching practices?
2. What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement?
3. What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated that would help schools in their overall improvement planning processes?

In the sections that follow an overview of the research design is presented, followed by a description of the data collection and data analysis and synthesis procedures. Ethical considerations for the protection of study participants and procedures for ensuring trustworthiness of data are also discussed.

Research Sample

A purposeful sampling method was utilized to select this study's participants. Purposeful sampling was used to obtain the most information about walkthroughs. This sampling method is the most effective for qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). A purposive sample is a sample selected deliberately and in a nonrandom way to achieve a certain goal (Bodgan & Biklen, 2006; Creswell, 2006). The researcher chose the middle school and high school of Park Place School District because student achievement at these levels is highly analyzed and principals are constantly asked what they are doing to improve student achievement.

Description of the Participants

Participants in this study consisted of building administrators, district supervisors, central office administrators, and teachers. Building administrators have the responsibility to conduct walkthroughs on a regular basis. Between the two schools, there are two principals and five vice principals. There are four district supervisors who are responsible for conducting walkthroughs. District administrators conduct walkthroughs for all grade levels; usually they focus on their designated subject area, however, they are able to go into any classroom. The walkthrough protocol was initiated by central office administrators, the director of curriculum, and the superintendent of schools. There are approximately one hundred sixty teachers working in the middle school and high school who are recipients of walkthroughs conducted by building administration, district supervisors or central administration.

Overview of Information Needed

This study focused on one middle school and one high school located in a suburban community in central New Jersey. In investigating what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that

attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning, three research questions were explored to gather the information needed. The information to answer these questions came from perceptual, demographic and theoretical information. This information includes teachers' perceptions of what an administrator conducting a walkthrough is looking for; central office administrators', building administrators', and supervisors' perceptions of what they need to observe during a walkthrough and how to provide valuable feedback to teachers and an ongoing review of the literature.

Research Design Overview

To collect data pertinent to the purpose of the study—to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning—a mixed methods design was used that included a review of the available literature, survey results, focus group and interview responses. Through the collected data, the problem of this study, which focuses on examining the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to the improvement of instruction; the relationship, if any, between walkthroughs and their impact on student achievement; and their contribution to on-going professional development planning, was examined and the research questions answered.

The mixed methods research design was chosen because it provides a better understanding of the research problem by allowing the researcher to use a variety of instruments to address the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In mixed methods research, qualitative and quantitative research techniques and approaches are exercised. As a result the researcher can use multiple approaches to answer the research questions rather than be limited to

either a qualitative or quantitative approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods research also helps the researcher triangulate data because data are cross-verified from several sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). When data are triangulated, the researcher can better assess the validity and reliability of the results and generalizations made (Creswell, 2007). The objective of qualitative research is to explore in depth a particular topic or phenomenon to find and examine as many details as possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, qualitative researchers are concerned with investigating the complexity, authenticity, context, and shared subjectivity of the researcher and the participants, and accurately describing the meaning of phenomena that take place in natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Unlike pure quantitative research, qualitative action research is not concerned with formulating or testing specific hypotheses; rather, it is more concerned with themes that emerge during the research (Creswell, 2007). Quantitative researchers collect empirical data in numeric form to test hypotheses and validate theoretical relationships (Creswell, 2007). Thus, together qualitative and quantitative data allow the researcher to present a complete picture of the solution.

Data Collection

Survey.

The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) is a common method of gathering data and is often employed to quantify qualitative information such as opinions and attitudes (Babbie, 2007). Survey questions may be Likert-scaled or closed-ended. Survey results can be quantified to provide additional empirical support (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). Surveys have the advantages of economy, speed, minimization of interviewer bias, and anonymity to encourage responses that are more candid (Babbie, 2007).

Teachers were asked to anonymously complete a survey via Survey Monkey. An e-mail invitation with a link to the survey was sent to all middle school and high school teachers. The survey informed questions one, two and three of this study. The survey results were stored, reviewed and analyzed using tools provided by Survey Monkey. The survey does not request any demographic information; therefore the researcher was not able to identify respondents of the survey.

Interviews.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the superintendent of schools, director of curriculum, high school and middle school principals, vice principals and district supervisors to gather data relative to the relationship between walkthroughs and student achievement. Open-ended questions (Appendix B) were used, and each participant was asked the same questions. According to Babbie (2007), this approach is a useful technique for ensuring that consistent results are achieved. The interviews informed research questions one, two and three of this study. An e-mail invitation was sent to building administration, the director of curriculum and the Superintendent. The interviews lasted between twenty minutes to one half hour. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by an on-line transcription service, Verbalink.com for accuracy.

Additionally, the researcher interviewed teachers at the middle school. Teachers were originally asked to participate in a focus group discussion, however due to the lack of participation, the researcher conducted interviews. Three interviews were conducted. The interviews lasted between seven and twelve minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by an online transcription service, Verbalink.com for accuracy.

Flick (2006) indicated that interviews allow the researcher to obtain a full range and depth of information and to develop a relationship with study participants. However, there are disadvantages to interviews that must be noted. Interviews can take much time, can be difficult to analyze and compare, can be costly, and the interviewer can bias the participants' responses.

Focus group.

Focus groups are an effective way to test new ideas. A focus group is a structured discussion consisting of a small group of people (six to ten) who discuss their perceptions, viewpoints, attitudes, or experiences with the guidance of a trained facilitator (Krueger & Casey, 2008). Focus groups are relatively inexpensive, are often conducive to more candid responses, and provide opportunities for participants to build on others' ideas (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2006).

One focus group consisted of high school teachers. The researcher chose to conduct a focus group with teachers to gain more insight on teachers' perceptions about the process since they receive feedback from all levels of administration. Teachers were asked to contact the researcher if they were willing to participate in a focus group discussion. The focus group questions (Appendix C) informed questions one, two and three of the study. The focus group lasted approximately forty-five minutes and was held after school hours in a classroom. The focus group was recorded and transcribed by on line transcription service Verbalink.com for accuracy. The researcher facilitated the discussion, ensuring each participant had an opportunity to respond to the questions, kept discussions on track and monitored time (Stringer, 2008).

Table 4

Triangulation Matrix

Research Question	Data Source 1	Data Source 2	Data Source 3
What is the quality of the classroom walkthrough feedback provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies that enhance teaching practice?	Teacher Survey Questions 2,3,4	School Principals, Vice Principals, Superintendent, Supervisors Director of Curriculum Interviews Questions 1,2	High School Teacher Focus Group Questions 1,2 Middle School Teacher Interviews Questions 1, 2
What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement?	Teacher Survey Questions 5,6,7	School Principals, Vice Principals, Superintendent, Supervisors Director of Curriculum Interviews Questions 3,4	High School Teacher Focus Group Question 3,4 Middle School Teacher Interviews Questions 3, 4
What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated that would help schools in their overall improvement planning processes?	Teacher Survey Question 8,9,10	School Principals, Vice Principals, Superintendent, Supervisors Director of Curriculum Interviews Questions 5 & 6	High School Teacher Focus Group Question 5,6 Middle School Teacher Interviews Questions 5, 6
	Appendix A	Appendix B	Appendix C

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The data analysis method that was used on the data collected from the one-on-one interviews, focus group and surveys was content analysis. The researcher searched for themes and grouped the responses to the open-ended questions into appropriate categories according to types of responses that emerged.

Content analysis methods may be applied to nearly any form of communication; it is assumed that words and phrases mentioned most often reflect the most important concerns Krippendorff (2004) and Babbie (2007) noted that content analysis answers the questions “Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?” (Babbie, 2007, p. 309). Content analysis can also involve the systematic examination of current records or documents as sources of data (Babbie, 2007). This last type of analysis was not the case in the present study, however; data was collected from focus groups and one-on-one interviews of participants.

Content analysis can be a useful technique for allowing researchers to discover and describe the focus of individuals, groups, institutions, or societies (Franzosi, 2008). Content analysis also facilitates making inferences that can be corroborated with other data that have been collected (Babbie, 2007). This understanding is particularly relevant for the present study. The nature of the feedback currently provided to teachers as a result of classroom walkthroughs and the types of classroom walkthrough data that should be collected and communicated to teachers that would enhance student achievement was examined. This study also examined the types of classroom walkthrough data that should be collected that would help schools in their improvement planning processes. The results of the interviews may provide information in response to one aspect from which implications can be drawn about another aspect of walkthroughs.

Krippendorff (2004) listed six questions that must be answered in content analysis:

1. Which data are analyzed?
2. How are they defined?
3. What is the population from which they are drawn?
4. What is the relevant context in which the data are analyzed?
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?
6. What is the target of the inferences? (p. 59)

Content analysis was chosen for this study because it most appropriately addresses the study topics of the nature of the feedback currently provided to teachers as a result of classroom walkthroughs, the types of classroom walkthrough data that should be collected and communicated to teachers that would enhance student achievement, and the types of classroom walkthrough data that should be collected that would help schools in their improvement planning processes. The data in this study came from a focus group, responses to interview questions, and a survey. An important step in analyzing content is to determine the unit of analysis (Babbie, 2007). This study's units of analysis will be the individual participants (i.e., principals, vice principals, and supervisors).

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the use of ethical procedures, the purpose of the research, procedures, and outcomes were explained to the participants. Potential participants received an informed consent form and an explanation in a cover letter that explained the importance of this form via e-mail. An underlying assumption of this study is that the research was conducted in the interest of and for the mutual benefit of both the researcher and the participants.

It was explained to potential participants that they did not need to participate in the study if they did not wish. Even after the study began, a participant was allowed to withdraw at any time. Participants were assured that all information collected in the study was held in the strictest confidence, and that only summary information and quotations (that are not attributed to any one participant by name) were used for analysis. The researcher made a list of all participants' names and assigned a corresponding number to each participant. The participants' names did not appear on the researcher's interview notes; rather, the researcher used the corresponding number to identify the participant. The list of participants and corresponding numbers was kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private office. Data analysis included only summary information and quotations. Participants signed their names on the informed consent form only.

The researcher provided feedback to participants and to other interested parties about the findings. All guidelines required for informed consent and confidentiality were followed. By fully disclosing and explaining the nature of the study, it minimized any potential ethical problems.

The researcher was the only one who had access to the data and who understood which numbers corresponded to which participant. All data was kept in a locked file cabinet in a home office while the study was conducted. This researcher was the only one that had access to this cabinet. Data will remain in the locked cabinet in the researcher's office for three years and then destroyed at the end of the three years.

Trustworthiness of Data

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), interviews that use open-ended questions allow participants to discuss in detail their concerns, issues, and circumstances. However, participants may or may not give an accurate assessment of their beliefs, feelings, attitudes or

behaviors and may answer according to what they believe the researcher wants to hear or respond with neutral answers. Thus, the accuracy of the data collected will depend on the extent to which participants respond honestly and candidly.

Honesty and candor in data collection can be facilitated if the researcher establishes rapport with study participants. The researcher needs to take care to balance rapport; too much or too little rapport may distort participants' responses during the interview process (Seidman, 2006). The researcher made every effort to develop rapport and a trusting relationship with participants to encourage honest and forthright responses. Rapport was established by observing common courtesies such as introducing oneself, sitting after the participant is seated, and making "small talk" about a neutral topic such as the weather or the traffic. Establishing a relaxed and trusting atmosphere made make the interview process go more smoothly (Seidman, 2006).

Validity and trustworthiness of data mean that the data collected give a true measurement or description of the reality experienced by participants (Creswell, 2007). Researchers need to be concerned about two aspects of validity: internal validity of the study and validity of the data.

The classic threats to internal validity of the study include history, maturation of subjects, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, differential selection of subjects, mortality, and selection interactions (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). For this study, the researcher identified the most relevant threats as maturation of subjects and mortality.

The maturation threat may be present in this study. A maturation threat is produced when participants experience internal changes (e.g., physical or psychological), such as fatigue, emotional turmoil, and so on (Punch, 2009). Every effort will be made in this study to minimize the maturation threat by ensuring that participants are adequately rested before the interviews begin. The subject mortality threat may also be present; that is, participants drop out of the study

(Punch, 2009). The researcher recognized that some participants may no longer be interested in participating in the study once it begun or would no longer be available to participate in the study.

Data are valid if the measure used to collect the data actually measures what it sets out to measure. In this study one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants. The validity of the interview questions were verified by several peers and an outside expert to determine if the appropriate questions would achieve the desired results and to modify questions based on their feedback and recommendations.

