PICKETT, NATALIE STANFIELD, Ed.D. Classroom Walk-through Visits: A Cultural Reform Effort. (2015)
Directed by Dr. Carl Lashley. 182 pp.

Reforming schools in the United States has been an ongoing process for the last two centuries. Most reforms were enacted with the intention of improving schools. School culture has been studied and examined in an effort to transform schools into dynamic and academically successful places where children can come every day to learn. This research study is aimed at learning about one recent cultural phenomenon that is occurring in many schools today, the classroom walk-through visit. As an outcropping of Professional Learning Communities, this rather new strategy offers tremendous potential to everyone in our schools: administrators, teachers and students. A multi-site comparative case study approach was used in which data from interviews, observations and collected documents were gathered, coded and analyzed in order to provide an understanding of the conditions in which classroom walk-through visits can change the teaching and learning that occurs in schools and classrooms. Triangulated data from three elementary schools in one school district was collected to ensure that the topic was studied thoroughly and accurately. The findings are reported through four categories that emerged from the analysis: Role of Educators; Role of Communicating the Vision; Role of Technology and Data; Role of Human Relations. The study makes recommendations for administrators and teachers in order for this cultural and instructional practice to be used more effectively. The intended purpose of this study was to provide school administrators and teachers with the knowledge and an understanding of the critical nature that culture plays in our schools. Armed with the knowledge that we, as educators,

can change the ways in which we teach and instruct children and the way in which we

work with other professionals in our building, we can greatly impact not only the learning

that occurs but also the attitudes about learning.

CLASSROOM WALK-THROUGH VISITS:

A CULTURAL REFORM EFFORT

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
2015

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Achieving my doctorate has been a collective effort on the part of many people for whom I am forever grateful. Without the support and understanding of family and friends, this would not have been possible. I am very aware and appreciative of the sacrifices that were made. My greatest fortune is my loving family. I love you all so much!

- To my father, Harold Allen Stanfield, who is no longer on this earth to celebrate this accomplishment with me. I know he would be so proud because he knew and emphasized the importance of an education. He and my mother always said an education is something no one can ever take away from you. Daddy knew that I would soon be working on my dissertation when he passed away. When the times got tough and I considered quitting the program, I could always hear him telling me that I could do it. I finished the program because I did not want to let him down.

- To my mother, Nancy Jo Davis Stanfield, who listened to my worries and concerns that my work was not going to be good enough. Her constant encouragement kept me going at the very times that I needed her most.

- To my sister, Elizabeth Josie Stanfield, who always helped me keep everything in perspective. She helped me with so many things at the times that I was dealing with pure exhaustion. I am very appreciative of her help. Her support means so much to me.

- To my brother, Allen Davis Stanfield, who taught me that a formal education is not the only worthwhile education. His passion and dedication to learning about airplanes has been a source of inspiration to me. He is an example of perseverance and making something happen—not waiting for opportunities to come to you. He is a natural leader!

- To my stepson, Jonathan Lynn Pickett, who I love unconditionally. He taught me the difference between tolerance and acceptance. He is a wonderful and special person that I am so grateful to know and have in my family. I will always be there to help you in whatever way I can.

- To my daughter, Josie Delaine Pickett, who is like a breath of fresh air for me. At such a young age, she has a wisdom about her that usually only comes much later in life. She has a kind and gentle nature and a caring and loving heart. I wish the very best for you in your life! I will always be there to help you in whatever way I can.

- To my son, Zebulon Allen Pickett, who is always there to debate (in a friendly way) whatever I say. I love his spirit and his determination. I respect him and his opinions. I wish only the very best for you! I will always be there to help you in whatever way I can.

- To my husband, Dennis Lynn Pickett, who is always supportive. While he helped me a lot with the technological aspects of my degree, the biggest support came from his encouragement. His faith in me never wavered.

- To Dr. Carl Lashley, my doctoral committee, and all of my professors, who inspired me to want to be a better teacher and reminded me to "learn something." Thank you for sharing your insight and wisdom and upholding high standards. I admire each of you for your integrity and your years of service to creating better schools for our students. I am so grateful that I was privileged with the opportunity to learn from all of you.

- To all of the administrators and teachers who graciously volunteered to participate in this study. Thank you for your time and insight.

- To Richard Allen, who assisted me in interview transcriptions and formatting of the final dissertation document. I could have never done this aspect of this work without your expertise.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Today's schools are constantly changing. This study examines one specific change in school practice that seems to have gained momentum since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into legislation: classroom walk-through visits. The study attempts to analyze the impact that walk-through visits have on teaching and learning in schools. While classroom walk-through visits are often considered an important instructional leadership role and responsibility of a school's administrative team, the walk-through initiative is examined through a cultural lens in this study.

Examining this change strategy is crucially important. Many school districts are requiring building level administrators to conduct these visits on a regular basis while also responding to multiple competing initiatives and demands at the same time (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2013; Pollack & Winton, 2012). School administrators need to know and understand what aspects of the visits are working and are effective and what aspects need to be changed so that they meet the needs of the staff and students in the school. Due to a vast array of demands, school administrators and teachers are not afforded the time to analyze the effectiveness of the initiative or consider ways to improve the implementation of the initiative. This study seeks to understand effects of the classroom walk-through visit initiative on the culture of teaching and learning in schools and classrooms.

Recent Federal Reform Initiatives in U.S. K-12 Schools

Knowing the background, intentions, and time frame of federal reform initiatives provides an understanding, or a linkage, to the sense of urgent and sometimes chaotic change and "random actions" (Fullan, 2014, p. 23) that have been felt in educational practice within U.S. schools in recent years. While the following reforms that are reviewed are by no means an exhaustive list, they are recent or current occurrences that today's schools have to contend with on a daily basis.

A Nation at Risk

In 1983 a report titled "A Nation at Risk" unleashed a wave of reforms that continues to this day. In spite of the significant conflicts and challenges that U.S. schools had faced during its history, many Americans in the 1970s and early 1980s seemed to be satisfied and content with the quality of the education that the public schools were providing until the U.S. government issued the report emphasizing serious concerns about the mediocre quality of the American schools. In this report Americans were alarmed to discover what the Commission described. The authors of this report claimed that the current trends in education "threatened both our children's opportunities and our collective future" (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The authors write,

> We [Americans] faced a grave risk of losing our leading position in the world. We had little idea of how we were doing, and we were happily complacent in assuming that we had and would continue to have, the best schools money could buy. This report challenged this illusion and forced us to recognize the profound deficiencies in our educational system. (p. 1)

The disturbing report caused Americans to take note of the current state of education and challenged educators to improve the quality of education being provided to students. The Commission advised changes in five areas: curriculum content, standards and expectations of students; time devoted to education; teacher quality; educational leadership; and the financial support of education. The U.S. Department of Education (2008) argued that the country answered the charges in the 1983 report by dramatically increasing student spending. They claimed that states and districts began to change their approaches to the teaching profession. They contend that individual states initiated content standards, created annual tests for students, and began to report the results of these tests. "A Nation at Risk" began a flurry of educational reforms that culminated with the "No Child Left Behind Act" in 2001.

"No Child Left Behind Act" of 2001

The legislative action in 2001 titled "No Child Left Behind," also known as NCLB, was a reauthorization to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, Naftel, & LeFloch, 2010). NCLB, signed into law by President Bush, was the first reauthorization of the ESEA since the 1994 version titled Improving America's Schools Act (Cronin, Kingsbury, McCall, Bowe, 2005; Taylor et al, 2010). While the 1994 act mandated states to devise standards and assessment systems, it allowed states to create their own accountability systems for Title I programs. By the time NCLB was implemented, almost all states had created standards-based accountability systems of their own. States had assessment systems in place at selected benchmark grades, and most had published content standards of what students were

expected to learn. States had also set achievement performance standards. Some states published school and district results and they developed growth models for their accountability systems. NCLB added to the 1994 provisions by including the following elements:

> a single federal accountability system for all states, eliminating growth models; a concrete goal of having 100% of students meeting standards by 2014; a set of uniform sanctions for schools and districts not meeting goals; a requirement that disaggregated (as well as whole group) results carry sanctions (Cronin, et al, 2005, p. 6).

Maleyko and Gawlik (2011) contend that NCLB became a major reform effort that brought educational issues to the forefront with the American public. The goal of the reform was to make educational agencies and states accountable for improving the quality of education for all students. It intended to identify and transform low-performing schools that had failed to provide a high quality education to their students into successful schools. The accountability provisions in NCLB were meant to close the achievement gap between high and low achieving students, minority and non-minority students, and the advantaged and disadvantaged students. The Public Education Network (2003) states that the primary focus of NCLB was to improve the academic achievement of students in low-performing schools around the country. The reform was to accomplish this goal by concentrating on:

- employing highly qualified teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals;
- developing state standards, assessment systems and accountability measures;
- rewarding schools that meet or exceed academic expectations;

- identifying schools that fall behind in progress toward state standards;

- funding schools that need special assistance to meet NCLB requirements;

- involving parents and community members;

- and providing parental choice and supplemental services.

Race to the Top

The Race to the Top initiative, a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, was announced in 2009 by President Obama as a competitive grant that would encourage and reward innovation and reforms in state and local K-12 education districts (Boser, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). States were awarded the grant based on meeting educational policies in the following areas:

- providing support to teachers and school leaders to become more effective;

- performance-based standards for principals and teachers;

- development of more rigorous [common core] standards and better assessments;

- lifting caps on charter schools;

- increasing resources for rigorous interventions needed to turn around the lowest performing schools;

- achieving significant improvement in student outcomes (including student achievement, closing the achievement gaps, improve high school graduation rates, ensure students are prepared for college and careers);

- and building data systems to improve instruction by providing schools, teachers, and parents with information about student progress.

A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2010

The ESEA is currently under revision. The Blueprint for Reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) outlines the latest changes suggested for the 1965 ESEA. In this version, the reforms are additions to the changes made in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The four major ideas introduced in this version are the following:

- improve teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader;

- provide information to families to help them evaluate and improve their children's schools;

- implement college and career reading standards and develop improved assessments aligned with those standards;

- and improve student learning and achievement in the lowest-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions.

Outlined in the 'blueprint' is the proposal to "recruit, prepare, develop and reward effective teachers and leaders" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 13). The 'blueprint' asserts that

> We have to do more to ensure that every student has an effective teacher, every school has effective leaders, and every teacher and leader has access to the preparation, on-going support, recognition, and collaboration opportunities he or she need to succeed. Our proposals will ask states and districts to put in place the conditions that allow for teachers, principals, and leaders at all levels of the school system to get meaningful information about their practice, and support them in using the information to ensure that all students are getting the effective teaching they deserve. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 13)

Moreover, the plan

> recognizes the importance of principal leadership in supporting teachers and states
> will work to improve the effectiveness of principals, through activities such as
> strengthening principal preparation programs and providing training and support
> to principals of high-needs schools. . . . School districts may use funds to foster
> and provide collaboration and development opportunities in schools and build
> instructional teams of teachers, leaders, and other school staff, including
> paraprofessionals; to support educators in improving their instructional practice
> through effective, ongoing, job-embedded, professional development that is
> targeted to student and school needs; and to carry out other activities to improve
> the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school staff. (p. 15)

As noted in the above sections, the work of teachers and principals is a major focus of reform efforts now. Teachers and principals must be given access to opportunities to grow in their profession. Teachers and principals must demonstrate continued efforts to improve their practice so that their students and schools can succeed and show improvement.

Reforming School Leadership

An area of public education that has been under heavy scrutiny for reform, especially in response to federal reforms, is school leadership. Several organizations (such as The Wallace Foundation, McREL, and the Southern Regional Education Board [SREB]) have studied many facets of school leadership and they understand the critical nature of their work. Research shows that an effective principal in every school is crucial to improved student performance (SREB, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Leithwood et al. (2004) assert that "research supports the idea that leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (p. 3). The ways in which principals are able to meet this demand of

responsibility include setting a clear course and direction, developing people by providing teachers with necessary support and training, and redesigning the organizational culture so that conditions support instead of inhibit teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2004).

In 2001, changes in state legislation established urgency for improved student achievement in an educational system where too many students were not succeeding against the new standards; therefore, the SREB (2001) decided that a "new breed" of school leaders was necessary in the "era of higher standards and greater accountability" (pp. 2–3). Due to accountability measures SREB realized that two questions about leadership needed to be answered. The first question was what do successful education leaders need to know and be able to do? They determined that the answer to this question was three-fold: have comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement; know how to work with faculty and others to fashion and implement continuous student improvement; and know how to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices. The second question that needed to be addressed was how do you prepare and develop effective leaders? This was a more challenging question, but agreement was given to an in-depth list of what states, universities, and academies can do to make more effective and solid leadership programs (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

In 2002, SREB developed a list of learning-centered indicators that would guide the leadership work in states in developing effective school leaders.   These indicators included state leadership standards, candidate selection, leadership preparation programs,

tiered licensure, alternative licensure, professional development and conditions to help improve teaching and learning. The 2012 SREB Benchmark report indicated that in their efforts to help states and public universities evaluate their state policies for preparing school leaders, progress had been made with most of the indicators and better-prepared principals had been developed who implemented best practices for improved student achievement. Specific areas of significant progress can be seen in the following areas: developing leadership standards that support the principal as the instructional leader of the school; redesigning programs to reflect the principal as the leader of changes in curricula and in the quality of instruction that support the growth of teachers; preparation programs that include substantial field-based experiences; designing and implementing a tiered, performance-based statewide system of principal licensure (SREB, 2012, pp. i–ii).

Based on literature reviews and research data, the SREB (2008, pp. 2–3) devised a list of three competencies and 13 critical success factors that are associated with principals who have shown improvement in student achievement in "high risk" schools. This list states that effective principals have:

- a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement (focus on student achievement, develop a culture of high expectations, design a standards-based instructional system);

- the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement continuous student improvement (creating a caring environment, implementing data-based improvement, communicating, involving parents);

- and the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound

   school, curriculum and instructional practices (initiate and manage change,

   provide professional development, innovate, maintain resources, build

   external support, stay abreast of effective practices).

The principal as an instructional leader has become important in today's schools.

The principal is challenged with the obligation to enact measures that will enable their

teachers to improve their practice so that their students can show improvement and

success. While this challenge contains lofty goals and high expectations, it is a necessary

one so that students are provided the assurance that they will receive an education that

will prepare them for their future.

General Statement of the Problem

Administrators, including those at the district and school building level, feel the

pressure from reforms made at the national and state level. Due in part to the pressure

they feel from national and state laws, principals in North Carolina schools are constantly

searching to find strategies for their schools so that they can help their students succeed.

They hope that the strategies they implement will also help them be in compliance with

reforms made at higher levels. School executives attend trainings and workshops, read

numerous amounts of literature on a wide variety of educational topics, implement the

latest reform efforts directed by the district office, and immerse themselves in all aspects

of their school. All of this is done with the intention of helping their schools and students

be successful. In spite of all of the hard work and passionate dedication that many

principals devote to their job, too many times the results that they hope will be evident are not the actual findings.