To ensure the validity of this study, data was triangulated. When researchers triangulate data, they examine the consistency of different data sources from within the same method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). In this study triangulation of data was achieved from the search of relevant literature, one-on-one interviews, survey questions, and focus groups. High school and middle school teachers surveyed, principals, vice principals and central office administration were interviewed. All have differing perspectives on the feedback currently provided to teachers as a result of classroom walkthroughs. They also expressed a variety of opinions on the types of classroom walkthrough data that should be collected and communicated to teachers about student achievement. Different viewpoints were also stated about what types of data would help schools in their improvement planning processes. Participants were asked open-ended questions. Common themes that emerged were identified in the data analysis. The triangulation matrix, found on page fifty nine, illustrates how data was triangulated.

Limitations of the Study

This researcher acknowledges that bias may be present in the research because the researcher is employed at the site where this study took place. Glesne (2006) noted that the

process of choosing what data are to be collected and from which participants often reflects the researcher's values and preferences. According to Babbie (2007), such bias is present in almost every type of similar study, regardless of the topic. While this does not generally pose a problem, there may be limitations to the validity of the study's findings. To minimize bias Glesne suggested that the qualitative researcher repeatedly re-examine the data to make sure that the themes, explanations, and interpretations that emerge make sense.

The findings may not generalize to all middle and high schools because the data collected from this study describes the results from one middle school and one high school in one school district. Another limitation to this study was that there may have been the possibility that participants would have dropped out of the study. The researcher recognized that there may have been participants who lose interest in participating in the study or would no longer be available to participate in the study.

Chapter IV

Presentation of Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. In fulfilling this purpose, the researcher examined (a) the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to improving instruction, (b) the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers and (c) aspects of walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness for overall school improvement.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings obtained through interviews with building level and district administration, teacher interviews, a teacher focus group and a teacher survey. The data collection methods were chosen to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies that enhance teaching practices?
2. What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement?
3. What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated that would help schools in their overall improvement planning processes?

The data collected will guide district leaders in the overall improvement of the school, professional development planning and how to better assist teachers for the attainment of improved student learning. The results of this study will determine if any changes need to be made to enhance the classroom walkthrough process.

Study Participation

Teacher survey.

Teachers were asked to complete a survey anonymously via Survey Monkey (Appendix A). An e-mail invitation was sent to one hundred sixty teachers on January 28, 2013. The survey was available for one month. Teacher participation was encouraged via a reminder e-mail sent one week following the original request. Supervisors were asked to remind staff about the survey during the monthly department meeting. The teacher survey had approximately a 33% completion rate from middle school teachers and a 40% completion rate from high school teachers (See Table 5).

Table 5

Survey Rate of Participation

	Invited	Responded	Response Rate
Middle School Teachers	59	20	33.8%
High School Teachers	110	45	40.9%

Interviews.

The researcher conducted interviews with the superintendent of school, director of curriculum, district supervisors, middle school principal, high school principal, middle school vice principal and high school vice principals. An e-mail invitation to participate in the study was

sent to all interview candidates on January 18, 2013 (Appendix B). Eleven administrators were invited to participate in the interview and ten agreed to participate in the interview, a 91% participation rate (See Table 6).

Table 6

Interview Rate of Participation

	Invited	Responded	Response Rate
Administration	11	10	91%

Focus groups.

In the original design of the study, the researcher intended to conduct two focus groups, one with middle school teachers and another with high school teachers. However, due to the lack of participation, the researcher was unable to conduct a focus group at the middle school. At the high school, eight teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group. The researcher obtained permission from the building principal and department supervisor to conduct the focus group in lieu of the monthly department meeting. The focus group was at held on February 13, 2013, for approximately forty-five minutes. Of the eight volunteers, six participated in the focus groups, a 75% participation rate.

Since the researcher could not get enough teachers from the middle school to form a focus group, a decision was made to conduct teacher interviews. The researcher desired to obtain some qualitative data from this group of teachers. Consequently, three of the twenty from the survey respondents volunteered to be interviewed. The same questions that were used in the teacher focus group (Appendix C) were asked. Although this number only represents 15% of the survey respondents, the attempt to secure additional qualitative feedback appeared to be worth

the time and the effort. Since there were a small number of teachers from the middle school, the researcher did not differentiate between the middle school teachers and the high school teachers when presenting the data.

Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative data were gathered for this study in the form of one-on-one interviews with the superintendent of schools, director of curriculum, high school and middle school principals, vice principals and district supervisors; a teacher focus group consisting of high school teachers and interviews with middle school teachers. Data were analyzed using content analysis whereby the researcher searched for themes and grouped the responses into appropriate categories according to types of responses and answers to the research questions. These patterns helped to inform the findings and support them. An outside reader who was not a participant in the study read the data and did additional coding to ensure inter-rater reliability. This reader found the same codes and patterns as the researcher, demonstrating reliability of the results.

Quantitative data were gathered from surveys of 66 teachers and were analyzed using descriptive analysis. In descriptive analysis, the major emphasis is on determining the frequency with which something occurs; variables are not manipulated nor are causal relationships between events established (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Rather, the data collected are organized, tabulated, and described quantitatively by providing the number of times a particular response is made on the questionnaire and the percentages that emerged are also highlighted. Insights were also gleaned from relationships between and among the data responses. Conclusions and interpretations regarding the data were also made.

Findings

The qualitative and quantitative findings given in this section are organized by research

question. Following the explanation of the relevance of each research question, there is a matrix giving the data that is associated with the question. The qualitative findings are supported with quotations from participants. In addition the triangulation of data supports the qualitative findings. Using a triangulation matrix supports the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. The quantitative results are displayed in figures 1-9. Each section concludes with a summary.

Research question one. What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies to enhance teaching practice?

Research question one was designed to gather data to determine if teachers were receiving feedback and if the feedback was used to improve instructional practices. Research question one also sought to identify if a walkthrough should be focused solely on instructional strategies.

Data sources for this research question were described in the methodology section of this study and included both quantitative data from the teacher survey results, and qualitative data collected from administrative interviews, one teacher focus group and teacher interviews. Table 7 lists the questions that align to each data source.

Table 7

Data Sources: Research Question One

Instrument	Question Number
Teacher Survey	2,3,4
Administrative Interviews	1, 2
Teacher Focus Group	1, 2
Teacher Interviews	1, 2

Finding one.

Research participants indicated feedback currently provided to teachers was inconsistent and sporadic. Participants also indicated that when feedback was provided it was minimal and did not impact teacher reflective practice. This finding was supported by data from the administrative interview questions 1 and 2, teacher survey questions 2, 3 and 4, a focus group questions 1 and 2 and teacher interview questions 1 and 2.

Survey data results.

In terms of the quantitative data, the responses from survey question 2, *The administration has explained the purpose of the classroom walkthrough*, survey question 3, *The feedback I have received has helped me improve my instruction*, addressed research question 1. As figure 1 illustrates, the majority of respondents either agreed, 84.9% with survey question 2 or disagreed, 15%. Based on the results on this question, teachers have a clear understanding of the purpose of classroom walkthroughs. Focus group and interview responses support this result.

Figure 2 shows, the majority of respondents either agreed, 59% or disagreed, 41% with survey question 3. The survey results are inconsistent with the focus group and teacher interview results. Teachers who participated in the focus group and interview stated that the feedback they received did not impact their instruction. Administrative interview results showed that administration had mixed feelings about the feedback provided to teachers.

Survey results indicate that teachers have an understanding of the purpose of walkthroughs. The results also indicate that teachers did not consistently receive feedback that helped improve their reflective practice.

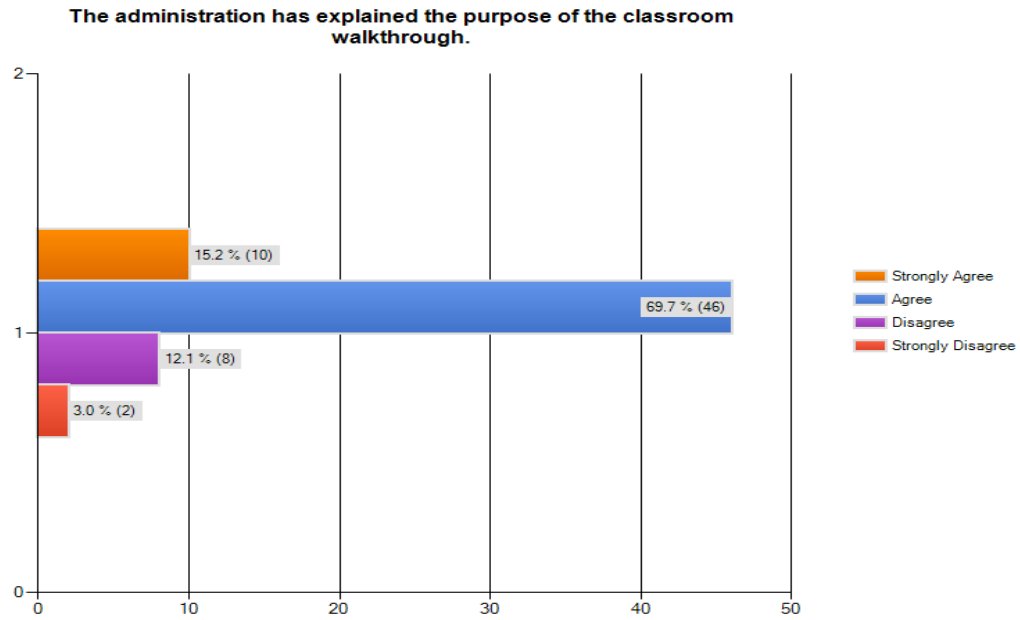


Figure 1. Teacher Survey Question 2

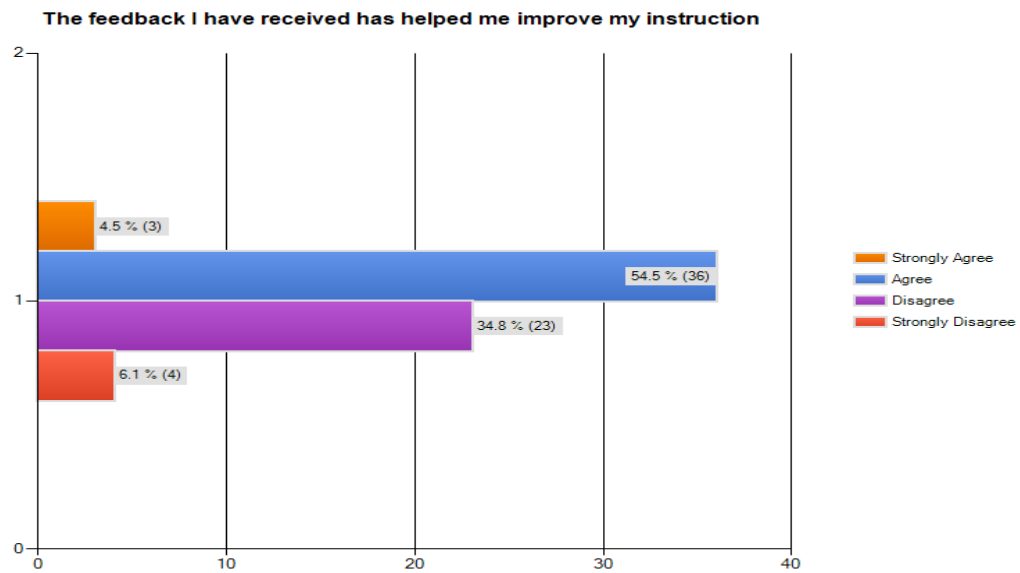


Figure 2. Teacher Survey Question 3

Administrative interviews results.

The superintendent of schools, director of curriculum, district supervisors, middle school principal, high school principal, middle school vice principal and high school vice principals

interviews provided insight on the types of feedback provided to teachers. The first part of interview question one asked interviewees to share their beliefs about the quality of walkthrough feedback provided to teachers. Responses in the administrative interviews were that feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies was “fair”, “sporadic”, “both good and bad”, “inconsistent”, “quality”, and “good.” One respondent explained, “I think, overall, the quality of our walkthrough feedback is fair, and I rate that because I don’t know if we’ve been able to scratch the surface of really entering to some pointed conversation that is going to cause the teacher to reflect and perhaps change practice.” There was agreement amongst respondents that feedback is usually “very nice”, “positive” and “lacks criticism.”

One respondent indicated that there was a lack of expectations set for administrators, “I don’t think there’s a clear expectation of exactly what is supposed to be said to teachers or not said to be teachers. I think every administrator does it their own way. I think that often times, some administrators are not providing teachers with any feedback.” Other respondents agreed that the feedback this year was more consistent than in years past. Respondents attributed this to the weekly meetings with central administration. Supporting statements are listed below:

I don’t believe that the feedback that you give teachers should just be on the positive things you see.

You have to be able to look at the whole picture, and you need to be able to provide feedback in areas that you feel need improvement. And you also need to provide feedback on what you see that’s working, and that’s hard for some people. They don’t like to be negative, and it’s not a matter of being- I shouldn’t say negative- but in the spirit of feedback, it has to be constructive criticism.

I feel that the quality of walkthrough feedback provided to teachers should be high quality, very specific in content, and what the teacher's strengths and weaknesses are in that particular lesson observed. Teacher method of instruction, the level of the learning environment, positive or negative, interactive or non-interactive, and the effect that the lesson has on the students.

Focus group results.

The focus group provided further evidence about the lack of quality feedback provided to teachers. Focus group question one asked teachers to respond directly on the quality of feedback received. Participants identified feedback as "positive", "detailed", "sporadic", "an after-thought", and "general." All participants agreed that they do not get feedback on a consistent basis and if they do get an e-mail it says, "Yes, I dropped in and I saw you teach." One participant stated that they consistently received detailed feedback from one administrator; however, this administrator was sporadic in their walkthroughs. Teachers in this group were eager for feedback.

One respondent stated, "It doesn't faze me, but not having that- you get used to getting that e-mail, and then when you see someone come through, you're almost waiting for that e-mail, you don't get it and it's not that I care, but you almost feel like, was it not worth it? Why walk through if you're not going to give feedback?"

There are some administrators that I never get any feedback from. ... is always going to send out a note. It's not positive, it's not negative, it's just I was here, that's it.

Teacher interviews.

Teachers who were interviewed were asked the same questions as the teacher focus group. Similar responses emerged from the interview. Teachers identified feedback as “superficial”, “sporadic” and “trivial.” They emphasized that feedback is sporadic, and it generally does not contain any information that they would consider useful enough to encourage a change in classroom practice. Teachers agreed that more specificity would be appreciated. Participants indicated that the feedback they received often left out how to improve instruction or how to change instructional practices. Supporting statements are listed below:

Sometimes I get an e-mail that just lists what I did and offers a minor suggestion such as increase wait time.

An e-mail restating my lesson with great job attached at the end is useless. It's exactly what I already know. I want more in depth feedback.

I feel that the feedback is sporadic, and it generally doesn't contain any information that I would consider useful enough to encourage me to change my practice.

Summary.

Finding one, *research participants indicated feedback currently provided to teachers was inconsistent and sporadic. Participants also indicated that when feedback was provided it was*

minimal and does not impact teacher reflective practice, was supported by data from the administrative interview questions 1 and 2, teacher survey questions 2, 3 and 4, focus group questions 1 and 2 and teacher interview questions 1 and 2. Teachers responded very positively to survey question 2. 85% of the respondents indicated that they have a clear understanding of the purpose for conducting walkthroughs. Teachers were almost split for survey questions 3, 59% of teachers agreed that the feedback they received was helpful, whereas 41% of teachers disagreed. The response to this survey question was inconsistent to the qualitative data collected from the teacher interviews and focus groups. This leads the researcher to believe that there is a general disconnect between the teachers and administration. Teachers in the focus group had mostly negative responses to question 1. Teacher interview participants also gave negative responses to interview question 1. The responses to question 1 of the administrative interviews were mixed.

Finding Two.

Teachers and administration would prefer more structure and a clear focus to the walkthrough process. Focused walkthroughs provide a better framework for feedback and provide teachers with an expectation. Support for this finding is reflected in all data sources: administrative interview questions 1 and 2, teacher interview questions 1 and 2, focus group questions 1 and 2, and the teacher survey questions 4.

Survey data.

Survey question 4, *To enhance their quality what should be the focus of classroom walkthroughs in our school*, addressed research question 1. Teachers were provided seven areas of focus and were able to provide another focus if the options available did not meet their needs. Three out of seven areas of focus were chosen the most. The top three selections were teacher

instructional practice, 80%, student behavior and learning activities, 64%, and classroom management, 63% (see Figure 3). The top three selections have a classroom focus. A possible conclusion from this data is that teachers were interested in getting feedback that enhances their teaching practice and that impacts student achievement. Administrative interviews, focus group responses and teacher interview responses all concur that a comprehensive classroom focused walkthrough is necessary.

Teachers who selected other, 7%, offered the following areas of focus: learning environment, questioning skills, co-teaching, formative assessment and lesson pacing. At the end of the survey respondents had the opportunity to provide additional comments. One respondent wrote, “It would be difficult to focus on any one of the above considering the teacher may not be doing that particular focus.” Another respondent wrote, “a focused walkthrough would be beneficial, sometimes I don’t know what the administrator is looking for.” The last comment stated, “A focus is great, but teachers should decide what the focus should be, use our PIP’s to guide the walkthrough.”

Survey results indicate that creating a focus for classroom walkthroughs would be received positively by teachers and administrations.

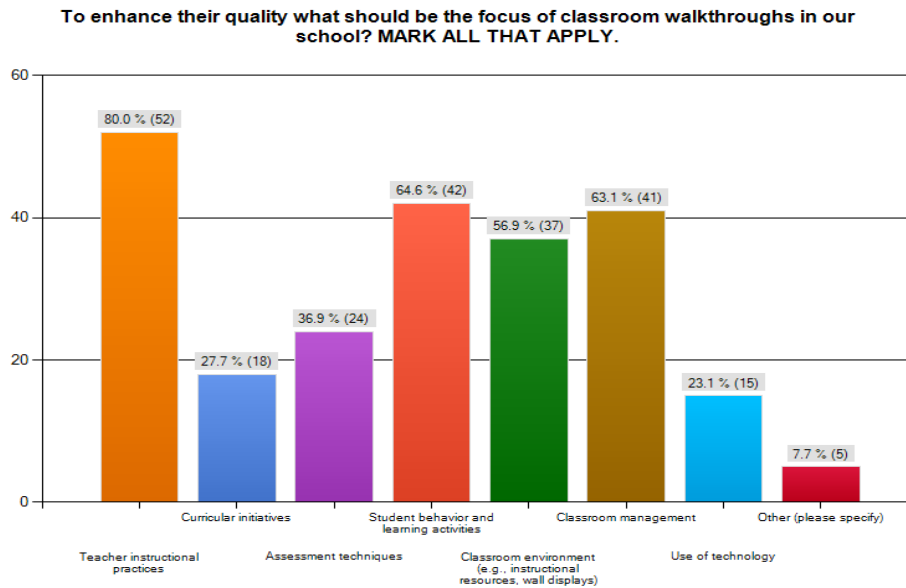


Figure 3. Teacher Survey Question 4

Administrative interviews.

Further support of this finding was reflected in administrative responses to part two of interview question 1, *What type of data do you believe should be collected about teachers' overall performance in the classroom? Overall performance relates to all aspects of classroom management, preparation and the classroom environment.* Most participants agreed that they often decide on a walkthrough focus; however it often is not shared with the staff. One participant stated, "I look for classroom management, learning strategies, level of questioning, and quality of questioning and level of student engagement." Several participants suggested that moving forward the walkthroughs should focus on the seven performance standards from the new Stronge Evaluation system. One participant mentioned that, "it would be easier to give feedback if I had a focus." Supporting statements are listed below:

Walkthroughs should be focused on a very specific aspect of a lesson.

While I know that it's a union issue, I believe probably the best way to provide feedback for a learning walk would have been through a standard form.

It would be interesting to do data to start your learning walks on a particular day with a certain focus. For example, if the focus is higher order questioning, the focus is classroom management, then coming back and doing a quick data log of what you had seen.

Focus group results

The focus group responses provide further support for this finding. Participants agree that a focus would be "fair" and give teachers "solid expectations." One participant stated, "Sometimes I wonder what you are looking for?" One participant disagreed stating, "I assumed walkthroughs were for management, because you can't really get an idea of teaching style...you only see five minutes." Participants also noted that a focused walkthrough would help teachers work collaboratively. Teachers expressed a desire to know what exactly administration wanted to see during a walkthrough. All participants agreed that it would increase the meaning and value of walkthroughs to have a focus.

A walkthrough is a snippet of my lesson, my teaching style. If I need improvement in an area such as transitions, then an administrator can suggest I visit the class of Ms. Doe to watch her transitions.

A focus would give us a target, something to strive for. If I knew that questioning was a focus I would invite my administrator in to see great questioning.

Focused walkthroughs would help give better feedback because the administrator would only have to look for one thing.

Summary.

Finding two, *teachers and administration would prefer more structure and a clear focus to the walkthrough process. Focused walkthroughs provide more structure for feedback and provide teachers with an expectation*, was supported in all data sources: administrative interview questions 1 and 2, teacher interview questions 1 and 2, focus group questions 1 and 2, and the teacher survey questions 4. Teacher responses were positive for survey question 4. Teachers' responses were based on classroom practices. These results show that teachers are interested in the feedback provided after classroom walkthroughs. Establishing a focus for walkthroughs would enhance the practice. Administrative interview responses echoed the responses of the focus group and teacher interviews. Establishing a focus would be to the benefit of the administration and teachers. A focus would create a frame of reference and set clear expectations for teachers.

Research question 2. What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement?

This question was designed to learn more about what kinds of data should be collected that would assist in improving student achievement, how to communicate the data to teachers, and what impact, if any, does administration have on student achievement.

Data sources for this research question included both quantitative data from the teacher survey results, and qualitative data collected from administrative interviews, one teacher focus group and teacher interviews. Table 8 lists the questions that correlate to each data source.

Table 8

Data Sources: Research Question Two

Instrument	Question Number
Teacher Survey	5,6,7
Administrative Interviews	3,4
Teacher Focus Group	3,4
Teacher Interviews	3,4

Finding three.

Research participants indicated that walkthrough data should be collected, tabulated and shared with the faculty. Teachers prefer e-mail, or an in person conversation to receive feedback. Support for this finding is reflected in administrative interview questions 3 and 4, survey questions 5, 6 and 7, focus group questions 3 and 4 and teacher interview questions 3 and 4.

Survey results.

According to the results of survey question 5, *I have received feedback that has assisted my efforts to impact student learning* (See Figure 4), the majority of respondents agreed, 58.4% whereas 41% disagreed. Again, these survey results are inconsistent with focus group and teacher interview responses. Overall, teachers in Park Place school district have not received feedback that impacts student learning.

The results of survey question 6, *How would you prefer that feedback be shared so that it might better assist your focus on fostering student understanding* indicated that teachers prefer to receive feedback either face to face, nearly 71% or via e-mail/ handwritten note, 69% (See Figure 5). Eleven teachers, approximately 16.9% indicated they prefer feedback left on the desk as the observer departs (See Figure 5). These results are consistent with focus group and teacher

interview responses. Overall, teachers prefer personal contact as a means to receive feedback. This shows teachers are willing to have meaningful dialogue in reference to student learning and teacher practices.