A critical area that principals cannot afford to minimize or overlook in their search for school improvement practices is that of school culture. The culture of the school can be described as an underlying current and it can be a determining factor in the success or failure in the attempts to show school improvement. One specific cultural reform that has become a common practice in recent years is the classroom walk-through visit. The classroom walk-through visit provides a cultural tool that can be used to change relationships and interactions between principals and teachers. This change effort provides opportunities for school administrators and teachers to collaborate in ways that prior to this initiative have rarely, if ever, happened. Instead of the principal operating as an evaluator, the school administrator seeks to be instrumental in offering continuous improvement in a formative assessment manner. While this practice has the potential to be a device that school principals can use to improve the teaching and learning in their schools, few studies have explored how this strategy can help change the culture of schools. This research is about how classroom walk-through visits impact the culture in the school and the instructional practices that can lead to school improvement.

Significance of the Problem

The significance of this study is that classroom walk-through visits are a rather new phenomenon in education. While some research has been conducted on this topic, much remains unknown about how administrators use the data from this strategy to inform changes about the cultural and instructional aspects of the school. Some districts

require their school administrators to be in classrooms a certain amount of time every day doing classroom walk-through visits. Because of these mandates and all of the challenges that schools face today, it is important that administrators' time be used efficiently and productively. It is important to find out if classroom walk-through visits yield the information that is necessary to move schools forward.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find how classroom walkthrough visits affect the culture in schools, specifically the teaching and learning culture in the schools. While culture can be simply thought of as "how we do things," it is actually very complex and constantly evolving. Classroom walk-through visits are a rather new feature related to school culture. This strategy has the potential to revolutionize the way in which teachers and principals interact concerning curriculum and instruction. This study intends to explore how administrators and teachers in three schools in one school district use their knowledge of this phenomenon to change the culture of teaching and learning in their schools. With all of the changes that are bombarding schools on what seems like a daily basis, it is important to find out if classroom walk-through visits actually accomplish the goals that they set out to achieve.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

- How do administrators intentionally and purposefully prepare for classroom walk-through visits?

- How do administrators conduct classroom walk-through visits? What do administrators do during and after "classroom walkthrough visits" that is connected to the teaching and learning culture in the school?

- What do administrators and teachers say about how "classroom walk-through" visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

- How do administrators and teachers say data is used from "classroom walk-through visits"?

In Chapter I we have seen that reforms in U.S. schools continue to be part of the American landscape. Initiatives, such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the latest revisions to the ESEA, all point to actions that were put into place with the intention of improving schools. Additionally, this chapter looks at reform efforts that have taken place for school leadership. This study can inform the current body of knowledge as it discusses the latest reform efforts to transform the culture of American schools with the practice of classroom walkthrough visits.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

Research surrounding organizational culture is examined through multiple definitions, models, frames and understandings according to leading experts on the topic. Chapter II will present viewpoints of four major theorists who have studied school culture. This chapter will address a recent reform effort—the classroom walk-through visit—that attempts to change the culture in schools. This reform is explored with respect to the purpose and goals of the visit, elements for successful programs, models and variations of the visits, and benefits and challenges of the experience.

The qualitative methodology used to conduct this study is described in Chapter III. A multi-site comparative case study approach was used to gain insight into how administrators and teachers at three elementary schools in one school district use classroom walk-through visits to change the culture of teaching and learning so that improvements in classroom instruction occurs and student achievement improves. Interviews, observations and document analysis were the techniques utilized in order to discover conditions that allow classroom walk-through visits to improve the culture of teaching and learning in schools and classrooms.

The findings from the study will be revealed in Chapter IV. Three elementary school administrators and 38 elementary teachers discuss their roles and experiences with classroom walk-through visits. The analysis is presented based on the perspectives of both the administrators and the teachers. Four categories emerged when the data was analyzed. The findings from the categories were used to help answer the research questions.

The answers to the four research questions are addressed in Chapter V. Recommendations and implications are made that may allow classroom walk-through visits to yield more effective results in classrooms and schools. Suggestions for further research and the researcher's reflections are shared followed by a conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What is "Organizational Culture"?

Schein (1990) reported that *organizational culture* was a difficult topic to write about because there was not a consensus of what the terminology meant or should mean. He argued that while words such as 'climate,' 'norms,' and 'attitudes' were a part of psychologists' vocabulary, they were not used to describe organizations. Langston, McClain, Stewart, and Walseth (1998) cite several researchers who have looked to the field of anthropology for an understanding of "culture." Their findings explaining "culture" include the following:

1. the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations;
2. the unique whole—the shared ideas, customs, assumptions, expectations, philosophy, traditions, mores, and values—that determines how a group of people will behave;
3. the learned pattern of unconscious thought, reflected and reinforced by behavior, that silently and powerfully shapes the experience of a people, providing stability, fostering certainty, solidifying order and predictability and creating meaning;
4. the way we do things around here;
5. what the group is committed to and what members think of each other; provides a structure by which membership is defined and a process by which members become acculturated. (p. 5)

As the business and education fields began to understand the notion of

organizational culture, researchers began to look at cultural behaviors that were specific

to their organization. Schein (1990) defined 'organizational culture' as

> a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given
> group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal
> integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore is to
> be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in
> relation to those problems. (p. 111)

Schein (1990) further developed three fundamental levels at which culture displays itself:

1. Observable artifacts—based on observations and feelings (physical layout,
   smell and feel of the environment, dress code, mannerisms, emotional
   intensity)
2. Values—obtained through interviews, questionnaires, surveys (norms,
   ideologies, charters, philosophies)
3. Basic underlying assumptions—acquired by more intensive observations and
   more focused questions (taken-for-granted underlying and unconscious
   assumptions). (p. 111)

Schein (1990) offers several thoughts on culture:

1. Culture is learned. Norms are established around critical incidents. Leaders
   model values, beliefs and assumptions so that others in the group can learn
   them.
2. Culture is preserved though socialization. Culture is perpetuated and
   reproduced by new members entering into the group. Socialization begins
   with recruitment and selection. Organizations look for new members who
   already have the 'right' set of assumptions, beliefs and values.
3. Culture has a natural evolution. Changes in the cultural environment will
   create stresses and strains. This mandates new learning and adaptation. As
   this is occurring, new members coming into the group bring with them new
   beliefs, ideas and assumptions that opposes the old assumptions.
4. Organizations guide the development of their evolving culture. They enhance
   the aspects that are crucial to keeping its identity and promote "unlearning"
   the parts that are viewed as unhealthy. (p. 111)

Langston et al. (1998) look to Deal and Kennedy for another model for understanding culture. They describe a five step process for learning cultures:

- study the physical setting;

- read what the company says about its culture;

- tell how the company greets strangers;

- interview company people;

- observe how people spend their time.

Langston et al. (1998) submit an additional model for analyzing organizational culture. This model involved 'six interlocking dimensions' in its taxonomy:

- the history of the organization;

- values and beliefs of the organization;

- myths and stories that explain the organization;

- cultural norms of the organization;

- traditions, rituals and ceremonies characteristic of the organization;

- and heroes and heroines of the organization.

Bolman and Deal (2008) use the metaphor of "frames" to explain how organizations can be presented with one situation but view it in different perspectives or lenses. The four frames that Bolman and Deal identify are: structural, human resource, political and symbolic. While these authors contend that successful organizations have to be accomplished with all four frames, the "Symbolic Frame" has its unique importance that must be completely understood. It is this frame that addresses the significance of culture in an organization. Bolman and Deal (2008) write:

Symbols permeate every fiber of society and organizations. A symbol is something that stands for or suggests something else; it conveys socially constructed means beyond its intrinsic or obvious functional use. Distilled to the essence, people seek meaning in life. Since life is mysterious, we create symbols to sustain hope and faith. These intangibles then shape our thoughts, emotions and actions. Symbols cut deeply into the human psyche and tap the collective unconscious. Symbols and symbolic actions are part of everyday life. They stimulate energy in moments of triumph and offer solace in times of tribulation. The symbolic frame interprets and illuminates the basic issues of meaning and belief that make symbols so powerful. It depicts a world far different from canons of rationality, certainty, and linearity. Symbols are the basic building blocks of culture that people shape to fit unique circumstances. (pp. 252–253)

The Symbolic Frame constructs its ideas from organization theory, sociology, political science, magic, and neurolinguistic programming (Bolman and Deal, 2008). The symbolic frame condenses the ideas from all of these origins into five assumptions:

1. What is most important is not what happens but what it means.
2. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience life differently.
3. Facing uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusions, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.
4. Events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced. Their emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.
5. Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise accomplish desired ends. (p. 253)

The symbolic frame views organizations as more figurative than literal and more unexpected than organized. Bolman and Deal (2008) assert that

an organization's culture is revealed through its symbols. These symbols have many methods of communication: myths, vision, values (instill purpose and determination); heroes and heroines (become a living logo); fairy tales and stories (offer explanations and explain contradictions); rituals and ceremonies (provide direction, faith and hope); metaphor, humor and play (loosen things up). (p. 254)

All organizations have a "culture," which some have called an "inner reality" (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 27). This inner reality consists of unspoken values and purposes. It intertwines quality into routine habits and it motivates all people to do their best. Bennis writes that "culture is the 'meaning' individuals create in their world of work. Each employee is, to a remarkable extent, the organization in miniature. This explains both why culture is such a critical force and how individual interactions influence the culture" (as cited in Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 27). Culture can be very powerful as it manipulates people's actions and words. It determines what its members care about, how they spend their time, as well as what they choose to celebrate and discuss. Culture is widespread as it is found in daily routine tasks and traditional customs.

How Do Schools Have *Organizational Culture* and Why Is It Important in Schools?

Schools certainly have an organizational culture. Some are healthy; others are dangerous. Some work for improvement; others work against progress. Even though schools and their leaders are aware of the importance of school culture, it is often ignored as a significant influence because of other factors that require their attention, such as curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Many school leaders have found that culture is equally or more powerful in moving a school toward achieving a vision of quality. Culture has been identified as one of the most powerful school improvement tools available to the school's leadership. Those who study school culture have noticed that a negative school culture can hinder school improvement efforts. When a negative culture is at work in the school community, the leadership must first study the existing elements

of the culture and then begin to transform it. As the culture is studied, the areas that

require or mandate attention are the core beliefs and values, norms, physical

environment, rituals, celebrations, stories and myths, and the heroes and heroines

(Robbins & Alvy, 2003).

Barth (2002) acknowledges that "changing a toxic school culture into a healthy

school culture that inspires lifelong learning among students is the greatest challenge of

instructional leadership" (p. 6). Moreover, he writes that changing the current school

culture is the most difficult job of the school leader. Barth (2002) asserts that

> The school's culture dictates the way we do things around here. Ultimately, a
> school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse
> than the president, the state department of education, the superintendent, the
> school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have. (p. 6)

He emphasizes that individuals cannot succeed in changing a culture by themselves;

rather, it takes a group of people working as a team to make the necessary changes.

Unless school administrators and teachers work together to change the culture, all efforts

of reform will be resisted and all efforts of innovation will have to work around the

existing elements of culture.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) addresses the idea that schools have their

own unique culture. They refer to Hanson when he makes the following argument:

> Schools also have their own unique cultures that are shaped around a particular
> combination of values, beliefs, and feelings. These school cultures emphasize
> what is of paramount importance to them as they strive to develop their
> knowledge base in a particular direction, such as producing outstanding football
> teams, high SAT scores, disciplined classrooms and skilled auto mechanics, or
> sending kids to college who come from inner-city urban schools. Although the

culture of a school is not visible to the human eye, its artifacts and symbols reflect specific cultural phenomena. (p. 47)

Marzano et al. continue by asserting that culture occurs naturally due to people working closely with one another; however, this interaction can have negative or positive effects on working relationships and environments. The school leader must work to build a culture that has positive effects on teachers. Marzano et al. refer to Leithwood and Riehl with their explanation of how this can happen:

> Leaders act through and with other people. Leaders sometimes do things, through words or actions, that have a direct effect on the primary goals of the collective, but more often their agency consists of influencing the thoughts and actions of other persons and establishing policies that enable others to be effective. (p. 47)

Marzano et al. (2005) claim that while principals do not directly affect student achievement, they indirectly impact this area by creating an effective culture. Four behaviors were identified as being associated with principals taking on the responsibility of "fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation among staff" (p. 48). These behaviors include:

1. Promoting cohesion among staff.
2. Promoting a sense of well-being among the staff.
3. Developing an understanding of purpose among staff.
4. Developing a shared vision of what the school could be like. (p. 48)

Major Theorists of *Organizational Culture* in Education

Organizational culture has been studied by prominent educational theorists. Their research and findings have been shared with and used by school practitioners. A

brief overview of the philosophies of four theorists on organizational culture will be presented in this section.

Michael Fullan

Michael Fullan is a leading educational theorist on the topic of educational culture. In the book *Cultures Built to Last* that he co-authored with DuFour (2013), Fullan notes that one difference between structural change and cultural change is that structural changes are generally liked by educational leadership because they are easier to implement due to mandates. Cultural changes have difficult challenges because of the "long held assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that represent the norm for people in the organization (Fullan, 2013, p. 2). Fullan and DuFour contend that while cultural change is possible, they explain factors that contribute to the difficulty of changing the culture:

- significant changes to traditional schooling practices that have endured for over a century;
- certain to cause conflict;
- multifaceted;
- process of trial and error;
- never 'arrive' at the new culture—the process never ends. (pp. 2–3)

They further state that "although we acknowledge the difficulty of cultural change, we are convinced that unless leaders recognize the need for whole-system reform aimed at changing the very culture of the system, schools will be unable to meet the challenges they confront" (2002, p. 3).

Fullan and DuFour (2013) address the issue of how do educational leaders "engage people in the process of cultural change" (p. 33). After discussing three models

of addressing complex cultural change ("too-tight control"—one best way to do a job; "carrot and stick"—rewards and punishment can have an adverse affect on people and organizations; "too-loose control"—leave answers up to each individual school), the authors settle on "the right balance" approach in which interdependence (the right amount of autonomy and collaboration resulting in focus, learning together, and strong internal commitment to group accountability) is the critical factor for achieving improvement.

Fullan recognizes that "effective school leaders are key to large-scale, sustainable education reform" (Fullan, 2002, p. 16). Much of the credit for successful principals can be attributed to them being instructional leaders, but Fullan contends that this single leadership responsibility does not go far enough. Instead, he writes

> To ensure deeper learning—to encourage problem solving and thinking skills and to develop and nurture highly motivated and engaged learners, for example—requires mobilizing the energy and capacities of teachers. In turn, to mobilize teachers, we must improve teachers' working conditions and morale. Thus, we need leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and of the teaching profession as well. The role of the principal as instructional leader is too narrow a concept to carry the weight of the kinds of reforms that will create the schools we need for the future. (p. 17)

Fullan (2002) emphasizes that if school leaders want to have an enduring influence on their organizations with deep lasting reforms, then they must focus their energy and time on aspects other than just preserving high standards. This school leader of the future will be able to make sustainable change by being the "Cultural Change Principal." The person in this position "must be attuned to the big picture, a sophisticated conceptual thinker who transforms the organization through people and teams. "Cultural Change Principals" display palpable energy, enthusiasm, and hope. In addition, five

essential components characterize leaders in the knowledge society: moral purpose, an understanding of the change process (especially reculturing); the ability to improve relationships; knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making.