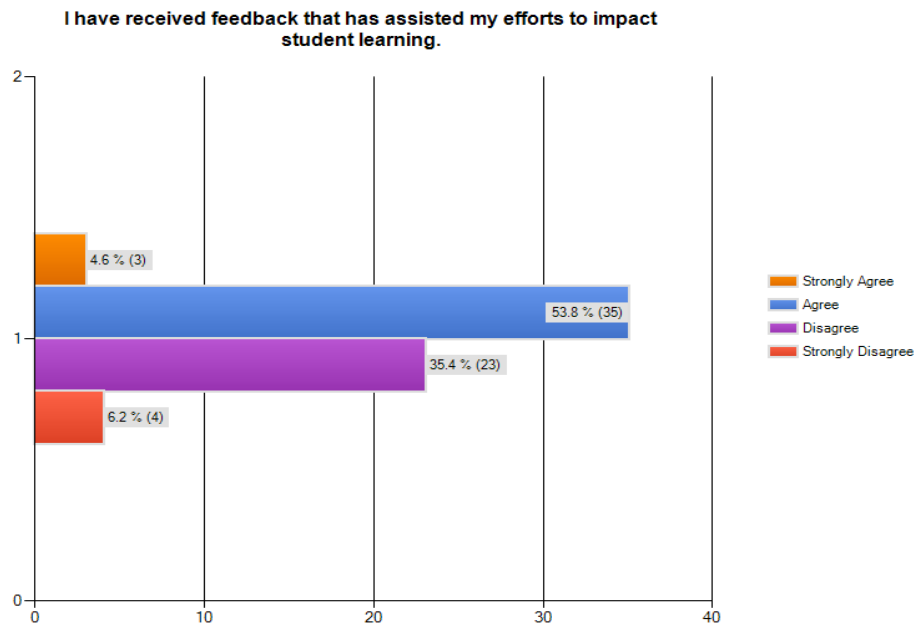


Figure 4. Teacher survey question 5

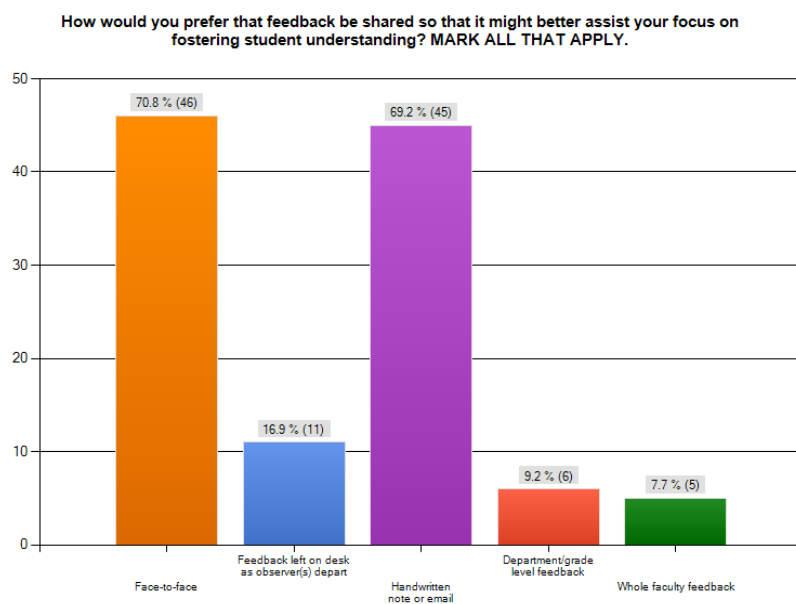


Figure 5. Teacher survey question 6

Focus group results.

Based on the focus group teachers' remarks, teachers both welcome and expect feedback on their instructional abilities to help their students achieve. As these teachers put it, "when it's detailed, I feel like the walkthrough was actually worth it." Teachers stated that when they receive what they consider valuable feedback they are more likely to share it with a trusted colleague for additional feedback, support or suggestions. Teachers in the focus group were curious to know about what administration is seeing in the walkthroughs and agreed that sharing walkthrough data, in any form would be a valuable addition to the monthly faculty meetings. Using the data in monthly professional learning community meetings or department meetings would also be helpful and perhaps more manageable. It was suggested that administration send a monthly e-mail with the data for use in smaller meetings. Teachers in the focus groups expressed a preference for documented feedback, specifically e-mail or paper documentation. They linked the need or preference for documentation to the new evaluation system. Supporting statements are listed below:

Walkthrough data would complement the work we are already doing in our PLC's.

Sharing data with staff would help us see the bigger picture and help us see learn more about what everyone else is doing. We have little pockets of it, but rare.

Administrator interviews.

Administrators had much to say about the kinds of data that should be collected and how it should be communicated to teachers. Overall, administrators believed that data on teacher questioning techniques, quality of student feedback, demonstrations of having high expectations for students, level of interactivity in the classroom, teachers' method of instruction, adherence to performance standards, and level of student engagement should be collected. Administrators

responded that the data communicated to teachers should be “specific”, “instructionally-based”, “show trends”, and should be communicated via “feedback conferences or meetings.” Several administrators did not think sharing walkthrough data at faculty meetings would be beneficial for staff, and some voiced concerns about how to share qualitative data without revealing teacher identity. Sharing data, however, on repeated behaviors that reflected good practice or that indicated some potential need for improvement could be helpful at faculty meetings.

Administration stated that the intention is always to provide meaningful feedback, but some admitted that at times it becomes challenging to send a quick message to acknowledge the walkthrough. This difficulty was attributed to time constraints within the day of the administrator, parent meetings, student conduct, paperwork and meeting requirements were all listed as reasons for not providing feedback for every walkthrough. Overall, the group would prefer holding conferences instead of e-mails. Supporting responses are listed below:

I also think it’s really important that we have some data in some way to show that our teachers’ expectations to our children are higher. You know something as simple as questioning techniques. When we’re in a classroom, we should be counting how many questions they’re asking, which of these are higher order thinking skills, and which are not. That’s great data. I think that when you look at their lesson plans and what their objectives are, are their objectives on the higher order of Bloom’s taxonomy or on the lower order?

“ ...is the teacher meeting the needs of the children? Is she varying her instructional strategies? That could definitely have an effect on the effectiveness of what's going on in the classroom and you can address, then, some of the student needs and improve achievement.

Did the students listen to a lesson, or did they sit and learn something new about the subject, or expanded their knowledge and built on their skills?”

I think the walkthrough feedback should be specific. It should focus on one of the seven performance standards that we're currently looking at based on our new evaluation tool. Using the information in that way the teachers can use something to help drive the instruction or improve their practice. The data that's collected should be data that speaks to how kids learn.

I think you need to chart the data collected, I would say, over a week at a time, I might be visiting 20 classrooms. I should be collecting the data and organizing it in some fashion so that I can see what my teachers' strengths and what my teachers' weaknesses are.

Walkthrough data should be used to assist student achievement by looking for trends. Looking to seeing what is throughout the building in terms of how instruction is being delivered. When we began to look at the different strategies that teachers are using, start coupling them with students teachers with strengths, discipline or, one strength in one area of instruction, they may be able to use that strength to assist or turnkey a teacher who is struggling in that area. For instance, if teacher A has been very successful in using centers and stations to supplement or reinforce or instruct students, and we know that teacher A is very good at it, and the data speaks to that, then certainly we can use that teacher as either to turnkey another teacher or allow opportunities for teachers who are struggling in this area to watch her perform her lessons in class.

Teacher interviews.

Data collected from teacher interviews also support this finding. Teachers stated, “If data is going to be collected, it should be shared. I’d like to know how many students are sent out of class- is it the same teacher sending students out, how often are the lessons observed the same as what is written in the lesson plan.” Teachers also agreed that data collected should be shared with staff. One teacher stated, “I think the principal should present the data using graphs and present to the staff at a faculty meeting so that we can see where we stand as a school.” Teachers who were interviewed stated, “the quality of the feedback for the walkthroughs would be better if the principal held feedback conferences with teachers.” To summarize, teachers communicated that they wanted data to be shared with the staff for the overall improvement of the school. One teacher stated, “it also gives us an idea of who is doing a really good job with certain things so they can share those best practices with other teachers.

Summary.

Finding three, *research participants indicated that walkthrough data should be collected, tabulated and shared with the faculty. Teachers prefer e-mail, or an in person conversation to receive feedback*, was supported administrative interview questions 3 and 4, survey questions 5 and 6, focus group questions 3 and 4 and teacher interview questions 3 and 4.

Teacher responses were positive for survey questions 5 and 6. Survey results indicated that nearly 71% of respondents prefer personal contact. Teachers and administration would prefer to have conferences as the means to communicate walkthrough feedback. Administration linked the inability to conduct personal conferences for all walkthrough feedback to time constraints due to paperwork, parent conferences, meetings and other job responsibilities. Administrators also conduct a high volume of walkthroughs on a daily or weekly basis, therefore

sending out e-mails or holding conferences is very difficult. Providing administration with a tablet may assist administrators in providing feedback while conducting the walkthrough.

Overall, teachers would like data to be collected and shared with the faculty.

Administrative interview responses concur with the idea of gathering data but there were mixed responses in reference to how to share the data with the faculty. Teachers and administrators agreed that a focused walkthrough would provide a framework for creating a data collection system that would allow data to be shared with the faculty.

Finding four.

Teachers believe that administrator and student interaction has a positive effect on student achievement and classroom management. Supporting evidence for this finding is reflected in three data sources: teacher survey question 7, focus group question 3 and teacher interview question 3.

Survey data.

In terms of the quantitative data, the responses from survey question 7, *Should observers engage in conversations with students about what they are learning during walkthroughs*, addressed research question two. As figure 6 indicates, the majority of respondents, 57.8% responded “yes.” Participants were given the opportunity to leave additional comments at the end of the survey. Two respondents left comments relating to this question, the comments described negative experiences with student-administrator interaction. Focus group and interview responses concur with survey results. For the most part, teachers had a positive reaction and shared positive experiences relating to student-administrator interaction.

Should observers engage in conversations with students about what they are learning during walkthroughs?

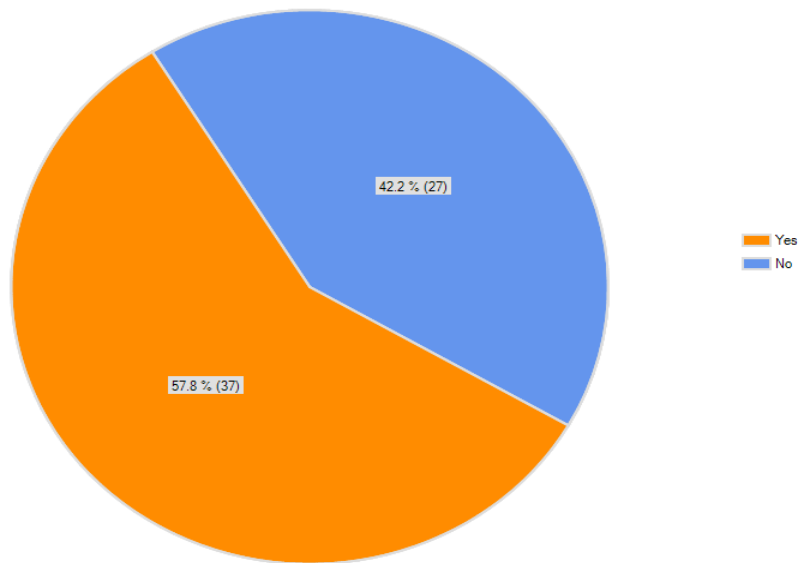


Figure 6. Survey Question 7

Focus group data.

The focus group participants shared conflicting views in relation to this question. One participant rather enjoyed the interaction/participation from the administration, stating, “when the administrator jumps into the lesson, I like that. To me, that’s instructional.” Three participants agreed stating, “it shows involvement”, “it’s positive” and “it makes the principal seem human.” Whereas, the other three participants disagreed stating, “it’s a disruption”, “it unsettles the kids” and “it takes time to refocus students.” One participant stated, “the way I teach, students have to grapple with the information. I don’t just give away answers. Well, during a walkthrough the administrator decides the jump in and shows the class how to solve the problem. It ruined my entire lesson.” However, all participants agreed that a walkthrough from any administrator is a deterrent for student misconduct. One participant suggested administration should speak to students about their progress while conducting a walkthrough.”

Some participants agreed that this could be a distraction, but it would be an efficient way directly impact student learning while conducting a walkthrough.

Teacher interview.

Overall, the data collected from the teacher interviews are supportive of the finding. One teacher stated, “I like when the administration interacts with the class. It shows they are interested in what the students are doing. It takes the pressure off me.” Another teacher stated, “It gives the students the opportunity to interact with administration in a different way, it also helps students work harder.” Teachers stated, “some students want to impress visitors.” Teachers who were interviewed shared the belief that interaction between student and administrator is beneficial to the student and the classroom atmosphere.

Summary.

Finding four, *teachers believe that administrator and student interaction has a positive effect on student achievement and classroom management*, was supported by survey question 7, focus group question 3 and teacher interview question 3. This finding portrayed the student-administrator relationship positively. Teachers appreciate and think students also appreciate the interaction in the classroom. A few teachers stated that the interaction could be a distraction; most of the teachers welcome the interaction. Most notably, improved classroom management was listed as the reason for such a positive correlation. Improved classroom management is attributed to the position of the administrator. Clearly, students understand the role of the administrator and the power that is held with that position.