Fullan states that "the problem in education is not the absence of innovation, but the problem is too many disconnected, episodic, piecemeal, superficially adorned projects" (2001, p. 109). Fullan (2001) asserts that all effective leaders possess personal characteristics of energy, enthusiasm, and hope. He contends that leadership is needed for problems that do not have easy answers and for problems that have not been successfully addressed. He describes a framework consisting of five components for leaders to consider as they lead complex change initiatives in their organization. The five components are:

1. Moral Purpose—Leaders need to make a positive difference in the lives of others. They need to be concerned with direction and purpose. Moral purpose means to treat people well and fairly. A moral purpose can be both an "ends" and a "means."

2. Understanding Change—Leaders need to create a culture of change, not just a structure of change. They need to be less about innovation and more about innovativeness. They need to be less about strategy and more about strategizing. Leaders need to be accepting of dissension and messiness. They need to understand that change cannot be controlled.

3. Relationship Building—Leaders need to mobilize care and respect in order to accomplish goals. If relationships improve, things get better. If relationships

stay the same or get worse, then ground is lost. Leaders need to create

Professional Learning Cultures to support personal development and build

program coherence. Leaders must be consummate relationship builders with

diverse people and groups, especially with people different than themselves

4. Knowledge Creation and Sharing—Leaders need to understand the difference

between information (machines) and knowledge (people). Leaders need to

make knowledge sharing a priority. They need to develop systematic methods

for exchanging experiences and ideas. Turning information into knowledge is

a social process, and good relationships are needed in order for that to happen.

5. Coherence Making—Effective leaders tolerate enough ambiguity to keep

creativity flowing, but along the way they seek coherence.

Fullan (1992) cautions school principals about relying on their visions to create

sustainable change in their schools. He explains that visions can be misleading and

blinding. This occurs when principals restrict alternative ideas, suppress the voices of

teachers, and when they rely on a charismatic personality to push through their visions.

When principals refer to their vision as 'mine' (My vision, My teachers, My school), this

simple claim suggests three monumental problematic issues stemming from ownership:

personal rather than collective; imposed rather than earned; and hierarchical rather than

democratic. Principals can avoid this trap by being "instrumental in implementing

particular innovations through direct monitoring and support" (Fullan, 1992, p. 19).

Principals are not responsible for initiating or implementing single, personal innovations.

Instead, they have the duty of making sure that multiple innovations are working

concurrently. A particularly successful strategy that a principal can employ is building a "collaborative work culture" in order to help the staff with all of the innovations that are in use. To achieve this goal, school leaders must focus on creating a culture that encourages:

> vision-building; norms of collegiality that respect individuality; norms of continuous improvement, problem-coping and conflict-resolution strategies; lifelong teacher development that involves inquiry, reflective practice, collaboration, and technical skills; and restructuring initiatives. (Fullan, 1992, p. 19).

Kenneth Leithwood

In conjunction with Fullan is Leithwood (1992), who agrees with Fullan that the instructional leadership role of school leaders will not meet the needs of what school administrators need to be in the 21st century. He feels that the term "transformational leader" more accurately describes what the image of the principal needs to become. This type of leader will motivate people to make an effort of improving their practices by assisting the school into becoming a "Type Z" organizational culture. This type of organization emphasizes democratic type decision-making and a form of power that is "consensual" and "facilitative" (Leithwood, 1992, p. 9). Evidence of this type of organizational culture is evident in teachers being helped to find greater meaning in their work, to meet higher-level needs through their work, and to develop enhanced instructional capacities. "Two of the greatest benefits of this organizational culture are that the derived power is unlimited and it enhances the productivity of the school on behalf of its students" (Leithwood, 1992, p. 9). One of the goals that transformational

leaders are constantly working towards is helping staff members develop and maintain a

collaborative, professional school culture. Leithwood (1992) maintains that

> In collaborative school cultures, staff members often talk, observe, critique, and plan together. Norms of collective responsibility and continuous improvement encourage them to teach one another how to teach better. A number of strategies used by their leaders to assist teachers in building and maintaining collaborative professional cultures include: collaborative goal setting, reducing isolation by creating time for joint planning, selecting new staff members who were already committed to the school's cultural norms, values, and beliefs in their day-to-day interpersonal contacts; sharing power and responsibility with others through delegation of power to school improvement 'teams.' (p. 10)

In the book *Linking Leadership to Student Learning,* Leithwood and co-author

Karen Seashore Louis (2012) assert that principals who had the greatest impact on

student learning focused on developing a culture of instruction, which included teacher

knowledge, skills, motivation, and supportive working conditions. They argued that

leadership affects student learning when

1. it is targeted at working relationships, improving instruction, and, indirectly, student achievement.
2. it requires formal leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders to share power and influence.
3. it develops capacity through supporting strong relationships among formal leaders, teachers and other stake holders that cement a common commitment to student learning.
4. it strengthens professional community for all members of the school community, a special place where educators work together to improve their practice and focus their work on student learning.
5. It is adoptive to the specific needs of the local setting
6. It takes advantage of external pressures for change and improvement rather than fighting against them. (pp. 234–235)

Thomas Sergiovanni

Similar to Fullan and Leithwood, Sergiovanni (2004) makes the connection

between organizational culture and organizational competence. He claims that

organizational competence is the factor that enables schools to be more effective. He

suggests that individuals alone cannot account for organizational competence; rather, this

"organizational competence typically resides in the relationships, norms, memories,

habits and collective skills of a network of people. Simply put, organizational

competence is the sum of everything everybody knows and uses that lead to increased

learning" (p. 49).

Sergiovanni (2000) also refers to a school's organizational culture when he refers

to a school's "lifeworld" (p. 8). He says that this lifeworld can be thought of as a

"school's local values, traditions, meanings and purposes." He states that

> the lifeworld determines what local strategies and initiatives will be used by
> schools to achieve their own destiny. The lifeworld includes the traditions, rituals
> and norms that define a school's culture. Lifeworlds differ as we move from
> school to school and these differences lay the groundwork for developing a
> school's unique character. As character builds, the capacity of a school to serve
> the intellectual, social, cultural and civic needs of its students and of its
> community increases. School character is also important because it is liked to
> school effectiveness . . . The relationship between school character and school
> effectiveness contributes to the development of social and academic capital.
> Social capital consists of norms, obligations and trusts that are generated by
> caring relationships. When students have access to social capital, they find the
> support they need for learning. Academic capital consists of the rituals, norms,
> commitments and traditions that cultivate and maintain a deep culture of teaching
> and learning in a school. Schools develop academic capital by becoming focus
> communities. In focus communities, teaching and learning provide the basis for
> making important school decisions. (p. 8)

Peter Senge

Another educational theorist who emphasizes the importance of developing

culture in schools is Peter Senge. Senge is a leading expert on organizations and how

they learn. While most of his work has dealt with the traditional business world, Senge

has given attention to school organizations and how children learn. He is emphatic when

he says that "Kids learn in schools that learn" (Newcomb, 2003, p. 20). He realizes that

changes must occur in school cultures in order for children to be educated well. Senge

understands that school leaders have the task of creating and sustaining school

improvement, but he believes that this purpose finds difficulty due to traditional

practices, top-down leadership and the constant fads that cycle through the schools.

Senge believes that people working in the schools, all the way from school

superintendents to cafeteria workers, "must become aware of deeply ingrained

assumptions they may not even know they have—but that can inhibit their performance

or blind them to new possibilities" (p. 20).

Senge sends the message that

> our organizations work the way they work because of how we think and how we
> interact. Only by changing how we think can we change deeply embedded
> policies and practices. Only by changing how we interact can shared visions,
> shared understandings and new capacities for coordinated action be established
> (Newcomb, 2003, p. 20).

Senge's 1990 book, titled *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning

Organization*, suggests that educators develop five dimensions (or learning capacities) in

order to achieve meaningful change and transform schools into "learning organizations."

The five dimensions are: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, team learning, and shared vision (O'Neil, 1995). Isaacson and Bamburg (1992) note that "It is critical to consider all five disciplines together in any serious search for increasing the quality of educational experiences" (p. 44). They offer hope that school leaders will be able to make this transformation by satisfying three functions: the designer of settings in which the five disciplines can be promoted; the steward of the shared vision; and the teacher who fosters learning for everyone.

Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, and Smith (1999) focus on one particular kind of organizational change--profound change. This type of change builds capacity for doing things in new ways. Profound change combines inner shifts in people's values, motivations, aspirations, and behavior with outer shifts in processes, strategies, practices, and systems. These authors identify three major groups of challenges that oppose profound change:

- challenge for initiating change (control over one's time; inadequate coaching, guidance, and support; relevance; leadership clarity and consistency);

- challenge of sustaining transformation (fear and anxiety; negative assessment of progress; isolation and arrogance);

- and challenge of redesigning and rethinking (prevailing governance structure; diffusion; and strategy and purpose).

As we have seen in the literature, culture is crucially important to an organization. Changing a culture to one that is more positive and effective is a difficult challenge that many leaders experience. One change in culture that many school leaders are enacting in

today's schools is the classroom walk-through visit. This culture change puts the instructional leadership abilities at the forefront of the school leadership's responsibilities. In the next section classroom walk-through visits will be explored and discussed as a way to help school leaders and teachers increase their professional capacity so that they can assist their students in improving in their performance and succeeding.

Classroom Walk-throughs (CWTs)

Classroom walk-through visits are rather new cultural phenomena that are occurring in schools. These visits are a cultural change strategy because they change the way in which school staff, especially administrators and teachers, interact with each other on a professional level. These visits create opportunities for school administrators to enter into classrooms on a regular basis and offer constant feedback in an informal way so that continuous improvement is possible for teachers. In this section the history, purpose and goals of classroom walk-through visits are explored. In addition, elements of successful visits will be addressed as well as the benefits and challenges of this initiative.

Definition and Origin

Classroom walk-through visits (also called Learning Walks, Quick Visits, Peer Coaching, Data Walks, and Principal Professional Learning Walks) are structured and systematic tours of schools and classrooms completed by the principal, assistant principal or a variety of other school leaders. These visits can be performed by individual observers or teams of people. Usually these classroom visits occur frequently and focus

on instructional practices and student learning. Rather than these short drop-in visits being a part of the formal teacher evaluation, they are meant to informally gather data on instructional practices and encourage collaborative conversations between school administrators and teachers as well as build positive relationships and environments (David, 2008; Rissman, Miller, & Torgesen, 2009). They have become increasingly popular over the last few years. In fact, classroom walk-throughs have become more of a norm and an expected part of the principal's routine (Martin & Furr, 2010).

The idea of "walk-throughs" did not originate in the educational world. The concept actually began in the business arena in the 1970s by Hewlett-Packard. They named their formal walk-through process "Management by Walking Around (MBWA)." Their purpose was to train managers in management skills and allow them to be visible to employees. Research by Peters and Waterman in 1984 showed that the most successful companies had managers that were close to the customers and workers. In addition, these managers participated in the daily routines of the business (Frase, Downey, & Canciamilla, 1999; Rissman et al., 2009).

Purpose and Goals

Classroom walk-through visits serve many purposes. Bloom (2007) identifies four purposes:

- develop and support professional learning communities focused on improving teaching and learning;
- strengthen the teaching profession by making the practice more public (not isolated) and informed by standards;

- commit to support the success of every student and teacher;

- and organize around clear and public processes and protocols.

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform (2007) notes four purposes for walk-through visits. First, they get principals into classrooms more often for shorter amounts of time than traditional observations allow. Second, structured visits give principals first-hand accounts of instructional issues and patterns that are taking place in their schools. The visits allow them opportunities to be the instructional leader at the school. Third, principals can see what is being taught in the classroom and make sure it aligns with the standards. Fourth, the walk-through provides opportunities for the principal and teachers to talk professionally about what is happening in the classroom.

David (2008) notes additional purposes for classroom walk-through visits. She cites that a significant purpose for the visits is to inform principals about school improvement efforts. Principals and teachers have the opportunity to learn more about instructional practices and principals are better able to identify training and support that teachers need. A second goal for the visits enables the principal to take on the role of the "instructional leader" of the school. In the past principals visited classrooms only two or three times each year, usually for the formal teacher observations (Rissman et al., 2009). This limited number of observations did not provide principals with enough adequate information to move their school forward, nor did it allow opportunities to display their "learning leader" role with their staff. In today's schools, principals must be more active in their instructional leadership role. They can demonstrate their instructional leadership skills by participating in the shared learning experiences with their staff. Hanson (2011)

notes additional purposes for walk-through visits. Usually the person performing the observation is looking for specific things during a walkthrough, such as the focus of the lesson, opportunities for students to engage in the lesson, ways the teacher models the lesson, or how teachers monitor student understanding and progress. Trends among classroom visits can be used for staff development topics. Walk-through visits also allow insight into how previous staff development trainings are being implemented and utilized.

Elements for Successful Programs

In order for classroom walk-through visits to have desired outcomes, administrators need to communicate the intent, procedures, and protocol of the visits. Prior to beginning a classroom walk-through program, administrators and teachers must be clear about what to expect and what everyone's role is. The walk-throughs should be focused on areas in which teachers have been provided with sufficient staff development and support to implement (Bloom, 2007; David, 2008). Ginsberg and Murphy (2002) suggest that principals and teachers work together in creating a walkthrough protocol that everyone understands, including a schedule for reviewing the process. Each school must design its own procedures and set of questions that observers try to answer during the walkthrough visits. Each school can begin creating their approach to walk-through visits by asking and answering five important questions: How will the walkthrough process contribute to our school's approach to school improvement? What are the reasons for the visits and who will visit the classrooms? What questions should observers bring to walkthroughs and what questions should observers ask students? What additional data

needs to be gathered to complement information from the walkthroughs? How can the

walkthroughs be a positive experience for everyone involved in the process?

Three common elements are shared among walk-through visits (Center for

Comprehensive Form and Improvement, 2007). The first element is brevity. Since the

walk-through is meant to increase the number of classrooms that a principal visits, each

visit needs to be limited to approximately ten minutes. If the visit lasts longer than this

length of time, then the goal of gathering initial impressions is not obtained. These short

visits are not replacing the required longer observations and evaluations; instead, they are

supplementing them with a high number of 'snapshots' that when taken over time can

reveal trends and patterns about instruction throughout the entire school. The second

element is focus. By teachers and principals having a common focus, all participants

have the same understandings. Because walk-through visits can vary in their purpose,

principals must be certain to make it clear to teachers what is being observed and why.

To make sure that the common understanding exists between all participants, teachers

need to be included in developing the checklist of 'look fors' and 'listen fors' that

principals will be using during the observation as well as the reflective questions during

the follow-up to the visit. Just a few examples of focal points are: student engagement,

grade level objectives being taught, evidence of planning, and classroom environment.

The third element of a classroom walk-through visit is dialogue. Following the

observation, a conversation between the principal and the observed teacher needs to

occur. This can be considered to be a powerful staff development opportunity when

feedback from the principal causes the teacher to think reflectively about his/her practice and behavior.