Research question 3. What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected that would assist teachers and school leaders in their overall improvement planning processes?

This question was designed to learn more about how to better impact the overall improvement planning process for the district and individual schools. It also was designed to create discussion surrounding professional development goals for teachers. Data collection relative to research question three included a teacher survey, a teacher focus group, teacher interviews and administrative interviews.

Table 9

Data Sources: Research Question Three

Instrument	Question Number
Teacher Survey	8,9,10
Administrative Interview:	5,6
Teacher Focus Group	5,6
Teacher Interviews	5,6

Finding five.

Teachers and administrators would like to see data collected that directly impacts student learning, teacher practice and school improvement. Finding five is supported by data from teacher survey questions 8, 9 and 10, focus group questions 5 and 6, teacher interview questions 5 and 6 and administrative interview questions 5 and 6.

Survey data.

Survey question 8 asked, *What kinds of data should be collected that would be helpful to the school's overall improvement planning process* figure 7 shows that the majority of respondents 84%, indicated school culture and environment. School culture reflects the norms that guide approaches to the development of acceptable procedures in relation to school policies, curriculum development and evaluation protocols. After school culture and environment, 65% of

respondents identified student performance and instructional practice as being equally important to the school's improvement process (see Figure 7). The result of this survey question solidifies the interest in having an instructional and student centered focus on classroom walkthroughs. The administrative interviews support this outcome; many stated that an instructional focus would have a positive effect on the impact of classroom walkthroughs.

Survey question 9 asked, *Has the feedback helped you target any of the following district goals*. The majority of the respondents, 62.8%, selected instructional practices as the area most targeted in feedback in relation to district goals (see Figure 8). Student performance was selected second with 41.9%. These selections indicate that the district has emphasized an overall improvement in instructional practice and student performance. However, professional development and curriculum were selected least with 20.9% each. This outcome indicates that there is a strong disconnect with the district's instructional goals and its professional development activities.

Survey question 10 asked, *Has the feedback helped you see the relationship to the scope of the district's overall improvement plan?* "Yes" responses were 35.5%, and "no" responses were 64.5%; four participants did not respond (see Figure 9). This number of "no" responses indicates that there needs to be increased communication with staff regarding the district's overall improvement plan.

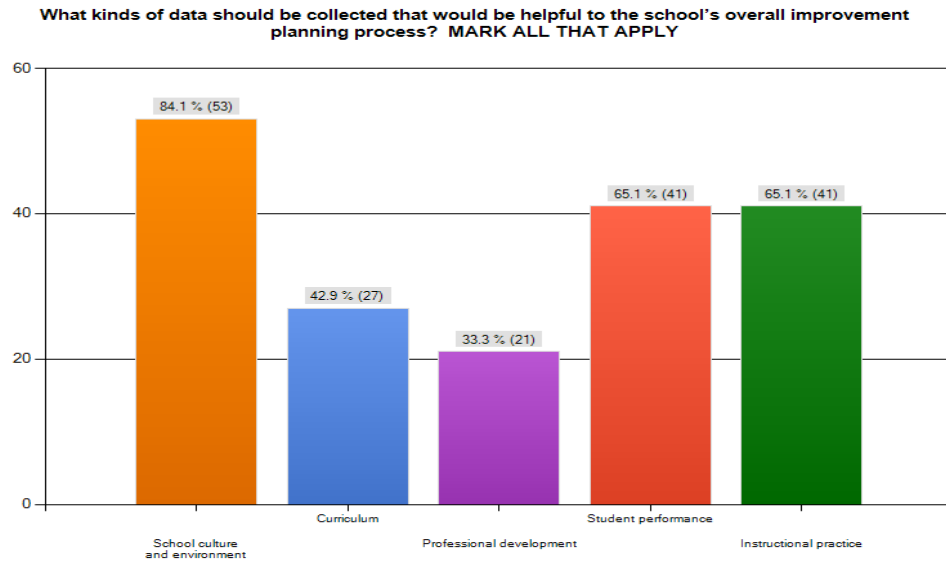


Figure 7. Teacher survey question 8

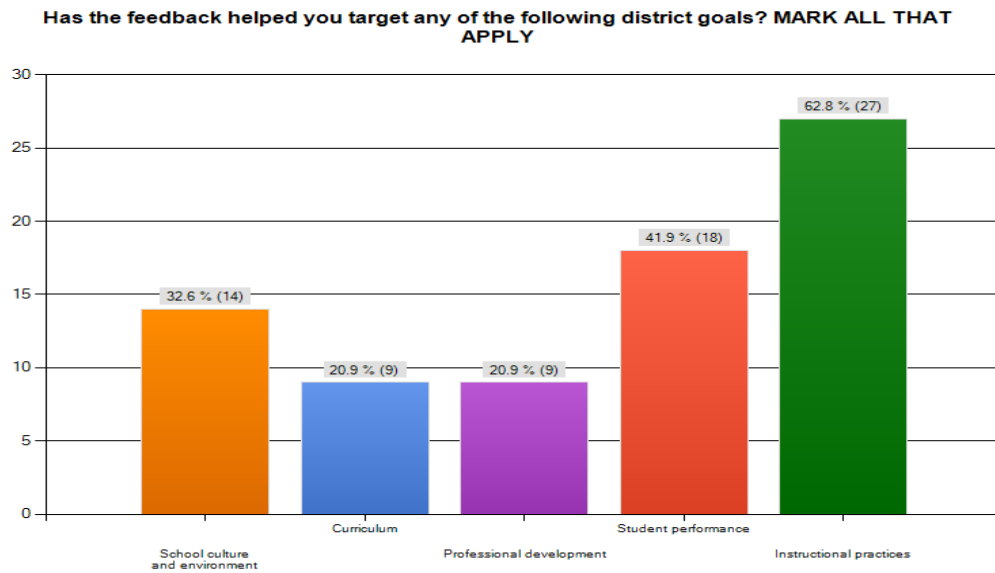


Figure 8. Teacher survey question 9

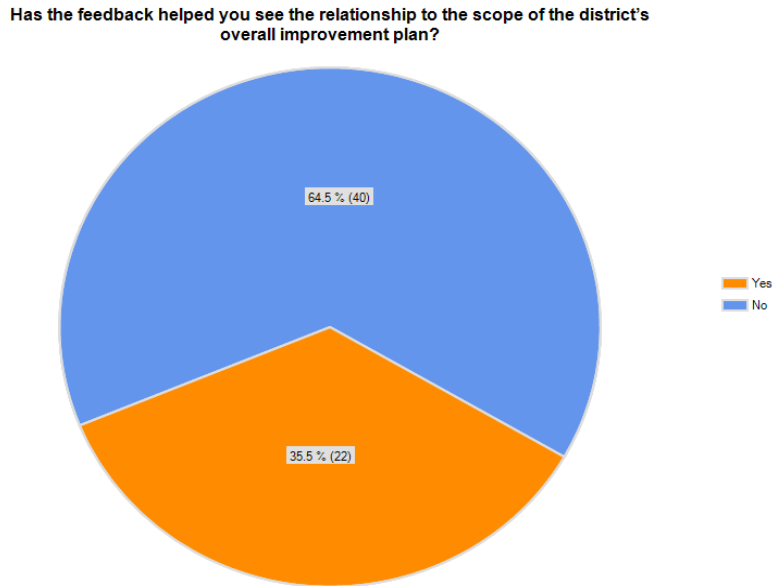


Figure 9. Teacher survey question 10

Administrative interviews.

Support for this finding was reflected in responses to the interview questions.

Administrators had many ideas about the data that should be collected in reference to overall school and district improvement. The responses indicated that data collected should include “type of instructional delivery systems”, “classroom trends”, “specific aspects of lessons”, and “instructional effectiveness.” Supporting statements are listed below:

Other data that should be collected is the type of delivery systems used for instruction – how often are they used in differentiated instruction? How often are they acting as facilitators? How often are they being using direct instruction?

I believe that the quality of walkthrough feedback provided to teachers should be focused on very specific aspects of a lesson that is observed. I think it should be connected to good practice with an identified and understood model for

instruction that the teacher and the supervisor understand and believe is the guiding vision for instruction in the classroom. The type of data that I believe should be collected about teachers should be connected to this instructional model. For specifically how a lesson is planned, how the planning aspects of the lesson are translated into the facilitation of the lesson with the types of activities that are happening in the classroom.

I believe that the administrative feedback given to the teacher is the most important contribution to instructional effectiveness. It is important that we provide positive reinforcement and critical constructive criticism for the teachers who need it.

The data needs to be taken over the course of time with a particular focus on the types of questions that are being asked. That's one major piece that at all times you can gather how the students are being assessed, whether it's the beginning, the middle or the end, so that's the number one thing that can be used. For student achievement, it's a matter – a level of whether the teacher can lead the students to the answer, whether the students can discover the answer on their own, and the process of questioning and leading up to that – definitely the most useful data from the walkthroughs.

We already have the order broken down into segments, professional knowledge, instructional learning, instructional delivery, assessment for learning, and so forth. I believe that we should, as administrators, prioritize the most important segment

and look at our overall notes on the positive and negative feedback that we observed in the classroom, and, based on the data gathered, make a plan for improvement in our weakest areas.

I'd like to see classroom walkthrough data that focuses on content, process, and product. I think those are the three planning areas that a teacher really has to focus on, and then we can map those to outcomes that we're seeing in the classroom. If we're seeing an outcome in a particular area of mastery that is deficient in for example a math area, we would want to look at some data in terms of how is the content being prepared? Is the scope of what's we're asking teachers to teach in the classroom sufficient for kids to master and continue to move and spiral in the area that we're talking about?

Focus group data.

The focus group discussion revealed staff frustration regarding district and school goals. Several teachers were frustrated that they are expected to meet certain goals and yet are not receiving feedback that would help them achieve those goals. Teachers are more than willing to assist in school improvement, but felt there was a lack of direction. Focus group participants noted that they would like to receive feedback that "is meaningful", "directly impacts teaching" and "direct." Supporting statements are listed below:

I need to know exactly what I can do better. Don't be afraid to tell me use this strategy.

Using a standardized form for each walk through would assist in collecting data that can be shared with the entire faculty. Does the administration look for the same thing in every class? If so, how will we ever know?

Teacher interviews.

The data collected from the teacher interviews are supportive of the finding. Teachers participating in the interviews discussed they would like to use walkthrough data to improve their teaching; they stated that they were not currently receiving feedback that would help them improve. One teacher stated, “instead of focusing so much on walkthroughs, look into providing common planning time.” One participant suggested that too much emphasis was being placed on walkthroughs instead of just working with teachers that have high failure rates, discipline problems and multiple parent complaints.

Summary.

Finding five, *teachers and administrators would like to see data collected that directly impacts student learning, teacher practice and school improvement*, was supported by data from teacher survey questions 8, 9 and 10, focus group questions 5 and 6, teacher interview questions 5 and 6 and administrative interview questions 5 and 6. This finding provided additional support for creating a focus for walkthroughs. Teachers and administrations were able to list areas they would like to see data collected. Survey results determined that teachers are interested in data in relation to school culture and environment, instructional practices and student learning.

Administrators indicated that they would like to see data collected on instructional effectiveness, questioning techniques and classroom trends. The focus group and teacher interview responses did not list any specific area for data collection; rather they emphasized receiving feedback that would allow teachers to contribute to school and district goals. Teachers in the focus group and

interview also emphasized sharing data with the staff for everyone's overall professional development.

Finding six.

Both administration and teachers believe that walk through data collected should inform professional development planning. Support for this finding was prevalent in three data sources: administrator interview question 5, focus group question 5, and teacher interview question 5.

Administrative interviews.

All of the administrators shared how they would like to tie walkthrough feedback and discussions directly to professional development. Many mentioned time and central office interference as the main restrictions to planning professional development related directly to the needs of the teachers. One administrator mentioned, "there are so many things going on in the school, I don't see how we maintain one area of focus." Another mentioned, "It's too hard to coordinate with central office, and if I had the extra time, who would present? I'm not an expert in all areas." Supporting statements are listed below:

Professional development should be linked to our needs.

I think the data we should start seeing from our feedback get back to trends – what are some of the things happening on a daily and frequent basis in our walkthroughs not only in that individual classroom, but overall in the entire building. Once the administration starts to hone in on some trends, that's the time for some prescriptive professional development to address some of the needs. I've talked to my administrative staff enough about – it's not about the walk, it's about the talk. And I've been corrected by some of

my administrators who tell me it's really not about the talk, it's about the corrective action. To go do a walkthrough and not have honest open dialogue about it is useless.