Models and Variations

Classroom walk-through visits in schools cannot be limited to only one particular model. Each model can have a different purpose, process, and frequency. Rissman et al. (2009) describe four models for classroom walk-through visits. The first model, and also perhaps the most common, is "The Three Minute Classroom Walk-Through" and the ideas are based on *The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time.* Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, and Poston (2004) claim that the principal's main role is to be an instructional leader. The informal observations allow principals to have substantive conversations with their staff based on what they saw when they spent time in the classroom. Rather than being evaluative, the principals use these visits to gather information about curriculum, instructional practices and teacher decision making so that opportunities can be created to begin reflective thinking and discussions. Downey et al. state that these short, focused, frequent and informal visits allow for professional growth. The authors encourage reflective follow-up, but advise not to provide feedback after every visit; rather, they suggest waiting until after eight to ten visits have occurred before engaging in reflective dialogue with teachers. The visits also allow school leadership to know how effective staff development opportunities have been. In the sequel to the first book written by Downey et al. (2010), the author's build on the second part of the walk-through process,

the reflective follow-up conversation. They underscore the importance of this critical

piece by emphasizing that school leaders provide

- effective follow-up discourse without criticizing or demoralizing teachers;

- build collegial and respectful relationships with faculty members;

- help teachers become continuously improving professionals;

- and foster a collaborative process between principals, teachers, and other

  instructional leaders.

A second model is "Three Cs and an E." This walk-through process is conducted

by central office staff and school principals. These visits look for "Curriculum content

being taught, level of expected Cognitive ability according to Bloom's taxonomy,

classroom and lesson Context, and evidence of student Engagement" (Rissman, 2009, p.

5). The walk-through committee provides teachers with feedback that asks questions that

will hopefully cause teachers to think about their curriculum and instructional practices.

A third model, "Data Analysis by Walking Around," has the goal of improving

the "core of educational practice" (Rissman, 2009, p. 6). This model includes walk-

through visits in the fall and spring by teams of 25 people including teachers,

administrators, parents and educators from surrounding school districts. This process

begins with each committee member reviewing the data collection process, confirming

schedules, and receiving assignments of classrooms to visit so that interviews of 20

students can be completed. Following the interviews, the walk-through team compiles

their data and summarizes what they learned so that the information can be presented to

the school faculty.

A fourth model, "Data in a Day (DiaD)," is conducted four times each year for 25 minutes each visit and has the purpose of determining what is happening in the classroom and improving instruction (Rissman, 2009). This model is used by visitation teams of administrators, teachers familiar with the instrument, and teachers learning about the instrument. The observation team looks for and counts frequencies in five categories: instructional practices, engagement, levels of thinking, connection between the teaching and curriculum standards, and the classroom climate. Following the observations and tallying and graphing results, the findings are shared with faculty. Confidentiality is maintained with only individual classroom data being shared with the teacher who is observed. This model includes goal setting, scheduling additional observations, training additional teachers on the instrument, and sharing information that is learned.

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2007) note variations for conducting walk-through visits. Instead of principals conducting the visits, allowing teachers to use the tool can encourage teacher leadership and build professional learning communities. After teachers are trained in using the strategy, teachers can use the tool in many ways. Teachers on the same grade level can visit each other's classroom and target an agreed upon focus. Another variation is the walk-through taking place after school focusing on how the physical environment of the classroom supports student learning. A third variation is a team approach to the visit. A team of five or six observers (including principals, teachers, instructional coaches, and staff from a nearby school) decide on a focus and each group member is given the task of observing a

specific aspect of the focus. Following the walk-through visit, team members meet and provide the observed teachers with written feedback.

Benefits

Research supports the notion that classroom walk-through visits have many desired learning outcomes and transformative possibilities, especially when tied to professional learning communities (Bloom, 2007). Positive results that can be tied directly to classroom walk-through visits include: higher student achievement across socio-economic and cultural lines; improved classroom instruction; improved teacher perception of principal effectiveness; improved student discipline and student acceptance of advice and criticism; increased teacher efficacy; enhanced teacher satisfaction and higher frequency; and improved teacher attitudes toward teacher appraisal (Frase et al., 1999, p. 3). Rissman et al. (2009) note that when principals visit classrooms on a regular basis they become more familiar with the curriculum, teachers' instructional practices, teaching patterns and decision making skills. These authors also find that principals become aware of the climate in the school, student engagement, and cross-curricular concepts. Principals use the visits so that they are able to develop a team atmosphere in the school that focuses on instruction and student motivation. The walk-throughs allow schools to develop a common language for quality instruction, establish consistent expectations, and provide a way for principals to communicate their expectations to their staff. Skretta (2007) asserts that the best walk-throughs give teachers relevant, real-time data on their instruction with feedback that is specific to observed behaviors, positive,

focused, descriptive of the level of performance observed and includes a question to ponder that is designed to enhance the reflective capacity of the teacher.

Challenges

While there are positive effects of walk-through visits in schools, administrators need to be aware of significant risks and challenges associated with the strategy. First, if the purpose of the walk-through visit is not clear to teachers or when there is not a sense of trust between the administration and the teaching staff, walk-throughs can be seen as compliance checks. The visits can increase distrust, tension, and anxiety. Second, if the walk-through is not attached to school improvement efforts that have been provided by staff development, teachers will dismiss the visits as 'gotchas or drive-bys.' Third, if the data from the walk-through is not used or if teachers perceive the data as being fake, then confidence is lost in the purpose of the strategy. David (2008) and Bloom (2007) also note that if walk-through visits are handled poorly or in a negligent fashion, not only will hostility and distrust be felt among teachers, but school staff will view it as another "passing fad in the long and disappointing history of school reform" (Bloom, 2007, p. 41).

Moss and Brookhart (2013) note three myths about education that traditional walk-through visits allow to be continued. First, principals, as "evaluators in chief" (p. 44), know exactly what to look for and can infer what teachers need to do about raising student achievement. Second, a foolproof recipe already exists of best practices that raise student achievement regardless of content, context or the students in consideration. Third, information about student learning flows from the top down, meaning that teachers

need the administrators to gather and interpret the data for them so that they can better

instruct the students. Moss and Brookhart (2013) point out that

> traditional walk-through visits, which are often frequent, short classroom visits
> that focus on the effects of instruction, are often guided by checklists of strategies
> that principals look for as they observe teachers and instruction. These
> prescriptive lists tie principals to a protocol that gathers one-sided evidence,
> invites misconceptions about effective teaching and meaningful learning, and
> derails opportunities for collaborative learning. (p. 43)

An alternative walk-through visit, called a 'formative walk-through,' is an

approach that might solve the problem that is implied from the traditional walk-through

visit. The concept used with this approach includes administrators walking through

classrooms looking for and learning from what the students are actually doing, saying,

writing or making during the lessons. School administrators using this approach are

"looking at learning experiences through the eyes of students" (Moss & Brookhart, 2013,

p. 42) by asking two questions:

1. If I were a student in this classroom, what would I think was important for me
   to learn today, and how well would I believe that I had to learn it?
2. If I did everything the teacher asked me to do during this lesson, what would I
   actually learn, and what kind of evidence would I produce that I had learned
   it? (p. 44)

Principals have the task of answering these questions by looking for and describing

performances of understanding and by having conversations with the students about what

and how they are learning in their classroom.

An additional challenge that many administrators face with classroom walk-

through visits is the enormous amount of data that is collected. Granada and Vriesenga

(2008) point out that many principals do not use walk-throughs to their potential because

of the time it takes to "store, process, analyze, and give feedback" (p. 24). School

systems are discovering that one way to get the most benefit out of this valuable

observation tool is a web-based walk-through system. These programs enable principals

to

> customize their walk-through templates to answer questions that are important to them and their faculty members, to gather observation data on handheld computers, and upload the data to a Web server . . . Principals can easily email copies of the observations to their teachers; analyze the data; and create, view and print reports. (Granada & Vriesenga, 2008, p. 24)

Suggestions for Effective Visits

While there are numerous challenges that principals face when initiating walk-

through visits, Frase et al. (1999) list 12 actions that principals can do to facilitate the

classroom walk-through process:

1. Strategically schedule walk-through visits at the beginning of the year for the entire year.
2. Schedule time for interactive feedback.
3. Use time for cancelled meetings for additional walk-through observations.
4. Stay in classrooms for only two or three minutes.
5. Visit a few classrooms after visiting something else on campus.
6. Observe to determine the curriculum being taught and the effectiveness of instruction and classroom management.
7. Do not formalize observations.
8. Provide feedback based on individual needs.
9. Give specific, written positive feedback before leaving classroom, when appropriate.
10. Provide feedback for meaningful reflection.
11. Keep feedback short and focused.
12. Start the inquiry-type feedback process with a few teachers that you recruit. (pp. 4–5)

Skretta (2007) suggests ten tips that can lead to successful walk-through visits:

1. Talk with teachers beforehand about the importance of informal observations.
2. Schedule walk-throughs and make them a commitment just as you would any other part of your day.
3. Track the frequency of your visits to specific teachers and content areas by maintaining a spreadsheet that lets you know whose classrooms you have visited and ensures you do not leave anyone out.
4. Use a laptop to record feedback while you observe so you do not have to rewrite or finalize walk-throughs when you return to your office
5. Get your walk-through note back to teachers within 24 hours.
6. If you use a checklist make sure it includes criteria that faculty members understand.
7. Always affirm the positives.
8. Consider leveraging the strengths of individual teachers for professional development for the entire faculty.
9. Email feedback to teachers and do not demand a reply.
10. Establish trust and maintain it through consistency. (p. 21)

Conclusion

There is little doubt that culture plays a critical role in the success of our students and our schools. When our schools' leaders fully accept their role and realize their power in changing and shaping their school's culture, effective transformations will begin to occur to guarantee this success.   When implemented well, classroom walk-through visits can be a positive cultural shift in a school and play a significant role in school improvement. Instructional walk-through visits can assist administrators from moving their teaching staff from a culture of isolation to one of collaboration. If walk-through visits are embraced by school staff and modified to meet individual school needs as a means for collecting data, rich conversation and continuous improvement is certainly possible. Through classroom walk-through visits, districts, schools and individuals will

have the ability to practice and stimulate professional culture growth and student

achievement. Bennis recalls the words of John Gardner when he stated that

> Leaders are people who understand the prevailing culture, even though much of
> the culture is latent, existing only in people's minds and dreams, or in their
> unconscious. But understanding is only the first step. The leaders of the future
> will be those who take the next step—to change the culture. It is through
> changing something that one truly comes to understand it. Here and now, we
> need such leaders (Bennis, 2009, p. 186).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of my study is based on school culture being the

foundation, or center, of the work that goes on within a school. My diagram serves as a

guide to understanding the sequence of events and desired outcomes of classroom walk-

through visits (see Figure 1). Ideally, the cycle begins with the principal conducting

classroom walk-through visits and giving teachers feedback based on the observations.

Ginsberg and Murphy (2002) contend that principals can go into a few classrooms every

day for frequent, short and unscheduled visits. The administrators should provide short

feedback and comments to the teachers so that the teachers can reflect on the observation.

After teachers have reflected on the visits and feedback, they discuss the visit and

feedback with colleagues during their Professional Learning Community groups.

Granada and Vriesenga (2008) found that 84% of teachers reported discussing the

classroom walk-through visits with other teachers.   Teachers explore how the feedback

can change and impact their instruction and student learning within the classrooms.

Based on the needs and concerns derived from the discussion, site-specific professional

development opportunities are provided to teachers from building level personnel.
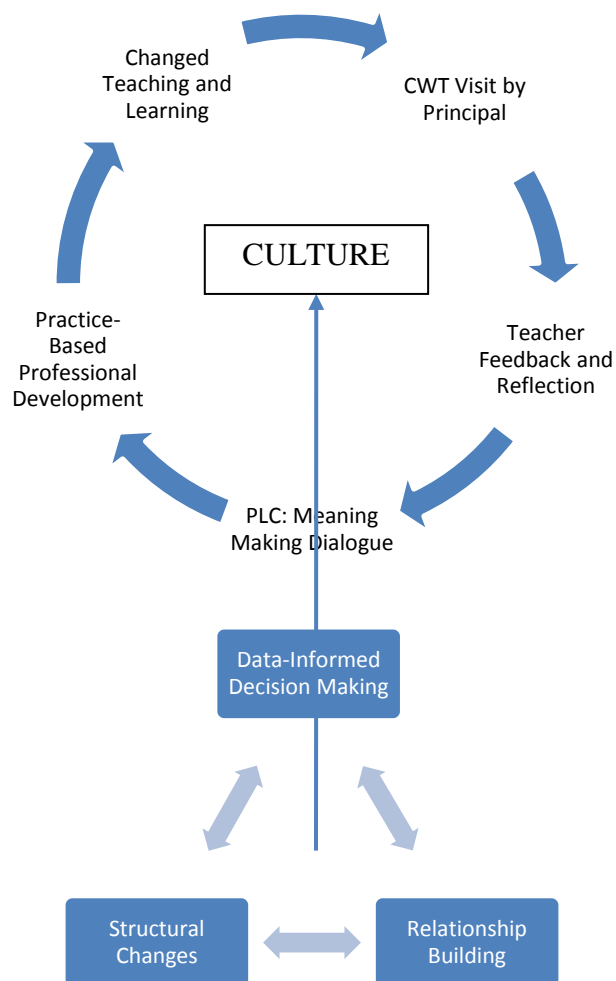
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for School Culture.

Bloom (2007) suggests that the classroom walk-through visitations not only be aligned with discussion and analysis of student achievement data in professional learning communities, but include professional development opportunities that coincide with school planning processes. Bloom (2007) states that the classroom walk-through visits are not just a random additional task to be completed by the administrator; rather, they are a "key element of continuous improvement processes" (p. 44). Bloom also notes that the classroom visit cycle should not occur just once or twice each year; instead, it should

be an on-going, continual process. He states that "they are meant to be an integral element of a school and district culture" (p. 44). The ultimate goal of this effort is that improved teaching and learning will be evident in the classroom. In order for the changed teaching and learning environment to occur from the Classroom Walk-Through initiative, three crucial elements must be recognized and developed: relationship building, structural changes, and data-informed decision making.

Summary

Chapter II provided an in-depth review of the literature on organizational culture and classroom walk-through visits. Key ideas concerning organizational culture were found from several leading authors and theorists. The literature reports that culture includes learned patterns of behavior and thoughts; shared ideas, customs, assumptions, expectations, philosophy, and traditions; the ways in which things are done; commitments of the group and what members think of each other. Additional findings emphasize the importance of socialization in culture, a natural evolution of culture, and organizations shape the development of the changing culture.

The literature on classroom walk-through visits was reviewed. Some of the key findings from the review revealed that this initiative actually started in the business world four decades ago. Walk-through visits have multiple purposes and goals that include supporting professional learning communities that are focused on improving teaching and learning; strengthening the teaching profession by making the teaching practice more visible and public instead of isolated; and providing opportunities for administrators to get into classrooms and receive first-hand accounts of what is happening in classrooms

and engage in conversations with teachers about instructional matters. Elements for successful walk-through programs were explored and findings included the importance of communication, brevity, and focus. Models and variations of these visits were addressed in addition to underscoring the benefits of the visits (higher student achievement, improved classroom instruction, improved teacher perception of principal effectiveness, improved student discipline, increased teacher efficacy; enhanced teacher satisfaction, and improved attitudes toward teacher appraisal).

Chapter III will provide the details concerning how the study was conducted. It will explain why the case study approach was the chosen methodology for the study. It will identify the four research questions, explain eight key concepts and terms, and provide information related to the setting, the participants, data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I conducted a qualitative multi-site comparative case study to answer my research questions about "classroom walkthrough visits." Qualitative data (Lichtman, 2010) has much to offer:

- multiple realities;

- interpretations based on the research's background;

- an ability to apply lessons to many situations;

- multiple ways of knowing things;

- a purposeful way to understand and interpret social interactions;

- an ability to study the whole instead of the specifics;

- an emphasis on words and visuals as data is collected;

- coding and discovering themes that emerge from data; and a more personal writing style.

Taylor and Trujillo (2001) assert that qualitative research is a large area that is constantly growing and changing. These authors argue that this method of study is almost impossible to define; however, they offer the following meanings to capture the encompassing ideas:

- a field of inquiry in its own right that privileges no single methodology over any other;

- a broad, interpretive, post-modern, feminist and critical sensibility as well as to more narrowly defined positivist, post positivistic, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience;
- an emphasis on inductive, interpretive methods applied to the everyday world which is seen as subjective and socially created;
- an examination of the qualities . . . of communication phenomena whereby data tend to be continuing rather than discrete, and the emphasis is on description and explanation more than on measurement and prediction;
- a reference to a variety of methods that includes interpretive, naturalistic, phenomenological, or ethnographic. (p. 162)

These attributes and descriptions are meaningful to me because they help me to understand the research methodology I have chosen for researching my topic. As a classroom teacher I understand "classroom walk-through visits" from one perspective. I feel that I am on 'the other side' of the administrators who are performing the classroom walkthrough visits; however, I am aware that there are multiple ways of considering the data that is collected and the implications that are constructed.

The case study is one form of qualitative inquiry (Lichtman, 2010). Case studies have gained favor as a means to study one entity, or case, in an in-depth manner. Through the collection of a variety of data, one can document a single case and describe, in detail, the characteristic, trait, or behavior being studied. The goal of the case study is not to discover information that can be generalized. Instead, case studies help researchers provide a rich and detailed description of an event or situation.

Cassel and Symon (2005) contend that case studies "are widely used in organizational studies and across social sciences. There is growing confidence in the case study as a rigorous research strategy in its own right. It can be theoretically exciting and data rich" (p. 323). These authors go on to describe case studies as "a detailed

investigation in which data is collected over a period of time, within their context. The

aim is to provide an analysis of the context and the processes which illuminate the

theoretical issues being studied" (p. 323). Cassel and Symon (2005) emphasize that

> the phenomenon is not being isolated from its context but is of interest precisely because the aim is to understand how behavior and/or processes are influenced by context. The case study is particularly suited to research questions which require detailed understanding of social or organizational processes because of the rich data collected in context. (324)

Using the case study approach, I will describe how principals and teachers use

classroom walk-through visits in their schools to improve the culture of teaching and

learning. In this study the case is the conditions that allow classroom walkthrough visits

to change the culture in schools, specifically the teaching and learning that takes place in

schools.

A review of the literature outlined the value and importance of understanding

culture in schools and the role it plays in school reform and school improvement. This

study investigated whether or not there was an impact on the culture of teaching and

learning in schools and classrooms due to classroom walk-through visits. The research

questions in this study are listed below.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this study addresses identifying the conditions that

allow classroom walkthrough visits to change the culture in schools, specifically the

teaching and learning that takes place in schools. The four research questions that

attempt to answer that question are:

- How do administrators intentionally and purposefully prepare for classroom walk-through visits?

- How do administrators conduct classroom walk-through visits? What do administrators do during and after "classroom walkthrough visits" that is connected to the teaching and learning culture in the school?

- What do administrators and teachers say about how "classroom walk-through" visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

- How do administrators and teachers say data is used from "classroom walk-through visits"?

Key Concepts and Terms

A 'vocabulary' is concerned primarily with communicating the meanings of terms and concepts so that the reader may use those terms and concepts in his or her everyday life and work. A vocabulary is therefore not concerned first and foremost with authoritative definitions or with etymological origins, but rather is concerned with the pragmatic meaning-in-use of particular terms and concepts. (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 1)

There are eight terms that are important to understanding this research study. The first term concerns the topic of the study. **Classroom walk-through visits** performed in the schools in this study are structured and systematic tours of schools and classrooms completed by the principal, assistant principal or academic coach. These visits can be performed by individual observers or teams of people. Usually these classroom visits occur frequently and focus on instructional practices and student learning. Rather than these short drop-in visits being a part of the formal teacher evaluation, they are meant to informally gather data on instructional practices and encourage collaborative

conversations between school administrators and teachers as well as build positive

relationships and environments (David, 2008; Rissman et al., 2009). They have become

increasingly popular over the last few years. In fact, classroom walk-throughs have

become more of a norm and an expected part of the principal's routine (Martin & Furr,

2010).

The remaining terms defined in this section deal with words and concepts that the

participants in the study discuss when talking about their experiences with classroom

walk-through visits.

- **Learning Targets** are statements that teachers present to students that guide

  and focus the lesson. The learning target helps students understand the

  purpose of the lesson and it allows the students to know what they are

  expected to be able to do at the conclusion of the lesson. They are often

  written in a 'kid' friendly way and they begin with the words "I can . . ."

- A **Professional Learning Community (PLC)** is a group of school personnel

  who gather together for many purposes. They may meet to study various

  student assessment data, including, but not limited to benchmarks, common

  formative assessments, and end of grade test scores. Teachers use this

  information to inform them when planning and writing their lesson plans.

- **Rigor** is the complexity level of tasks that teachers present to students. Rigor

  also refers to the ways in which students apply their knowledge through

  higher order thinking skills. Often teachers refer to the Bloom's Taxonomy

for different levels of cognitive activities and questions when they refer to rigor level of student work and assignments.

- A **School Improvement Plan** is a document that lists priorities, goals and strategies schools will take to raise student achievement. The schools in the district that I studied use REACH goals for their School Improvement Plan. REACH stands for: Rigorous instruction; Engagement in 21st century learning opportunities; Achievement in support of college/career readiness; Community involvement to infuse school culture; High quality teachers and administrators.

- **Student engagement** is the degree of attention, curiosity, interest and motivation students demonstrate when they are learning.

- **Teachscape**, founded in 1999 with the "mission to help all educators maximize their effectiveness" (Teachscape), is on online program that the school district in this study purchased. It collects data that the observers record and provides many analytical tools to present data, including charts and graphs.

- **Vertical Alignment/Articulation** refers to teachers from multiple grade levels who meet to discuss how curricular content and instruction progressively build from one grade level to the next.

Settings

The research for this study took place in a naturalistic setting.

Naturalistic settings are important because researchers are interested in the role of context. The naturalistic setting affords practitioners and researchers with opportunities to examine how individuals interact with their environment through symbols, social roles and social structures. (Hays & Singh, 2012)

The research setting for this case study included three elementary schools in one school system in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. This setting, Dogwood School District, was chosen for several reasons. First, the selection was based on its close proximity to where I live. It was conveniently located so that it was just a short drive from my house to each of the three school sites. Second, I selected this school system because I know several of the administrators in the district. Prior to conducting this research study I worked in this district for 23 years; however, while collecting the data for this research study, I did not work in Dogwood School District. My experience with this school district afforded me the opportunity to ask a high level executive at the district office to assist me in finding schools that would want to participate in the study. The executive sent out emails to several principals in the school district asking of they were interested in participating in the study. Only one of them responded to her email. I immediately contacted her and made arrangements to conduct the study at her school. I sent out emails to five other principals that I knew and two of them responded that they would participate in the study.

All of the schools in this study were elementary schools. They ranged in different sizes of student populations. This was important because the student population

determined whether the school would be assigned an assistant principal. This factor impacted Maple Avenue Elementary because it had a student population of 344 students and 27 classroom teachers. Due to its size, it was not allowed to get a new assistant principal when theirs left in the middle of the school year to take another position in a neighboring school district. Birch Street Elementary had a student population of 553 students and 40 classroom teachers. South Garden Elementary had a student population of 602 students and 50 classroom teachers. Both Birch Street Elementary and South Garden Elementary had full-time assistant principals. The existence of an assistant principal was important because the principals felt that it afforded them more time to do the classroom walk-through visits.

Participants

The participants for this research study were three school administrators (two principals and one assistant principal) and 38 teachers in the three elementary schools. Appendix D provides information about the participants in the study. I interviewed and shadowed one administrator at each school. I also interviewed 12–13 teachers at each school. I recruited the administrators by sending them an email asking for their participation in the study. I asked the administrators to inform teachers at their school about the study and I requested their voluntary participation in an interview during their planning time during the school day or after school has been dismissed. All of the teacher interviews were conducted during their planning time while their students were in their special/encore classes. I conducted the principal interviews and shadowing at Elm Street and Maple Ave. Elementary schools after finishing all of the teacher interviews.

When I was at Pine Street Elementary I conducted the principal interview and shadowing before I interviewed any of the teachers.

Data Collection

After I received approval from the UNCG IRB and the school district in which the participants were employed, I was able to begin my data collection. Data for this study was collected from a variety of sources, including individual administrator (principal or assistant principal) and teacher interviews, observations of principals conducting classroom walk-through visits, and the collection of documents from each school site that demonstrated data collected from their classroom walk-through visits. There was an administrator interview protocol and a separate interview protocol for teachers. The interviews were semi-structured so that the same questions were asked of all participants, but they were flexible enough so that I could probe deeper for more detailed answers and descriptions. Prior to all of the interviews, each participant signed a consent form documenting that they voluntarily agreed to be a part of this study.

Each school administrator participant was interviewed individually for approximately one hour. Administrative interviews were conducted in the office at each of the schools. Following the administrator interviews, I shadowed the administrator on one to three classroom walk-through visits and debriefed the observation with the administrator immediately after the visit to find out what she noticed about the teacher and students in the classroom. In addition to administrator interviews and shadowing of classroom walk-through visits, I interviewed teachers at the school. The teacher interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 30 minutes. I contacted the school prior to my visit

to secure a private room so that the interview would be confidential. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for potential codes, categories and themes.

Data Analysis

Upon the full collection of data at a site, the audio recordings of the interviews were professionally transcribed. Once I received the transcriptions, I read them and then sent them to the participants for a member check. I asked each participant to read the transcript and let me know if they felt any changes needed to be made or if they wanted to add additional comments.

After the participants responded that the transcribed interviews were correct, I began to analyze the interviews. I reread each interview, highlighted key words and wrote phrases and notes in the margins. I also printed each question from the interview protocol on a separate sheet of paper with lines where I could jot down key words and phrases for each participant's answer. This allowed me to see how the participants' answers were the same and different for each question. I then began to group key words together until I found categories that united them. I analyzed all of the information and identified common and unifying categories as they related to how classroom walk-through visits change the culture of teaching and learning in the school. All forms of data collection (interviews, observations, and documents) were used in the study.

After closely analyzing the data, four major categories emerged. The categories that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV are Roles of Educators: Before, During and After classroom walk-through visits; Role of Communicating the Vision; Role of Technology and Analyzing Data; and Role of Collaborative Learning

Relationships with a consideration of attitudes and emotions of educators. As the researcher, I had a difficult time deciding which category and theme some of the information fit best. In some cases, the data could be categorized in several categories, but I had to make the decision of where it belonged best.

<div align="center">**Subjectivity**</div>

Researchers acknowledge that they enter into any study with a set of perspectives. Peshkin (1988) refers to these as our "Subjective I's" which are influenced by a researcher's experiences and perceptions of the topic of study, in this case the classroom walk-through visits. Subjectivity can refer to notions of an individual's conscious and unconscious self. A researcher's subjectivity is not something that can be taken away from the research process.

My primary subjectivity in this study is influenced by the fact that I am an experienced elementary teacher. I have been a classroom teacher for 26 years. During my first 23 years of teaching administrators never stepped into my classroom for short visits for any reason. In fact the only time that an administrator came into my classroom was to do the required formal observations, and those occasions totaled no more than three times each year. It has only been during the last two years that I have personally experienced classroom walk-through visits. Now principals come into my classroom on a daily basis to conduct walk-through visits.

Before I began collecting data, I had assumptions that when I interviewed the teacher participants I would hear similar stories that aligned with my lived experiences. I assumed that the teachers would have similar opinions and feelings that I had. I entered

into this study with a negative opinion toward classroom walk-through visits. In my experiences I have never felt like the visit contributed toward improving my lesson planning or delivery of instruction. The visits always felt like they were a way in which administrators could monitor what I was or was not doing as a teacher. I felt like I was being "check on" and "watched." I felt this way because the principal would come into my classroom with a check list on a clipboard and would leave a copy of a comment on NCR paper. The administrator's copy was put in "my file." Every teacher had a file with copies of walk-through feedback forms. Very rarely was there ever a verbal conversation about what the administrators saw while they were in my classroom. Only on one occasion was feedback shared with the whole staff about the walk-through visits, and that information was shared through a blanket email to the entire staff. That email gave the percentage of teachers who had current learning targets written on the board and the percentage of teachers who were teaching the subject that was listed on the master calendar.

While conducting this study it was important for me to remember that during the last two years even though I have had numerous occasions where the principal or assistant principal observed my classroom, I have never had the experience of actually performing one of these observations. I also had never shadowed a principal for one of these visits. In addition, I have not had the opportunity to have meaningful conversations with principals about how they use the information that they obtain from these observations.

During this study it was very important for me to examine the data in an objective and fair manner. I speculated about what the administrators would say during their interviews about the purpose of the walk-throughs and challenges that they faced when implementing this initiative. It was important for me to not get defensive if principals talked critically about what they saw in teachers' classrooms. While the principals that I have worked for have been very positive toward me and the work I do in my classroom, I have heard my peers talk about what administrators have said about the instruction in their classrooms. While I understand the principal's role in striving for school improvement, I also believe in the teacher's rights and responsibilities to exercise professional judgment for the instructional teaching practices and student learning that occurs in the classroom.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was very important to me. I took several steps to make sure that this study maintained high quality standards. First, all of the data from the three schools in my study was collected within just a few weeks of each other toward the end of the school year. This was important because it meant that all of the participants were answering questions based on the classroom walk-through visits that had taken place during an entire school year. Second, I triangulated the data by using interviews, observations and supporting documents. This allowed me to study the topic from multiple perspectives. Third, I immediately had the interviews professionally transcribed. After I read the transcribed the data I shared the transcriptions with the participants for member checking. I requested the participants to read the transcriptions

and let me know if any changes needed to be made to the information they provided. Finally, I used all of the data that I collected (interviews, observation notes and supporting documents) from all three schools to identify emerging categories. While most of the data that was collected came from the interviews, the information from the observations and the documents supported the findings in the interviews.