It would be interesting to do data to start your learning walks on a particular day with a certain focus. For example, if the focus is higher order questioning, the focus is classroom management, then coming back and doing a quick data log of what you had seen – I think that would be very helpful because that would lead to more focused professional development.

Walkthroughs are little snapshots in time, I think it – you can see patterns in a walkthrough in a building or in a department. You can see that maybe you're seeing too much whole group, maybe you're not seeing enough small group instruction, maybe there's not a lot of class participation – the teacher is constantly talking at the students. Maybe you walk down the hall and all you're hearing are teacher voices as opposed to student voices. Those kind of things then can lead to more professional development, and, again, if teachers would not become so defensive, I think there could be a real dialogue when it comes to walkthroughs.

Walkthrough data that we collect should primarily focus on the seven strands of performance standards and using those strands and performance standards to determine where weaknesses are with individual teachers or collectively and start to build a professional development plan around those same concerns.

Teacher interviews.

Throughout the interviews, teachers expressed the need to revamp the professional development structure for the district. Teachers expressed a strong dislike for the arrangements of the typical professional development day. Teachers shared that they wanted more interactive professional development related to their needs. Supportive comments are listed below:

The data should be used to determine the type of professional development that teachers are in need of. For instance, if effective questioning is a persistent problem among teachers, and they demonstrate that they are not equipped to ask the types of questions that generate discussion and critical thinking skills among students, there should be PD around that issue.

I think you can learn a lot from being in someone's classroom for ten minutes. The idea is that if you go in five classrooms this week, and of those five classrooms, four of them are lecture oriented, then we know that our professional development needs to be on students that are learning. So I think that have you have to take what you see, or probably more importantly, what you're not seeing, and turn that into professional development.

Focus group teachers.

Similar to the interview participants, the teachers perceptions articulated in the focus groups supported the need to design professional development according to the needs of the faculty. Teachers in the focus group stated:

And as far as professional development goes, classroom management, things you see that promote good classroom management would be great, especially for first year teachers or even teachers that are struggling with certain classes or whatever, cause we all have those wonderful moments.

I think any issues that are observed...and they're saying 70 percent of the teachers we see have an issue with this, then that's a way to lead it to professional development, because that has been severely lacking at this school.

Summary.

Finding six, *both administration and teachers believe that walkthrough data collected should inform professional development planning*, was supported by focus group question 5, administrative interview question 5 and teacher interview question 5. This finding indicates that more emphasis needs to be placed on connecting professional development goals directly to teacher needs. Teachers and administrators expressed a need to make adjustments to the current professional development planning strategy. Teachers would like to link their professional development to their professional improvement plans or to the feedback provided during walkthroughs.

Unexpected finding.

Data is not collected on teacher assessments as a method to contribute to student achievement. Administrative interview question 4, teacher focus group question 4 and teacher interview question 4 asked participants to respond to the following question: "What data has been collected on teacher assessments that are indicators of student learning?" A common theme that emerged from the responses was that teacher assessments are not reviewed by the

administrator. Teachers evaluate the data for grading, but it is rarely used to target student growth. Teachers in the focus group discussed the application of the data on their own to improve student learning, but that is never discussed with administration. Teachers who participated in the interview also indicated that such data had never been collected. In the administrative interviews, it was stated that the middle school students are tested twice a year using Learnia software and that teachers must analyze and use the data, however teacher assessments are never reviewed by administration. Formative assessments such as quizzes, presentations, projects and portfolios are rarely commented upon. Teachers agreed that the only assessment that is reviewed by administration is the midterm and final exam, however, they did not know if administration looked at the results of the exams in depth. One teacher stated, “No one has looked at my individual classroom assessments. I am always asked to look at NJASK scores and Learnia, but that is done in a large group.”

Overall, this unexpected finding indicates that greater emphasis needs to be placed on teacher assessments, especially with regard to examining teacher grade and planning books. Both of these references are indicators of a variety of assessments that teachers use.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed method action research study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district’s overall improvement planning. In fulfilling this purpose, the researcher examined (a) the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to improving instruction, (b) the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication

to teachers and (c) aspects of walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness for overall school improvement.

In this chapter the results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses of one-on-one interviews with the superintendent of schools, director of curriculum, high school and middle school principals, vice principals and district supervisors; surveys of teachers a teacher focus group and teacher interviews were discussed and the research questions answered. The results of the data analysis yielded 6 findings and one unanticipated finding. The findings are:

1. Research participants indicated feedback currently provided to teachers is inconsistent and sporadic. Participants also indicated that when feedback is provided it is minimal and does not impact teacher reflective practice.
2. Teachers and administration would prefer more structure and a clear focus to the walkthrough process. Focused walkthroughs provide more structure for feedback and provide teachers with an expectation.
3. Research participants indicated that walkthrough data should be collected, tabulated and shared with the faculty. Teachers prefer e-mail, or an in person conversation to receive feedback.
4. Teachers believe that administrator and student interaction has a positive effect on student achievement and classroom management.
5. Teachers and administrators would like to see data collected that directly impacts student learning, teacher practice and school improvement.
6. Both administration and teachers believe that walkthrough data collected should inform professional development planning.
7. Data is not collected on teacher assessments as a method to contribute to student

achievement.

Chapter V concludes the research study. A summary of the research findings, conclusions and implications are presented. These findings were further analyzed and interpreted within chapter five. Recommendations are provided based on the findings and conclusions and focus on future research.

Chapter V

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

Contemporary thinking in educational research about the relationship between student achievement and the approaches used for teacher evaluation often indicate that a real clear link does not exist. Many have called most of the traditional forms of teacher evaluation, which very often rely on checklists and rating scales, into question. The increasing focus on standards and test-based measures of achievement require that teachers provide effective instruction that meets the needs of individual students. In the process of meeting individual student needs, however, teachers may not be able to take the time to reflect adequately on their instruction and classroom management techniques that enhance student learning. Therefore, systematic observation of teacher performance can aid teachers in providing quality instruction and enhance student learning and achievement (Danielson, 2006; Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

The superintendent, principal, department supervisors or other school administrators may conduct classroom observations (Ziegler, 2006; Zepeda, 2003). One type of systematic observation for informally supervising teachers and observing classroom activities that has become increasingly popular is the classroom walkthrough (Prothero, 2009). Gathering, examining, and analyzing data obtained from walkthroughs can be helpful in examining teaching practices. Assessing student achievement and developing professional development plans that contribute to continuous school improvement can also be derived from walkthrough data.

While walkthroughs can be an effective means of helping teachers understand how instructional practices support student learning and achievement, key issues exist relative to walkthroughs. Some of these concerns relate to the extent to which walkthroughs can improve

instruction, the connection between walkthroughs and student achievement, and aspects of walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness. This study focused on these issues.

This chapter concludes the research study. The finding and interpretations are presented and the research questions of the study are answered. Unexpected findings are addressed. Recommendations based on the findings and recommendations for future study are made.

Findings and Interpretations

The purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. In fulfilling this purpose, the researcher examined (a) the extent to which walkthroughs contribute to improving instruction, (b) the perceptions of teachers about a meaningful data collection process and its communication to teachers and (c) aspects of walkthroughs that should receive the most attention to maximize their effectiveness for overall school improvement.

This study used a mixed method approach with both qualitative and quantitative data sources. To complete this study, the researcher developed a survey to collect quantitative data in reference to teacher's perceptions of classroom walkthroughs. Qualitative data such as interviews and a focus group discussion provided further evidence about the effectiveness of classroom walkthroughs.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies that enhance teaching practices?

2. What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement?
3. What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated that would help schools in their overall improvement planning processes?

The findings presented in chapter four satisfied these research questions. The principle finding in this study revealed that classroom walkthrough, if used correctly, was a meaningful component of the district's evaluation system. This was apparent in all aspects of the data collection process. Teachers at the grade levels studied, grades 7-12, indicated that classroom walkthroughs could contribute to teacher effectiveness, student achievement, professional development and the overall improvement of the school. The workload of the administrator greatly contributed to the depth and frequency of feedback provided to teachers. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze, interpret, and synthesize these findings. This chapter begins with a discussion and interpretation of the findings from each of the research questions of this study, followed by recommendations for the Park Place School District and ideas for further research.

Research question 1.

What is the quality of the feedback currently provided to teachers in relation to instructional strategies that enhance teaching practices? Research question one was designed to gather data to determine if teachers were receiving helpful feedback and if the feedback was used to improve instructional practices. Research question one also sought to identify if a walkthrough should be focused solely on instructional strategies. Data collected in relation to

research question one included a teacher survey, a teacher focus group, teacher interviews and administrative interviews.

Findings one and two focused on the quality and consistency of feedback received by teachers and the structure of walkthroughs. Finding one examined the quality of feedback received by teachers. Teacher survey responses indicated that 59% of teachers agreed that they have received feedback that has helped them improve their instruction. Teacher interviews and focus group discussions revealed that feedback was provided sporadically. Teachers want feedback that helps improve instruction, but they have been receiving feedback that is too general, not specific enough and often were usually positive. Administrators' responses to the quality of feedback provided to teachers were similar to those of teachers. They agreed that the feedback was positive, lacks criticism, and is inconsistent especially in relation to establishing a clear focus for walkthroughs.

The quantitative and qualitative data related to the first finding revealed that most of the teachers in the study have an understanding of the purpose of walkthroughs and believe that feedback should be consistent and more in depth to improve instruction. Finding two addressed the concept of conducting focused walkthroughs. The majority of teachers surveyed reported they would prefer a walkthrough that focused on teacher instructional practice, student behavior and learning activities and classroom management. Focus groups and the teachers interviewed also prefer a focus for the walkthrough, stating it would provide an expectation to what administrators are looking for during a walkthrough. The responses of the participants supported Overstreet's (2006) description of the purpose of walkthroughs; that is, to give and receive evidence-based feedback that focuses on teaching practices and learning activities to improve instructional practice and student learning. Finch (2009) also noted that walkthroughs are a way

to monitor instruction, find out what is happening in classrooms, and to determine if professional development is needed or if professional development initiatives are effective. According to Overstreet, the feedback teachers received from walkthroughs help them develop a more in-depth understanding of teaching and learning.

Administrators agreed that having a focus for the walkthroughs would provide structure for the feedback provided to teachers. For the most part, some administrators create their own focus when conducting walkthroughs and would like to use the performance standards related to the new evaluation system based on the Stronge research as a focus for walkthroughs. The performance standards are professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, professionalism and student learning (Stronge, 2007). As Aness et al. (2007) pointed out, while walkthroughs may form the basis of district-level or school-based instructional supervision to confirm that district initiatives are being properly implemented and to evaluate student progress and teacher needs, the Massachusetts Department of Education (2010) cautioned against school leaders using learning walkthroughs as part of the teacher evaluation process. The purpose of a walkthrough is to offer constructive support (Dexter, 2004; Valli & Buese, 2007). If teachers believe that observers are coming into their classrooms to point out their weaknesses and that these weaknesses will be part of an official evaluation, their anxiety may be heightened, they may feel threatened, and they may not perform optimally (Valli & Buese, 2007).

Finding two also revealed a lack of communication between teachers and administrators. Some administrators have a focus for walkthroughs however; this information has not been shared with teachers. This finding also revealed a lack of communication regarding the expectations for walkthroughs. A possible reason for the lack of sharing is the change in

administration and teaching staff. In the past several years, there have been five different high school principals, two new high school vice principals, and three different middle school principals.

Both of the findings related to research question one showed that teacher participants have an understanding of the purpose of walkthroughs and believe that they are not receiving quality feedback that helps improve their instructional skills. These findings are consistent with findings relative to walkthroughs in the literature. One of the purposes of walkthroughs is for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and quality of learning for students. Several researchers (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008; Protheroe, 2009; Rossi, 2007; Schomburg, 2006; Skretta, 2007) suggested that the superintendent, principal, or administrators be involved in walkthroughs and have a specific plan for conducting the walkthroughs and for collecting and analyzing information gathered from the walkthroughs. Whoever conducts the walkthroughs should determine the purpose and criteria for the walkthrough and provide feedback to individual teachers and staff (Protheroe, 2009). Downey et al. (2004) and Skretta (2007) observed that when both the principal and teacher are involved in a dialogue about instruction and learning in the classroom, teachers are more likely to reflect on their teaching practices, leading to increased student learning. Skretta (2007) stated that effective walkthroughs provide teachers with relevant, real-time information on specific behaviors and level of performance observed by the principal in the classroom.

A solution to the problems of a lack of specificity of feedback and a lack of communication between administrators and teachers is for administrators and teachers to work together to create a walkthrough protocol that emphasizes improvement. Research by Ginsberg & Murphy emphasized the importance of having specific protocols clearly describing what

teachers can expect from a walkthrough (Overstreet, 2006), and where observers provide confidential feedback to teachers based on the protocol after the observations take place (Overstreet, 2006).

Research question 2.

What are the perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be collected and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement? This question was designed to learn more about what kinds of data should be collected that would assist in improving student achievement, how to communicate the data to teachers, and what impact, if any, does administrative feedback have on student achievement. Data collected relative to research question two included a teacher survey, a teacher focus group, teacher interviews and administrative interviews.

Findings three and four focused on the participants' perceptions about how classroom walkthrough data should be used and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement. For finding three, teacher survey responses indicated that 58% of teachers agreed that they have received feedback that has helped them improve student learning. Teacher survey responses also indicated that 71% of teachers preferred to receive feedback face to face, and 69% of teachers preferred to receive feedback by e-mail or by a handwritten note.

Teacher focus group discussions revealed that teachers both welcome and expect detailed feedback on their instructional abilities to help their students achieve. Observers should create an agenda for the walkthrough, communicate it to the staff, know exactly what to look for, and inform staff in advance when the walkthrough will be performed (Graf & Werlinich, 2002).

Further, teachers in this study indicated they are more likely to share the feedback with trusted colleagues and ask for additional feedback. Teachers in the focus group agreed that sharing walkthrough data in any form at monthly faculty meetings, monthly professional learning community meetings, or department meetings would also be helpful and valuable. Teachers in the focus groups expressed a preference for documented feedback, specifically e-mail or paper documentation and linked the need or preference for documentation related to the district pamphlet on walkthroughs and the new evaluation system, based on the Stronge (2007) research.

Administrators believed that data on teacher questioning techniques, quality of student feedback, demonstrations of having high expectations for students, level of interactivity in the classroom, teachers' method of instruction, adherence to performance standards, and level of student engagement should be collected. Administrators also believed that the data communicated to teachers should be detailed and communicated via individual feedback conferences or meetings. However, sometime time constraints did not permit administrators to communicate in this manner and at times the best they could do was send a quick message to acknowledge the walkthrough. Nonetheless, administrators preferred holding conferences instead of e-mails. Administrators and teachers indicated that conferences allow for a richer discussion and are more interactive than using e-mail.

Teachers who were interviewed generally supported finding three and agreed with teachers who were surveyed and who participated in focus groups. They also agreed with administrators; however, finding three revealed disagreement in the area of how data should be shared. Interviewed teachers believed that the principal should share data at faculty meetings so that teachers and staff could see where they stood as a school in relation to meeting school objectives.

For finding four, teachers believed that administrator and student interaction had a positive effect on student achievement and classroom management. The majority of respondents (57.8%) indicated that walkthrough observers should engage in conversations with students about what they are learning. Ginsburg (2001) noted that observers should determine if students can articulate what they are doing and ask questions such as, What are you working on? Why are you doing this work? Is what you are working on interesting to you? Is what you are working on in other classes interesting to you? Pitler and Goodwin (2008) also suggested that observers evaluate student learning according to Bloom's taxonomy (i.e., the six cognitive hierarchical action components of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). However, teachers in the focus groups had mixed feelings. While one enjoyed the interaction from administration, others felt it was a disruption. Teachers who were interviewed overall supported finding four.

The quantitative and qualitative data related to findings three and four answered research question two by revealing that most teachers welcomed detailed feedback to help them improve student learning, preferably face-to-face and/or documented feedback. Administrators also believed that the data communicated to teachers should be detailed and communicated via individual feedback conferences or meetings. Teachers agreed, except that they believed that in addition to individual feedback conferences or meetings, data should be shared at faculty meetings so that teachers and staff could see the extent to which they were meeting school objectives. This is an important aspect of the finding, as Pitler and Goodwin (2008) stated that observers should determine if student achievement data correlate with walkthrough data and that observations are placed in the context of student achievement data to make data-driven decisions

about improving teaching and learning. Most teachers expressed that administrator and student interaction has a positive effect on student achievement and classroom management.

Research question 3.

What types of classroom walkthrough data should be collected that would assist teachers and school leaders in their overall improvement planning processes? This question was designed to learn more about how to better affect the overall improvement planning process for the district and for its individual schools. It also was designed to create discussion surrounding professional development goals for teachers. Data collection relative to research question three included a teacher survey, a teacher focus group, teacher interviews and administrative interviews.

Findings five and six focused on data collected that affects student learning, teacher practice, school improvement and professional development planning. For finding five, 84% of the respondents indicated that they believe data on school culture and environment should be collected, and 65% identified student performance and instructional practice as being equally important to the school's improvement process. Administrators indicated that data about overall school and district improvement should be collected. Teachers in the focus group indicated that data on how to meet school goals should be collected and that more direction was needed about how they best could contribute to school improvement efforts. Similarly, the data collected from the teacher interviews supported finding five. These teachers stated they would like to use walkthrough data to improve their teaching, but, like the teachers in the focus groups, they were not currently receiving feedback that would help them improve. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative data related to finding five revealed that both teachers and administrators would like to see data collected that directly affects student learning, teacher practice, and school

improvement. Further, most of the teachers are more than willing to assist in school improvement, but that they need more direction about how best to accomplish this aspect of on-going professional growth.

A possible solution to this lack of direction may be found in the MDOE's (2010) suggestion of developing a Focus of Inquiry to ensure that learning walkthroughs help educators prioritize and identify areas of school improvement, especially for student achievement. The MDOE suggested that the focus of inquiry for observers include (a) questions about the priorities and strategies outlined in school and/or district improvement plans that may benefit from new insight and/or progress monitoring, (b) how meeting the school and/or district vision and mission statements is demonstrated in the classroom, (c) which aspects of student learning present opportunities for improvement, (d) what is known about root causes of low student achievement, and (e) best practices for improvement as shown in the educational literature.

Another possible solution is suggested by Lucich (2009), who examined the difference in mathematics Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores between schools using the classroom walkthrough process and comparable Texas schools not using the classroom walkthrough process. The results of Lucich's study showed that data can be collected that provide information about whether there is a relationship between walkthroughs and student achievement as measured by standardized test scores.

Finding six revealed that both administrators and teachers believe that walkthrough data collected should inform professional development planning. Administrators agreed that walkthrough feedback and discussions should be tied directly to professional development, but time and central office constraints often interfered with this process. Teachers believed that the professional development structure for the district should be more interactive and that

professional development should be designed according to the needs of teachers and staff in the building.

Both of the findings related to research question three showed that both teachers and administrators would like to see data collected that directly impact student learning, teacher practice, and school improvement and that both administrators and teachers believe that walkthrough data collected should inform professional development planning.

An aspect of the linkage between walkthrough data and professional development planning might be addressed with the process of action research, which is comparative research that uses a cycle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action. The results are used to develop plans to solve problems (Badham & Sense, 2006). Hansen and Borden (2006) indicated that in a climate of school reform, action research can provide insights into student developmental and learning processes.

Based on the results of the present study, action research could be applied to determine just how walkthrough data should be assessed to help teachers and school leaders in the overall school improvement planning processes. Data from action research allows teachers to learn more about themselves and their teaching styles (Hansen & Borden, 2006). Unlike traditional applied research, action research is cyclical. It is also participatory, an aspect of professional development that teachers in this study cited as important. When teachers participate, there is more opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues. Thus, action research is a useful framework for planning and implementing successful participatory program planning and can stimulate interaction and dialogue necessary for overall change, although there are no guarantees that the information will be used effectively to solve problems or develop appropriate programs and services (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

Unexpected finding.

An unexpected finding emerged from the data collected. Teachers and administrators revealed that data is not collected on teacher assessments. A theme that emerged from the teacher participants' responses was the need to evaluate student progress. Teachers discussed having analyzed standardized test scores; however, minimal analysis was done on classroom tests, quizzes, projects, presentations and portfolios. Administrators also agree that teacher assessments are not looked at for data; rather, standardized test scores serve as one of the factors to measure student progress. At the high school, administrators look at failure rates for teachers and other indicators of student progress such as midterms and final exams.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. The following recommendations are based on the findings previously discussed in Chapters IV and V.

Recommendation 1.

District leadership, the director of curriculum, and superintendent of schools should reinforce that administrators provide feedback for every walkthrough conducted. They should also create a guideline that should outline criteria for feedback. Quality and not quantity should be emphasized from the district leaders.

According to Overstreet (2006), walkthroughs reinforce attention to teaching and learning priorities based on standards. Walkthroughs also allow observers to gather and provide data about instructional practice and student learning that supplements quantitative or statistical

data about school and student performance. Thus, walkthrough data can provide the story behind the numbers. For the teachers in this study, while the majority indicated that they received feedback that has helped them improve their instruction, quality feedback is often provided sporadically. When they do receive feedback, it is also general and usually positive rather than specific and constructive. Administrators agreed that the quality of the feedback provided to teachers was inconsistent and lacked constructive criticism. Thus, not only should feedback for every walkthrough be conducted, but also the feedback should be consistent, more in depth, and focus on teacher instructional practice, student behavior and learning activities, and classroom management.

Recommendation 2.

District leadership along with significant teacher representatives should update the learning walk brochure. This process should include collecting feedback from administrators and teachers and then jointly develop clear expectations for classroom structures related to walkthroughs. This approach should then allow building principals to create weekly or monthly focused walks; however, the focus should be communicated to teachers.

The results of this study revealed that although some administrators have a focus and expectations for walkthroughs, yet these approaches are not communicated to teachers. Walkthroughs should stimulate collaborative, professional conversations about teaching and learning. Thus, appropriate feedback based on evidence of teachers' instructional abilities to help their students achieve must be based on gathering evidence that has a specific instructional expectation or focus. As a result of feedback from such evidence, teachers learn from each other and from their observers, ask questions, share experiences, and provide a variety of perspectives about teaching and learning (Overstreet, 2006). Teachers in this study both welcome and expect

detailed feedback on their instructional abilities to help their students achieve. Graf and Werlinich (2002) recommended that observers have an agenda for the walkthrough that specifies exactly what to look for, and inform teachers in advance when the walkthrough will be performed. The MDOE (2010) suggested developing a Focus of Inquiry to ensure that learning walkthroughs help educators prioritize and identify areas of school improvement, especially for student achievement.

Recommendation 3.

Create a data collection protocol and share data collected related to school and district goals on a monthly basis at full faculty meetings. Incorporate data collected into professional development planning.

Teachers in this study had a number of suggestions for how walkthrough data should be used and communicated to teachers so that the information might help contribute to student achievement. The majority of teachers indicated that they preferred to receive feedback face to face or via e-mail or handwritten note. Further, teachers agreed that sharing walkthrough data in any form at monthly faculty meetings, monthly professional learning community meetings, or department meetings would also be helpful and valuable. Both teachers and administrators believe that walkthrough data collected should inform professional development planning. This concept supports the research of Finch (2009), who noted that through walkthroughs teacher instruction and classroom activities can be monitored and that determinations can be made about the need for effective professional development initiatives.

Recommendation 4.

Administration should hold quarterly conferences with teachers to review assessment results. Pitler and Goodwin (2008) emphasized the importance of communicating feedback from

observations to teachers, and quarterly conferences are one way to communicate assessment results. During these conferences, the administrator should review teacher grade and planning books, formative and summative assessment. Downey et al. (2004) suggested that administrators decide if their observations about content taught is accurate or complete and if more extensive observations are needed to provide greater support to teachers experiencing instructional issues. Together the administrator and teacher should create a plan of action using the data from assessments as an indicator of student progress.