Benefits and Risks

There are hopefully many benefits for the individuals participating in this research study. The principals had the opportunity to examine and reflect on how classroom walk-through visits are used to improve the teaching and learning culture at their school. Perhaps questions that the researcher asked the participants caused them to consider additional ways that classroom walk-through visits can be utilized to improve the teaching and learning process in their building. Teachers will be able to reflect on classroom walkthrough visits and how they have been beneficial to the teaching and learning in their classrooms. Hopefully, this study will provide opportunities for conversations between the administrators and faculty about the visits and the vision for the school. Risks were a minimal factor in this study. All recordings and transcripts were kept confidential and destroyed at the conclusion of the research study.

Limitations

There are three main limitations to this study. First, I limited this study to one school system in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. I am interested in learning how other surrounding school systems conduct classroom walk-through visits, collect data, and use the information to inform them of the potential changes in their school culture,

but due to many factors I was not able to extend my research into other districts. The

second limitation to this study dealt with teacher interviews. The length of time I had to

interview each teacher was determined by the length of his/her planning period. Often I

was not able to probe as deeply as I would have liked because of the time constraint.

Third, I was limited to the number of schools in the district that agreed to participate in

this study. While numerous attempts were made to recruit participants, only three

principals agreed to participate in the study. I would have liked to have included at least

one or two more schools in order to ensure a more comprehensive examination of the

way in which this district used classroom walk-through visits to improve the culture of

teaching and learning in the classrooms and schools.

Summary

This qualitative case study examines how three elementary administrators and 38

elementary teachers view how classroom walk-through visits impact the culture of

teaching and learning in their schools and classrooms. In-depth interviews, observations

and document analysis from the participants in three elementary schools were used to

establish trends and patterns that were conducive to changing the culture of schools and

classrooms in a positive direction. After the data collection was complete, all aspects of

the data were analyzed and coded in order for themes to emerge. The four themes that

emerged from the data assisted in answering the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The literature review in this study suggests that school leadership should address the issue of school culture if positive, sustainable changes within schools are to take place. One of the culture building strategies that many schools have been using in recent years is the utilization of classroom walk-through visits. This research study examined classroom walk-through visits in three elementary schools in Dogwood School District in order to answer the four following research questions about classroom walk-through visits and changing the culture of teaching and learning in schools:

- What are the conditions that allow classroom walkthrough visits to change the culture in schools, specifically the teaching and learning that takes place in schools?

    o How do administrators intentionally and purposefully prepare for classroom walk-through visits?

    o How do administrators conduct classroom walk-through visits? What do administrators do during and after "classroom walkthrough visits" that is connected to the teaching and learning culture in the school?

    o What do administrators and teachers say about how "classroom walk-through" visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

o How do administrators and teachers say data is used from "classroom walk-through visits"?

This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will tell the individual story of classroom walk-through visits in three schools in Dogwood School District. Stories of the administrators will be told first, followed by the stories of the teachers. The second section of this chapter will be a discussion and comparison of the four categories that emerged from the data after it was collected and analyzed. The four categories that will be discussed and compared in detail in this chapter are: Role of Educators Before, During and After classroom walk-through visits; Role of Communicating the Vision; Role of Technology and Collection and Use of Data; and Role of Human Relations: Collaborative Learning Relationships and Attitudes/Emotions.

Section 1: Stories from Three Elementary Schools

Maple Avenue Elementary

Maple Avenue Elementary is located in "Magnolia," a small town in the eastern part of the Dogwood School District. The principal, Ms. Johnson, is in her second year as Principal at Maple Avenue Elementary. The school has 344 students. The student demographics are 76% white, 15% black, and 8% Hispanic. Twenty percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch. The school has 27 teachers. There are eight teachers with their National Board Certification and nine teachers with their master's degree.

The administrator's story: Ms. Johnson. Principal Johnson talked about several methods that she used to make sure that she and her instructional team visited every teacher on campus for the classroom walk-through visits. First, before the school year began she made a tentative schedule on an Excel spreadsheet for the entire year and she gave it to her instructional leadership team. This schedule ensured that every teacher would receive at least one classroom walk-through visit each week from one of the administrators.

> I would send the assignments out [to my Instructional Leadership team] in an Excel sheet for the entire year. Everybody knew each week about who they needed to get to. We're a small school and when you split that [number of teachers] up it's very easy, so that was a minimum number and so most of the time we were getting into classrooms more than the one time that we had scheduled out for everybody to get to.

As the school year progressed she made more precise plans about scheduling classroom visits by planning over the weekend about which classrooms she was going to go in, which day and which time. She conceded that even though she made plans, they did not always work out the way she intended. For example, "My plans don't always happen because I have meetings or discipline issues will come up that will get me off schedule. Sometimes I have to try and go whenever I can."

Another action Ms. Johnson used for scheduling the visits was the Teachscape tool that was on her iPad. She used the software to make sure that she and the rest of her instructional team had visited all teacher classrooms. "We found that using Teachscape is an excellent way for us to track that we have visited every classroom." An additional way that Ms. Johnson scheduled her visits was based on the physical layout of the school.

"We have a K-2 hallway and a 3-5 hallway. I try to alternate that up so that you know, some days I'm starting on the K-2 side and some days I'm starting on the 3-5 side. I also have to plan around specials schedules and field trips."

In addition to scheduling the walk-through visits, , Principal Johnson talked to her staff at the beginning of the year about the visits. She explained what she said to her staff.

> The real purpose of the classroom walk-through visit is to improve our practice. It's not a gotcha. I really wanted to emphasize that with teachers because I think in the past there has been distrust between the teachers and the administrators. I wanted them to know that this is something that we can use to improve on and we're all learning and we're all growing. This is letting me be able to come in and share this time with you as an instructional leader about things that I see and how we can improve it because ultimately we all want our students to achieve at higher levels. I went through the Teachscape tool and I shared that with them. Even though we had been over it last year, some people were still surprised because they said 'I didn't know you were looking for that.' I also talked with them about the feedback they would receive. I told them that you will be provided with feedback and you are to reflect on that and you can change your practices and improve on them.

Ms. Johnson continued to talk about her role in preparing for walk-throughs. She stated that she needed to plan what she would be looking for prior to going into the classrooms because that would determine how long each visit would take and how many classrooms she would be able to visit. She noted that "I might only be looking for one thing, like I might go in and look for learning targets that particular day and that way I am able to get into all the classrooms." She indicated that when she is conducting classroom walk-throughs that involve looking for more detailed information, she is not able to get to as many classrooms because of the amount of time it takes to see each of

the elements. She went on to say that the major focus points that she looks for came out

of meetings with her Instructional Leadership Team and a small group of principals from

two other elementary schools in the district.

> We developed our list of what to look for based on previous data from our walk-through visits. Our two main things that we focus on are pedagogy and evidences of student learning. For the pedagogy part, we really wanted to look at the gradual release of responsibility. We wanted to see modeling and collaborative engagement. We wanted students to be able to have discussions with other students and be able to articulate their thoughts and their reasoning and their thinking. We wanted to see the total participation techniques to engage them. We wanted to see independent application to show that our students could apply those skills. We knew that we also had to look at the rigor level of what our students are learning. These were our focus areas and they have continued to be our focus areas throughout this year.

Principal Johnson said that when she goes into the classrooms to conduct the

visits, she looks to see if the learning target is posted. If it is posted, she looks to see

what it is. She also looks to see if the teacher refers to the target during the lesson. In

addition to these things, she looks to see what the teacher and students are doing.

> I look to see what the adult behaviors are and what the student behaviors are. I look to see if the students are engaged or are the students disengaged. I look to see how involved the students are. I look to see if the students are communicating with each other. What are the communication patterns? Are they communicating with the teacher or are they communicating with one another as partners? Are they on task or off task? I also try to gauge what is going on in terms of the rigor level. What kind of level of thinking are we at with the activity that is going on? Is there modeling that is happening? If a teacher is in a small group, I will watch that activity for a while, but then I will look and walk around to make sure that the students in the rest of the room are engaged. Another thing that I look for is what's on the walls in a teacher's classroom because that tells me a lot about what they're learning, as well.

Ms. Johnson said that usually most of her walk-through visits are unannounced, but on a few occasions after having staff development on certain topics, she would let the staff know that she was going to be coming by their classrooms to check on what had been discussed in the meetings, which included increasing the rigor level and engagement level along with learning targets that reflected their learning standards.

Ms. Johnson said that the length of time that she spent in each classroom depended on what she was looking for. If she was only looking for a short bit of information like learning targets, then that could be done very quickly in just a minute or two at the most; however, she said that other visits could take much longer.

> If I'm really going in to get a bigger picture or a full picture, it really takes a good ten minutes to kind of take things in, orient myself, really notice what the learning target is, what the teacher is doing, what the students are doing, what's kind of going on in the context in the classroom, and to really kind of take all that information in to really see what is the rigor level, make sure the rigor level of the learning target matches the activity and the activity matches the standard. I look to see if the students are engaged.

Ms. Johnson stated that she tried to give teachers feedback on a consistent basis following the visits; however, if a discipline incident or some other issue happened, then that could prevent her from providing feedback to the teacher. The feedback that she generally provided the teachers consisted of notes of what the teacher and students were doing. Usually she will write a reflective thinking question that she wants the teachers to consider. She says that the reflective questions that she leaves for teachers are different based on the needs of the teacher. She writes the feedback in the notes section on her iPad and then sends the note directly to the teacher's email. Ms. Johnson commented that

in order to give the teachers feedback, she has to use the notes section of her iPad because

she cannot send the teachers the data that she collects from the Teachscape software.

Due to the time factor of collecting the data on Teachscape and then rewriting it in the

notes section of her iPad, it sometimes requires that she has to be in one teacher's

classroom for as long as 20 minutes to complete the visit. Ms. Johnson stated "Because

of the way the data has to be recorded in Teachscape and then I have to copy and paste

comments into the notes section of my iPad, the teachers may not be getting feedback

every time, but it is still pretty consistent."

Principal Johnson at Elm Street Elementary noted how she used her instructional

leadership team following the completion of walk-through visits.

> When I had an assistant principal, we had three people on our Instructional
> Leadership Team. We would meet every Thursday after all three of us had
> finished our part of the walk-through visits. First, we made sure that we had been
> in all of the classrooms. Then, we would sit down and look at trend data. We
> would look to see what good things were going on in the classrooms. We would
> also look at things we were concerned about. We would use this information to
> begin planning the staff development that we needed at our school.

Ms. Johnson noted that she plans the staff development at her school based on the needs

that she sees at her school, which comes out of the walk-through visits. She stated that

she had planned a lot of staff development on learning targets and rigor last year. This

year she continued working on rigor, but she also focused on student engagement using

Kagan strategies.

Ms. Johnson also reported on following up with the feedback that she left with

teachers in different ways. She said that sometimes teachers will email a response to her

reflective question. Other teachers will request to have a conference with her about the feedback. Some teachers will even ask her about the visit while she is still in the classroom or stop her in the hallway and talk about the lesson that was observed. She said that sometimes she has to initiate the conversation with some teachers about the walk-through.

The teachers' story: Maple Avenue Elementary. The teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary attended a meeting at the beginning of the year to learn about the classroom walk-through visits. At the meeting the principal announced that these visits would occur throughout the school year. Ms. Allen reported that the principal discussed that what would be looked for in the visits are "things that are part of our school improvement plan." Ms. Farmer said they were told that they would not be a formal observation and it would be a way to provide feedback. Ms. Baldwin reported that the purpose was to get a feel for what was happening in the classrooms. Ms. Langley stated that "Ms. Johnson said that she was going to be looking for overall trends. The more information they collected, the better it was. We were told that one bad walk-through is not a big deal. Outliers were dismissed."

Ms. Jackson said the principal gave the teachers the [Teachscape] form so that they would know what the administrators would be looking for. Mr. Davidson, Ms. Ingle and Ms. Manning discussed what the administrators were looking for during the visits. They all agreed that the main items that were being looked for were rigor, engagement, learning targets, high level learning, and relevant information.

While several teachers, including Ms. Baldwin, Ms. Langley and Ms. Ingle all stated that Principal Johnson showed them the Teachscape template that would be used during the observations, several other teachers reported that they were not sure that Principal Johnson had provided them with any information about the visits. Ms. Coble said, "I can't think if we had a meeting this year where we were given any information about these visits." Ms. Hale said "I remember the principals talking about the visits last year in a meeting and going through the different areas on the Smartboard, but I can't remember anything being discussed this year."

The teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary varied in their answers for how often the walkthrough visits occurred. Four teachers stated that they took place about four times per year. Three teachers said they happened about once each month. One teacher reported that they happened twice each month; one teacher stated they happened once each week; and one teacher reported that they took place three times each week, but then it was weeks before seeing the administrators in the rooms again.

 During the visits, all of the teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary (except for one) reported that they saw the administrators come into their classroom with their iPad or laptop for the walk-through visit. The media center coordinator, Ms. Langley, stated that her area is so large that she often does not know when administrators come through for a visit. All of the teachers agreed that the visits were unannounced and usually lasted about five minutes. Four teachers did report that the visits could last as long as 15 or 20 minutes.   Almost all of the teachers reported that the administrators would walk around the room, sometimes stand in one place toward the back of the room and look around the

room at the walls and board, occasionally talking to students but rarely joining in to participate in the lesson. The teachers felt like the principals stayed quiet because they did not want to interrupt the lesson. The teachers said that they just continued to teach and work with students. Ms. Garrison reported, "I just keep doing what I'm doing when they come in. I don't change anything."

After the walk-through visits, teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary reported that their main activity in this phase was to read the feedback (if the administrator provided any) and reflect on it and consider different ways of teaching a lesson. None of the participants interviewed stated that they received feedback after every walk-through visit. The teacher participants reported feedback as "sporadic, not regular, occasional, not a lot, once in a while, inconsistent and sometimes." Many of the teachers were disappointed and expressed frustration in not receiving feedback because they said getting reflective feedback was a way to benefit the growth of the children. One participant, Ms. Garrison, said that she would "even be okay with positive criticism if it helped the children."

Several of the teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary reported that following the visits they would have meetings to discuss the data. The participants reported that information was shared in two meeting formats: whole staff meetings and grade level meetings. Ms. Allen, Ms. Baldwin, Mr. Euliss, Ms. Hale and Ms. King all agreed that data was shared at staff meetings. Ms. Allen stated, "When we had an A.P. we would have whole staff meetings and he made charts and graphs that would show the data." Ms. Hale commented, "We have staff meetings where they talk about the data, but we haven't seen any graphs or charts this year." Three teachers, Ms. Farmer, Ms. Jackson and Ms.

Langley reported that they do not remember specific classroom walk-through data being shared at meetings.

Teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary felt that a lot of the professional development that they have attended was based on classroom walk-through visits, even though they were never told that directly. Ms. Coble said, "We have a lot of professional development, but they don't tell us why we're having it. We just show up at the meetings." Ms. Davidson said that she did not know if the professional development was due to walk-through visits or not. Ms. King said, "I know we have different things, but I don't know if it is due to walk-throughs. We're not told why the topics are chosen for professional development. It could be the classroom walk-through visits, or it could be the district office telling us what we need to do, or who knows what." Ms. Manning said, "We get more professional development than anyone wants. We get professional development at least three times each month. We are never told why we are working on certain topics." Several of the teachers mentioned that the staff development topics they had worked on included rigorous instruction, learning targets, vertical alignment, student engagement, and topics related to Common Core.