Areas for Further Research

This research study examined the walkthrough observation process and its relationships to enhancing teaching practice and student learning and assisting a district's overall improvement planning. Based on the data that were collected in this study, a focus for walkthroughs and better communication among teachers and administrators regarding walkthrough data are needed in the Park Place school district. An important aspect of walkthroughs is that feedback from observations made must be communicated to teachers. Pitler and Goodwin (2008) noted that when conducting walkthroughs, principals should ask questions such as, are teachers using research-based strategies? Downey (2001) suggested that observers ask reflective questions of teachers about instructional practices in the classroom, teachers' grouping strategies (i.e., collaborative, small groups, pairs), and whether teachers and students are using technology to support learning. This suggests that walkthroughs can be a two-way dialogue between teachers and observers, resulting in better communication.

Further research to examine the impact and effectiveness of walkthroughs on improving instructional practices, student achievement, and school district planning is recommended. Dexter (2004) noted that walkthroughs are practical, focused, time efficient, and support the

school improvement process. Data gathered through walkthroughs help administrators identify staff professional development needs, encourage staff collaboration, and improve instructional practices and student achievement (Skretta, 2007). This research could provide valuable data for continuous improvement of these processes and for overall teaching and learning.

Further research on professional development based on walkthrough data is also recommended. According to Finch (2009), Skretta (2007), and Koerperich (2008), walkthroughs can help principals and administrators determine if professional development is needed or if professional development initiatives are effective. Such research would be beneficial in identifying specific areas for professional development that improves instructional practices and student achievement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine what types of data collection currently exist and what kind of information should be provided through a walkthrough observation process that attempts to enhance teaching practice, contribute to student learning and assist a district's overall improvement planning. Overall, the research revealed that teachers and administrators perceive walkthroughs as beneficial. They also agreed on the importance of communication between teachers and administrators. They stressed the benefit of consistent and in-depth feedback to teachers to improve instruction and student achievement. They also considered the collection of data about school culture, school environment, student performance, and instructional practice contributed to their role in the school's improvement process. Both administrators and teachers also believed that walkthrough data collected should inform professional development planning. The recommendations made by the researcher of this study are intended to spark dialogue and a strategic planning process that purposely focuses on walkthroughs and the improvement of the

walkthrough process in the Park Place school district.

The underlying motivation for my choosing this topic related to my genuine desire to assist my school and district to improve teacher reflective practice. Hopefully, the scope of my research will assist teacher growth and overall district improvement.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Survey Invitation

Dear Teachers,

I am engaging in research as part of my doctoral studies in the area of learning walks. To help me gain further insight into this area, I have been given district permission to gather input from teachers. I have prepared an online survey that should take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. The survey is anonymous and results are confidential. The information collected will be used to better inform administrative practice and better assist teacher professional development in relation to teacher development, contributing to student achievement and accomplishing district goals. I value your input. *Thank you* for taking the time to complete the survey. Feel free to provide any additional comments at the end of the survey.

You can access the survey at:

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions,
Cary Fields

Teacher Survey Questions

The purpose of this survey is to acquire a profile of the teaching staff's views about classroom walkthroughs that would be helpful in the potential design and implementation of effective classroom walkthroughs.

Directions: Please respond to each of the questions below. At the end of the survey you are given the opportunity to add any further comments.

1. I currently teach at the

Middle School	High School
---------------	-------------
 2. The administration has explained the purpose of the classroom walkthrough.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
 3. The feedback I have received has helped me improve my instruction.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
 4. To enhance their quality what should be the focus of classroom walkthroughs in our school? MARK ALL THAT APPLY.
 - a) Teacher instructional practices
 - b) Curricular initiatives
 - c) Assessment techniques
 - d) Student behavior and learning activities
 - e) Classroom environment (e.g., instructional resources, wall displays)
 - f) Classroom management
 - g) Use of technology
 - h) Other (Please specify) _____
 5. I have received feedback that has assisted my efforts to improve student learning.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
 6. How would you prefer that feedback be shared so that it might better assist your focus on fostering student understanding? MARK ALL THAT APPLY.
 - a) Face-to-face
 - b) Feedback left on desk as observer(s) depart
 - c) Handwritten note or e-mail
 - d) Department/grade level feedback
 - e) Whole faculty feedback
 - f) Other? (Please specify)

7. Should observers engage in conversations with students about what they are learning during walkthroughs?

Yes

No

8. What kinds of data should be collected that would be helpful to the school's overall improvement planning process? MARK ALL THAT APPLY

- a) School culture and environment
- b) Curriculum
- c) Professional development
- d) Student performance
- e) Instructional practice

9. Has the feedback helped you target any of the following district goals? MARK ALL THAT APPLY

- a) School culture and environment
- b) Curriculum
- c) Professional development
- d) Student performance
- e) Instructional practices

10. Has the feedback helped you see the relationship to the scope of the district's overall improvement plan?

Additional comments:

11. I am willing to participate in a focus group discussion centered on walkthroughs. If so, please e-mail cfields@cse.edu with your interest.

APPENDIX B

Interview Invitation

Dear _____,

I am engaging in research as part of my doctoral studies in learning walks. I have been given permission by the district to meet with building administration to gather information related to my research topic. I would like to interview you regarding learning walks in the district, specifically the middle and high school. The information collected will be used to better inform administrative practice and better assist teacher professional development, contributing to student achievement and accomplishing district goals.

Our conversation will be informal and confidential. I will be more than happy to share my findings with you after I have compiled my data. If you are willing to participate, please respond and we will schedule the interview.

Thanks,
Cary Fields

Interview Script

Hello and thank you for taking the time to meet with me and talk about learning walks. I am conducting research as part of my doctoral studies in classroom walkthroughs. I am interested in hearing about your experiences and point of view on this topic.

This afternoon, I am going to ask you questions about learning walks and their impact on assisting teacher reflective practice and their relationship to assisting student achievement. I will also ask you about learning walks and their relationship to the attainment of district goals. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. There is no right or wrong answer. I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments. They are both helpful.

For the purposes of our conversation we can use first names. Please be assured that our conversation is confidential and not names or any other personally identifiable information will be included in my findings. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. If there are no objections I would like to record the session for accuracy. I will secure the recordings and no one will have access to them. Do I have your permission to record the session? (Pause for responses)

If you are interested and after I have categorized our conversation, I will be happy to share my findings with you.

Interview Questions

1. What do you think about the quality of walkthrough feedback provided to teachers? What type of data do you believe should be collected about teachers' overall performance in the classroom? Overall performance relates to all aspects of classroom management, preparation and classroom environment.
2. How do you see walkthroughs contributing to instructional effectiveness?
3. How should walkthrough data be used to improve student achievement?
4. What data has been collected on teacher assessments that are indicators of student learning?
5. What kinds of classroom walkthrough data would you like to see collected that would support professional development efforts?
6. What kinds of classroom walkthrough data would you like to see collected that would support the school's overall plans for improvement?

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Invitation

Dear _____,

I am engaging in research as part of my doctoral studies in walkthroughs/learning walks. I have been given permission by the district to meet with teachers to gather information related to my research topic. I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group session with colleagues to discuss learning walks in the district, specifically the middle and high school. The information collected will be used to better inform administrative practice and better assist teacher professional development, contributing to student achievement and accomplishing district goals.

I will provide refreshments and our conversation will be informal. The consent form is attached. There is an expectation of confidentiality regarding the conversation in the focus group meeting. Therefore, by signing the consent form you agree not to discuss the focus group meeting after the session.

I will be more than happy to share my findings with you after I have compiled my data.

We will meet on _____ from 2:45-3:30pm in _____. I value your input. If you are able to attend, please RSVP to me no later than _____.

Thanks,
Cary Fields

Focus Group Script

Hello and welcome to our focus group session. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and talk about learning walks. I am conducting research as part of my doctoral studies in classroom walkthroughs. I am interested in hearing about your experiences and point of view on this topic.

This afternoon, I am going to ask you questions about learning walks and their impact on assisting teacher reflective practice and teacher's perception of how walk throughs contribute to enhance student achievement. I will also ask you about learning walks and their relationship to the attainment of district goals. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. There is no right or wrong answer. I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments. They are both helpful. I will not be contributing to the conversation. I am here to moderate the session by asking questions and listening.

For the purposes of our conversation we can use first names. Please be assured that no names or any other personally identifiable information will be included in my findings. There is an expectation of confidentiality regarding the conversation in the focus group meeting. Therefore, by signing the consent form you agree not to discuss the focus group meeting after the session. You may withdraw from the focus group at anytime.

If there are no objections I would like to record the session for accuracy. I will secure the recordings and no one will have access to them. Do I have your permission to record the session? (Pause for responses)

If you are interested and after I have categorized our conversation, I will be happy to share my findings with you.

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. What do you think about the quality of walkthrough feedback provided to teachers? What type of data do you believe should be collected about teachers' overall performance in the classroom? Overall performance relates to all aspects of classroom management, preparation and classroom environment.
2. How do you see walkthroughs contributing to instructional effectiveness?
3. How should walkthrough data be used to impact student achievement?
4. What data has been collected on teacher assessments that are indicators of student learning?
5. What kinds of classroom walkthrough data would you like to see collected that would support professional development efforts?
6. What kinds of classroom walkthrough data would you like to see collected that would support the school's overall plans for improvement?

APPENDIX D

LEARNING

WALKS

A Guide to the
Improvement of Instruction

Learning Walks

Purpose:

To improve instruction. Through increased administrator visibility, the teaching and learning process will be more closely observed and the teacher will be provided feedback to improve their instructional techniques and ultimately student achievement.

Focus:

- Tone and environment
- Instructional methodology
- Student engagement
- Questioning Strategies
- Assessment-Checking for understanding

Goal:

Create a climate that fosters collegial dialog between the administration and teaching staff. Teacher feedback will be provided in a timely and informal manner. It is encouraged that this feedback be verbal. (e mail is acceptable)

There shall be time allotted at monthly faculty meetings to discuss instructional patterns of instruction noted in the Learning Walks.

Peer observation shall be encouraged and facilitated.

Observations and findings will be discussed at weekly building administrator meetings.

Questions to guide focus:

- How do you know students are learning?
- How are students assessed?
- Do students assess themselves?
- Do teachers monitor and adjust based upon student learning?
- What does the learning environment look like?
- Are lessons differentiated based upon student learning style?
- Do students receive plentiful feedback?
- Are “best instructional practices” used?
- What is the role of all adults in the classroom?

Positive Best Practice Techniques:

- Learning is experiential and hands-on
- Active learning is a two-way transmission of information and ideas
- The teacher assumes some diverse roles; mentor, coach, facilitator, model
- Activities tend to be cooperative and collaborative-pair /share, groups, stations, inquiry-based
- There are cross –curricular activities
- There is a respectful genuine warm teacher tone
- There is an emphasis on thoughtful exploration
- Multiple activities can take place simultaneously
- Student work fills the room
- Questioning is at a high level
- Teacher location varies

APPENDIX E

COLLEGE OF SAINT ELIZABETH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

STANDARD ADULT CONSENT FORM

Complete both pages of this form and submit it with the Submission Form. Indicate if you will use College letterhead X or the letterhead of the host site. _____

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Classroom Walkthroughs: Does Such an Approach to Supervision Contribute to District Improvement?

RESEARCHER: Cary Fields

The researcher is a student at the College of Saint Elizabeth and this study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

This study has been approved by the College of Saint Elizabeth's Institutional Review Board.

Cary Fields has/ have:

- A. Provided me with a detailed explanation of the procedures to be followed in the project, including an identification of any experimental procedures. I understand that I will be asked to discuss classroom learning walks. The focus group should take one hour. The interview should take one half hour. I understand that our conversation is confidential. I will not be paid for participating in the focus group or interview.
- B. Answered any questions that I have regarding the study.

I understand that:

- A. My participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time. My refusal to participate will not result in any penalty.
- B. By signing this agreement, I understand that the researchers do not expect that my participation in the study will hurt me in any way. There is no plan to reimburse me for any costs I might incur as a result of participating in this study.

I hereby give my consent to be the subject of your research. I also give my consent to be audio taped. Participant initials _____

Signature _____

Date _____

THIS PAGE MUST BE PROVIDED TO THE SUBJECT

Please keep this sheet in case you have any questions about this research project.

1. TITLE OF RESEARCH: Classroom Walkthroughs: Does Such an Approach to Supervision Contribute to District Improvement?

2. For answers to any questions you may have about this research, contact:

RESEARCHER: Cary Fields; cfields@cse.edu; 908-884-5455

3. For answers to any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject, contact:

Dr. Louise Murray

Chair, Institutional Review Board

College of Saint Elizabeth

2 Convent Road

Morristown, New Jersey 07960

973-290-4430

irb@cse.edu

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