Birch Street Elementary

Birch Street Elementary is located in "Begonia," a western area of Dogwood School District. The principal, Ms. Brown, is in her third year as principal at Birch Street Elementary. This school has historically had the highest End of Grade test scores for the district. The school has 553 students. The average class size is 22 students. The student demographics are: 51% white, 27% black; 22% Hispanic. The total ESL population is 89

students: 63 students are Limited English Proficient and 26 are Fluent English Proficient.

Forty-three percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch. Birch Street

Elementary has 40 teachers. Nineteen of the teachers have a master's degree and six

have their National Board Certification.

The administrator's story: Ms. Brown. At Birch Street Elementary, Principal

Brown discussed the importance of scheduling classroom walk-through visits.

> What I have found as a principal is if you don't specifically schedule them in your calendar, it won't happen. So when we were first asked to do these I thought, well, you know, sure, that will be easy. I'll get to these, and then before you know it, you know, a couple of months have gone by and I realize that I haven't gotten them. So we started scheduling those, just writing them into our calendar and that's how we make sure they get done. You know, it's kind of like an observation, during this time we're going to go to this grade level, and I use the teachers' schedules that they turn in to me to kind of guide when I go in.

Ms. Brown pointed out that she has scheduled the walk-throughs in several different

ways. Initially her Instructional Leadership Team, which consists of her assistant

principal, her academic coach and herself, divided the grade levels so that each person

would visit two grade levels during a week. Ms. Brown realized soon after doing this

that she was not getting the amount of data that she needed, so she changed her plan and

required each person on her leadership team to visit every classroom during a week.

Another scheduling strategy that she implemented was having all three members of the

instructional team go into a classroom at the same time. Ms. Brown stated that "by

making these changes we have a good collection of data to say this is what's happening

in our building." Ms. Brown made a point of saying that for the weeks that she was

going to do walk-through visits, she sent an email to all of the staff on Sunday night

informing them that at some time during the week she or other members of the leadership

team would be coming to their rooms for a visit. She said that she did this to emphasize

that the purpose of the visits was not evaluative.

Ms. Brown spoke about the way that she prepared her staff for the visits. She

wanted to emphasize to the staff that walk-throughs were not for evaluative purposes;

rather, they were used to gather information.

> I told them that when I come around for walk-through visits, it is not evaluative. I'm not trying to catch you. It's not a gotcha. I'll be coming through doing walk-throughs for all of K-5 and the purpose is I'm collecting data across the whole building. I describe it as a way for me to see what is happening with the instruction in our building. I just continue to remind them of that. Last year was the first year we used the Teachscape tool to collect data. I showed them what specific pieces of the tool we would be using this year as we do our walkthroughs. Last year we did a year's worth of work on learning targets. So this year when the school year started, I put up some of the learning targets on the Smartboard that we had seen in the building last year. I gave them a copy of the learning targets and a copy of the Teachscape tool. We talked about how you would mark this and why. We weren't seeing rigorous targets, we weren't seeing outcome driven, and it really helped them go, oh, I see that, that's an outcome driven target, or that isn't. And so really you use that tool with them, and I think that's important.

Ms. Brown also explained that the she generally has a specific focus for each

year. She mentioned that the focus of the walk-through visits is

> generated from the School Improvement Plan which the district drives. The district uses the REACH goals. I have to write goals for each of the REACH statements. Now our School Improvement Plan is based on data and that's how we determine those priorities, and from those priorities then we kind of get to design how our focus is going to look.

She recalled that last year the focus was on learning targets and rigor, but this year the focus is on reading standards—how they are being taught and assessed.

> We are looking at the teacher and the student active participation. This year we started with the Teachscape tool, started walking through the building to kind of gauge where we were, and kind of immediately what we started to see using the Teachscape tool is our teachers' learning targets were great, they had rigor now, so we could kind of see the effect of the work [from last year], but what we weren't always seeing was did the learning target reflect what the students were doing, and did the work that the students were doing reflect the [reading]standard, and how do we know it? And so that kind of became our focus for us, we were like, okay, we need to do more work with [reading] standards. And we felt like it supported our work with rigor because if we're teaching the standards, rigor's going to be there. And so our focus this year just kind of evolved from our work from last year.

Principal Brown described that when she goes in a classroom she immediately just starts looking because she knows in her head what she is looking for and she can also refer to her iPad, so she just lets that be her focus when she goes in. On a personal level she mentioned that she wants the teacher to be comfortable, so she felt that giving eye contact and a smile was good. The length of time that Ms. Brown stayed in the classrooms varied.

> We have been told that the visits are to take two to three minutes, but I've found in two to three minutes you can't always see what you need to see. I stay longer than that depending on what we are seeing. For instance, the second grade classroom we were in today, the teacher was transitioning from what looked like a grammar activity to reading and she had her mind on those sticky notes and I just wanted to see how she was going to introduce that lesson, so I stayed a little longer. So I think, you know, I want to make sure more important than how long I'm in there I want to make sure I see what it is I'm looking for.

Ms. Brown stated that she did not give feedback to her teachers this year after conducting walk-through visits. She said that last year when she did walk-through visits, she left little positive notes about things that she saw that were good. She said that she had to step away from leaving feedback because it was distracting for her to be looking for two separate items. "Leaving the little notes and doing what was on Teachscape meant that I had two different focuses when I went in, so it was almost like we had to wean them off a little bit—give them time to get comfortable with classroom walkthrough visits."

Principal Brown at Birch Street Elementary commented about meeting with her instructional leadership team after conducting the walk-through visits at her school.

> We have an instructional leadership team meeting weekly. The three of us talk about what it is we're seeing and pull up the data and kind of make a plan for the data. For example, we have a staff meeting on Monday and I want to share with the teachers kind of where I feel like we are after our work with the standards. I want to use that Teachscape data, so we'll meet this week once we've done our walkthroughs to kind of pull up that data and see what pieces of it we want to share. Also, conversations happen. When we get back and I go, wow, I'm really seeing this. This is what I'm seeing K-2. Are you all seeing that? And then for the walkthroughs that we do together, it allows good opportunity for us to go, wow, are you all seeing this trend?

Ms. Brown says that she and her team use the data to plan for professional development with the staff.

> This year's focus on professional development was based on what we saw in the classrooms with the standards. We realized that what we were seeing was not what the standards were asking us to do. And so immediately we decided that what we needed to do was provide some staff development. So what can we do? So we take our early release days or those days that the district has given us and we started to craft our focus for them. And we modeled, we actually did it, it's

> kind of a lesson in a lesson, but we were teaching close reading, which was a great strategy for them to use for rigor and those kinds of things, but at the same time we were modeling, we took a standard and broke that standard down and then showed them how that would look in a lesson, if this is what the standard is, this is how we broke it down, this is what we would be doing, and this is what we would ask students to do and kind of modeled all that for them, so the walk-throughs do drive our staff development, because again, to me it gives me a picture to kind of see this is what we need to work on, and then what we do is then immediately begin providing staff development. I mean, because personally I believe if you want them to be better, you've got to provide them the tools and the means to be able to do that.

She said that soon after the professional development ends, she goes back to the classroom to see how the new instructional strategies are being implemented.

> One particular time we presented the data and we did some staff development. Then we gave the teachers time to make some changes, and then we immediately went back in to see, okay, are we seeing the fruits of our labor here? You know, is this working? So we absolutely do follow up with successive visits to see if teachers are following up with what we do with our walk-through visits.

The teachers' story: Birch Street Elementary. At Birch Street Elementary the teacher participants reported that at the beginning of the school year the principal, Ms. Brown, held a staff meeting and explained that the purpose of walk-through visits was to collect data. Ms. Baker, Ms. Clapp, Ms. Jones and Ms. Lassiter all reported that they were told the visits were not for evaluation purposes and they were not meant to catch us doing something wrong. Instead of the teachers being caught off guard by a surprise visit, three of the participants (Ms. Hall, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Keck) mentioned that the visits were semi-announced in weekly email memos that were sent out at the beginning of the school week. "We knew they would stop by our room at some point during the week for a walk-through, but we just didn't know the exact day or time." Ms. Baker said that

the visits were meant to help the staff grow professionally. Ms. Jones and Ms. Lassiter

told during their interviews that the information gathered during the visits was just meant

to look for trends. Three teachers, Ms. Allred, Ms. Keck and Ms. Lassiter, remembered

the principal showing the staff the Teachscape tool and giving the staff a printout of what

the administrators would be looking for when they came into the rooms. Ms. Baker

stated that what the administrators look for when they do the walk-through visits are

based on the REACH goals. Ms. Edwards, Ms. Faucette, Ms. Jones and Ms. Grant

mentioned that some of the items on the 'look for' list were learning targets, rigor,

Bloom's question stems, student engagement, best practices, and the anatomy of a lesson.

Ms. Allred mentioned the year long focus for this year was rigor with the reading

standards while Ms. Allred mentioned that last year's focus was on learning targets.

Ms. Lassiter was the only teacher in the entire study that mentioned that at the

beginning of the year she talked with her students about the classroom walk-through

process. She wanted to prepare her students for administrators coming into the room.

She continued by saying,

> I taught my children about the learning targets. I told them that the learning
> targets were an expectation of what they were going to learn and be able to do. I
> told them it was all right for them to look at the board and read the learning target
> if an administrator asked them what they were doing. Sometimes children get
> nervous and forget and all of a sudden someone is kneeling down and asking them
> what are you doing. I told them it was okay for them to look at the board—that is
> what it is there for.

The teachers at Birch Street Elementary reported that they knew they were having

a classroom walk-through visit when they saw the administrators coming through the

door with their iPad. They mentioned that the administrators do a daily check just to see

how things are going, but they only enter the room about once each grading period with

their iPad to collect data. Ms. Allred described administrators as being "unobtrusive."

Other teachers shared that the principal stayed at the back of the room without any

interruption. They said that the administrators did not want to be a disruption. Ms.

Baker, Ms. Edwards, Ms. Faucette, Ms. Isley, Ms. Keck and Ms. Faucette all agreed that

the principal would walk around quietly, look around the room, listen to the instruction,

record what they were looking for on their computer and then leave. A few teachers said

that the entire walk-through only lasted three minutes. Most teachers said that they lasted

between five and ten minutes, with one participant reporting that they could last as long

as 15 minutes.

When the teachers at Birch Street Elementary were asked during the interview

about the feedback they received from walk-through visits and how they reflected on it,

all of the participants responded that they had not received any feedback this year. A

couple of the teachers mentioned that in the previous years they would get little

sticky/post-it notes, with a positive comment written on it, but this year they had not

received that. Ms. Keck did mention that she remembered getting a "blanket email that

was sent to all of the staff," but she did not remember the specifics of the information in

the email. When asked about not receiving feedback, most of the teachers said they

would prefer to get feedback, but Ms. Baker considered it as "No news is good news."

Ms. Allred and Ms. Isley reported that after having a walk-through visit, they had

conversations with other teachers about the visits. Ms. Lassiter stated that on one

occasion she did follow-up with the principal about a walk-through visit in her classroom to apologize for not having any student work up when she and some other administrators came into her room.

A variety of different answers were given by the teachers about what kind of information they received after the walk-through visits occurred. Some of the teachers at Birch Street Elementary explained that the data from the classroom walk-through visits was shared during whole staff meetings, grade level/PLC meetings and data team meetings. Ms. Allred explained that they were "given information from the data, and then the teachers were asked to break into small groups and to make observations about the information, reflect on it, and then come back to the group to share out." Ms. Keck mentioned that sometimes the data is given to the grade level chairperson and then that individual brings the information back to the rest of the grade level team. Two teachers, Ms. Hall and Ms. Dixon, said that they had never seen any data from the visits this year.

The teachers at Birch Street Elementary said that they had received a lot of staff development this year, but they were unsure if it was based on classroom walk-through visits. Three teachers that I spoke with, however, did feel that the staff development was based on what principals saw during their visits. Ms. Dixon said, "They tie what they see to the staff meetings to help change the outcome of what they saw to something better the next time." Ms. Grant reported, "Our staff meetings have an instructional focus. They are tied to what they saw during the walk-throughs. They point out what they noticed or saw." Ms. Isley said that all of the staff development was based on classroom walk-through visits. While many of the teachers said they did not know for sure where their

topics came from, they said that their staff development for the last two years had been focused mainly on increasing rigor in a lesson, learning targets (with higher level verbs), vertical articulation, and reading standards.

South Garden Elementary

South Garden Elementary is located in "Garden," a small town in the central part of the Dogwood School District. The Assistant Principal, Ms. Thompson, is in her first year as Assistant Principal at South Garden Elementary. The school has 602 students. The student demographics are: 34% white, 22% black; 44% Hispanic. Seventy-six percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch. The school has 50 teachers. There are six teachers with their National Board Certification and 11 teachers with their master's degree.

The administrator's story: Ms. Thompson. At South Garden Elementary, Assistant Principal Thompson discussed how Principal Robinson created a schedule for the walk-through visits. All three Instructional Leadership Team members (principal, assistant principal, and academic coach) are put on a rotational schedule on an Excel spreadsheet. Ms. Thompson explained how this schedule works by saying,

> There are three of us who do the classroom walk-throughs. We have our principal, our instructional coach, and me. The schedule on the spreadsheet allows us to have a grade level for two weeks and then we switch. She created this at the beginning of the year and those are also the lesson plans that we check and we check lesson plans weekly. The schedule makes sure that no one is left out. Our biggest thing is that we wanted to make sure that all of our teachers know that we're there to support them and so it was important for her to create a schedule and for us to stick to it as close as possible. Some teachers who need additional support can be assigned our academic coach and she may have them for more than just a couple of weeks depending on what their need is.

Ms. Thompson noted that the classroom walk-through visits at South Garden are

unannounced. She also noted that before she did any of her visits she checked the

teachers' lesson plans that they were required to put in Dropbox by Sunday night before

the new school week began.

Ms. Thompson told how the purpose of classroom walk-throughs was explained

to the staff at the beginning of the year by the principal, Ms. Robinson.

> Ms. Robinson set the precedent at the beginning of the year that we're gonna be in
> your classrooms. We're here to help. The only way we know what's going on is
> if we're in there. We explained to them the process of how they would be on a
> rotational schedule. Someone would be checking their lesson plans. Someone
> would be coming to do their walk-through, but to know that it would rotate
> between the three of us. So she did that type of conversation.

Ms. Thompson explained that the focus points for their school's walkthrough

derived from their school improvement plan. The priority for South Garden Elementary

was to focus on student engagement and make sure that learning targets were aligned

with the curriculum. Ms. Thompson provided additional information about choosing

student engagement and learning targets for their school's focus by stating

> Student engagement was our focus this year because with Common Core it's
> more of a facilitated type of teaching than it is a lecture. It was a struggle for
> teachers to go from the standard course of study, very traditional, where you
> could give a lesson, the kids do their work, and then you move to the next subject.
> With Common Core it's more of a collaborative process between the student and
> the teacher. With this being the second full year of Common Core we really
> wanted to make sure that the teachers were facilitating the learning for their
> students more so than just giving information to the kids. We had to see that
> collaboration and engagement because it is important for them. It's visible by
> their interactions and what they are learning. With the Common Core, students
> are really supposed to be learning and using 21st century strategies of
> collaborating and using those higher order thinking skills and Bloom's. It's really

hard to get there if you are not talking. So that's why student engagement has been a focus and it will continue to be a focus, depending on the shifts, whichever way it's gonna go with Common Core.

Ms. Thompson stated that their administrative team primarily wanted to make sure that quality teaching was occurring in the classrooms. She said that the instruction could be through small group instruction, whole group instruction or it could even be a facilitative type instruction—questioning and probing to get the kids to start thinking on how to problem solve. Ms. Thompson stated that if it was a small group, then the teacher should be doing more than just sitting at their desk with a group of students. She stated that the teacher should get that group started, then they should get up and move about, checking on other groups, monitoring what the other students are doing. Ms. Thompson emphasized that what the administrative team was looking for was focused instruction. "That's where the learning target comes in. That helps us know what the kids are going to be learning today. We like to see how the learning target is going to be incorporated into the lesson—connecting what the teacher has taught or what the students have learned."

Ms. Thompson also noted that importance of student engagement:

Our biggest thing is making sure there's student engagement and that what the teachers say they're teaching is what they are actually teaching. In a walkthrough, those two things—student engagement and learning targets—that's about all you can look for during that short period of time.

Assistant Principal Thompson said that when she enters a room for a classroom walk-through visit, she immediately begins looking at what the students are doing. She

looks for active student participation. She also looks to see if the teacher is facilitating the lesson and what instructional strategies the teacher is using to make everything happen.

Ms. Thompson said that she always leaves feedback with the teachers. Usually she leaves a note printed on NCR paper in an area where the teacher can find it or she emails a note to the teachers. The note that is left by the administrators at Maple Avenue Elementary is called "Two Hugs and a Push." The hugs are two positive comments that were observed while the administrator was in the classroom and the push is either a reflective question or a comment suggesting something that the teacher can improve on.

Assistant Principal Thompson stated that the Instructional Leadership Team meets bi-weekly at Maple Avenue Elementary to discuss what they observed during their two week rotational walk-through visits.

> We discuss patterns that we see and then we'll take that information, share it with the teachers during a grade level meeting, and then figure out how to problem solve from there about what we can do to improve the areas that are issues. We use our copy from the 'Two Hugs and a Push' feedback note to see if there are any red flags. We talk about grade levels having certain problems. We also look to see if we need to have an individual conversation with a teacher about what all three of us are seeing when we go into the classroom. We also talk about what kind of supports that we need to provide for the teachers to improve what we've seen or what we haven't seen. Our professional development that we have planned this year with Kagan grew out of the student engagement piece that we are focusing on.

Ms. Thompson also shared how she follows up with the feedback that is left with teachers.

We use the 'Two Hugs and a Push' as an avenue for the teachers to ask questions. Some teachers will have questions and say, okay, you said that I need to increase the interactions between students, well, how can I do that? We don't typically seek out the teacher to initiate conversations with them about the feedback. We want them to come to us and be active in their learning of what they need to do to improve. We have a lot of them that will see their push and come and ask questions. But all that we can do is give them that push and hope that they talk to us about the push, and the majority of our teachers have because they want to make sure that they have improved it for the next time. And because we are on a two-week rotational schedule, we do look the next time we go into the classrooms to see if they used the feedback. I keep my copy of the 'Two Hugs and a Push' and I know what I saw last time for my push, and so I'm gonna look for that this time, and a lot of times if they have made a good change that will be one of my hugs. You know, thanks for taking the feedback and utilizing it in this lesson.

The teachers' story: South Garden Elementary. At South Garden Elementary the teachers reported that the administrators held a meeting at the beginning of the year and talked about the classroom walk-through visits that would be taking place during the school year. Ms. Moore reported that she remembered being told that "the overall goal of the walk-through visits were for the administrators to get a big picture of our classroom environment and our teaching." Ms. Day remembered the staff was told that "the purpose was to gather data so that trends could be identified." Ms. Coleman said she understood the purpose of the visits was for "the teachers to get a general feeling of self-reflection."

Ms. Day, Ms. Evans and Ms. Kimrey noted that the staff was just given a "rundown" of what was to be expected. Other teachers remembered that they were given a list of things that would be looked for during the visit. The list of things they were told that would be looking for included posted learning targets, students engaged in their learning, word walls, student grouping, and student collaboration (specifically A-B

Buddies). Ms. Alderman stated that teachers at South Garden had to submit lesson plans to Dropbox by Sunday nights so that when walk-through visits were conducted, the administrator could compare the lesson plans with the posted learning targets and see if what was being taught was actually what was written on the plan. Ms. Alderman stated,

> We have to put our plans in Dropbox so they can pull up our plans so they'll know exactly what we're doing at what time or what we're supposed to be doing at what time so they get an idea of what we're doing, and our learning targets need to be posted and matched.

Four participants, including Ms. Alderman, Ms. Brooks, Ms. Day, and Ms. Ingold remarked that they were trained on the rubric that would be used to "score" how they did during the walk-through. Two teachers, Mr. Gentry and Ms. Kimrey, recalled that they were told that the walkthroughs should be considered nonthreatening because they were not a formal evaluation. They [the teachers] were not being judged; rather, the administrators were just coming into the rooms to help the teachers and help the lessons go smoother. Four participants commented on being told about the feedback they would receive. The administrators introduced a new feedback form, called 'Two Hugs and a Push,' which would be used to list "two great things that they saw and one thing to work on."

The teachers at South Garden Elementary reported that when the administrators would come into their rooms for the walk-through visit, they would find a "quiet, obscure place and sit down and get comfy." While these administrators tended to stay towards the back of the room, in a corner, or at a teacher's desk, they still were close enough to the teacher and students to be able to see and hear what was happening in the classroom.

Most of the participants reported that the administrators did not talk to the students or participate in the lessons; however, they occasionally might ask a student a question or stand behind a student that was misbehaving. Almost all of the participants at this school noted that toward the end of the visit the administrator would stand up and walk around and look at lesson plans, things on the walls and student work. The administrators would type notes on the iPad and then leave.

All of the teachers stated that the walk-throughs were unannounced and only occurred four or five times a year. Most of the teachers reported that the visits occurred more frequently at the beginning of the year—sometimes happening once each week, but by the end of the year they were almost nonexistent. In fact, three teachers reported that they had not seen any of the administrators in their classrooms since December or January. Most of the teachers stated that the walk-through visit lasted anywhere from 10 to 25 minutes. The shortest reported time was five minutes and the longest amount of time was 30 minutes.

The teachers at South Garden Elementary reported that after the classroom walk-through visit, they read their 'two hugs and a push' feedback paper and reflected on it. Almost all of the teachers commented that they felt receiving the feedback was very important to their work. They wanted to know what the administrators were seeing and "didn't want to be left hanging." Several teachers said that they tried to implement the suggestions that were listed in the 'Push' section. Ms. Day said, "I usually try their ideas and often times their idea works out better. I try to meet their expectations." Ms. Faircloth stated, "I used their feedback about going over homework. I liked what they

told me to do. They've been at it a lot longer than me and I know they are here to help me." Mr. Gentry said that he liked getting the feedback because "it is usually something good. It tells me what I can improve on." Ms. Ingold said that if she thinks the feedback will work, then she will try it, but if she thinks that it won't be helpful then she does not worry about trying it. Ms. Lane said, "I always try to do what they ask." Ms. Alderman stated that the feedback was so important to her that she taped the '2 hugs and 1 push' paper on the back of her lesson plans. "I put the feedback paper with my lesson plans in a notebook. I pull the lesson plans out occasionally and look over the feedback for lesson plans that I am working on." Eight of the participants reported that they saved their feedback in some form such as hanging it on a wall near their desk to look at from time to time or keeping it in a file cabinet. Ms. Kimrey said "They are like a little report card."

Several teachers, including Ms. Alderman, Ms. Baker and Ms. Coleman said that they would often share their feedback and have informal conversations with other teachers about the comments they had received. Ms. Faircloth and Ms. Lane reported that while they do not usually have conversations with the administration after the visits, they will ask questions if they are not sure what a comment on the feedback paper means or if they need additional information to be able to implement the suggestion. None of the participants indicated strong opposition to the feedback they received. The most negative comment received was that sometimes the administrators were not in the room long enough to see what they were looking for.

Most of the teachers interviewed stated that after the walk-through visits occurred, the administrators would have meetings to show them the data. Ms. Alderman, Ms.

Evans, Ms. Lane and Ms. Moore stated that the staff was shown different graphs at a staff

meeting or grade level meeting. Ms. Brooks told that there were several ways that the

data could be looked at: individual teacher, grade level, and whole school. Three

teachers reported that they had never seen or been told how the data was used.

None of the teachers at South Garden Elementary stated that they were told why

they were receiving training on certain topics during the staff development, but many felt

that it came from the walk-through visits. Ms. Day said that the administrators just

decide on their own. The teachers said that the training they had received during this

school year was focused on using Kagan strategies, which was tied to their work on

student engagement.

Section 2: Discussion and Comparison of Categories that Emerged

Role of Educators: Before, During, and After CWTs

All educators in a school, including administrators and teachers, have roles and

responsibilities with respect to classroom walk-through visits. All levels of educators

have to attend to their tasks before, during, and after walk-through visits are conducted.

In the first section the role of instructional leader will be discussed and then examined as

to how it relates to the different phases of the classroom walk-through visit.

School administrators: Instructional leaders. While all areas of school

leadership need to be enacted with careful attention and detail, the role of instructional

leadership is of paramount importance. Many principals consider this aspect of their job

as being the most important. In fact, some principals consider instructional leadership so

essential that they prioritize their duties, putting all other functions at a lower level of

importance (Johnson, 2008). While the education system has changed drastically over the years, the notion that the principal will be the "educational visionary, offering direction and expertise" (Hoerr, 2008, p. 84) remains a constant belief in order to make sure that students are learning. The principal takes his vision, finds teachers and other staff that will assist in making the vision happen, and then "coaches and mentors the staff so that together they accomplish the desired results" (Johnson, 2008, p. 72).

Being an instructional leader is not meant to imply that the person in this position has knowledge about every part of the curriculum; rather, the person in this position is "facilitating teachers' learning" (Hoerr, 2008, p. 84). The principal makes sure that "teachers use the most effective instructional methods" (Johnson, 2008, p. 73). If a principal wants to see continued success in his students' ability to learn, opportunities must also be given to teachers for them to grow in their field. While a principal can establish his role as instructional leader in many ways, the opportunities that are presented during the observation phase are an excellent time to demonstrate curriculum and instructional skills. During this time, the principal can extend the lesson by asking probing questions that can "lead teachers to their own discoveries" (Hoerr, 2008, p. 85). This kind of discussion can prompt learning possibilities for everyone involved.

In my research study, I found evidence that the instructional leadership role was carried out during different phases of the classroom walk-through visits. In this section I will share the responses that the administrators provided for what their duties and responsibilities entailed for conducting classroom walk-through visits: before, during and after the visit.

The administrators in this study described various issues prior to beginning classroom walk-through visits in their schools. All of them discussed how scheduling and planning for classroom walk-through visits was an important aspect of this initiative.

Before classroom walk-through visits occur. All three of the principals at the schools in the study scheduled classroom walk-through visits for the entire year before the school year began. They refined their plans as the school year progressed. All principals also used all members of the Instructional Leadership Team to conduct the walk-through visits. The assistant principal at South Garden was the only administrator to say that lesson plans were compared to what was observed in the walk-through visit. She also said that the walkthrough visits occurred on a two week rotational schedule. Three principals in this study mentioned that they discussed with the staff at the beginning of the year the purpose of the visits and best practices that they would be identifying in the visits. All three administrators showed the Teachscape tool to the teachers and explained how it would be used. All of the principals stated that the items they were looking for were based on their School Improvement Plan. The only principal who semi-announced the visits to her staff was Ms. Brown at Birch Street Elementary. The other two principals said that for the most part the visits were unannounced.

During classroom walk-through visits. All three principals stated that the use of their iPads loaded with the Teachscape program was important to their walk-through visits. Each administrator said that when they entered the classroom they already knew what they would be looking for. They definitely were looking for evidence that what had

been taught during staff development sessions (student engagement strategies, rigor, learning targets) was being utilized with students during instruction.

When I observed the administrators conducting a walk-through visit, all three of the administrators moved around the classroom at some point during the shadowing of the visits. There were differences that could be seen between the three administrators who conducted the walk-through visits. First, the length of the visits was longer at Maple Avenue Elementary (10-17 minutes) than Birch Street or South Garden (4-8 minutes). The only verbal feedback to students was seen at Maple Avenue Elementary. This principal interacted with students in all three classrooms. Neither of the administrators at Birch Street or South Garden talked with the students. The second main difference that was identified was the use of feedback. The principal at Birch Street was the only administrator who said that she did not give any feedback to the teachers. The administrators at Maple Avenue and South Garden said that they tried to give consistent feedback to the teachers.

Observations of classroom walk-through visits.

Maple Avenue Elementary. I observed Ms. Johnson conduct classroom walk-through visits in three third grade classrooms. The first visit lasted ten minutes; the second one lasted 17 minutes; and the third visit lasted 17 minutes. During all three walk-through visits, instead of using her iPad with the Teachscape tool, she used her laptop. She said she had to use her laptop because her iPad was not staying charged. In all three classrooms she did very similar things. She positioned herself near students so that she could hear what they were saying and could see what they were doing. After

listening and watching for a while, she would sit and type on her laptop what the teacher was saying and doing and she would type what activities the students were doing. She would move around the room so that she could get a closer look at the work that the students were doing. She would look over the shoulders of students and ask them questions about what they were doing. In one classroom she addressed some student misbehavior. Towards the end of the first visit she talked to the teacher and students about the fraction math activity they had been working on. In the second classroom she interacted with two groups of students when they were collaborating and sharing their thinking on the assigned activity. Ms. Johnson told me after the visits that she looked for the content standards matching the learning target in all three rooms, engagement level, rigor level, teacher behavior and student behavior. She also told me that she was a little frustrated with the first visit because the math learning targets for the small group math activities were not aligned with the instruction. She said that was something they had been working on all year. I did not observe Ms. Johnson send an email to the teachers for feedback, but she said that she would do that.

Birch Street Elementary. I observed Ms. Brown conduct classroom walk-through visits in three second grade classrooms. The first visit lasted five minutes; the second visit lasted eight minutes; and the third visit lasted five minutes. In all three classrooms she used the Teachscape tool on her iPad to collect data. She observed what the teacher and students were doing and entered data on her iPad. In all three rooms the principal stood toward the middle and back of the rooms and watched what the teacher and students were doing. In the first classroom she stood in one location in the room; in the

second room she walked around the room noting what the teacher and students were doing; and in the last classroom she sat on the teacher's desk which was near the students who were sitting on the floor. In the debriefing following the shadowing, the principal noted that while the learning targets were appropriately aligned with grade level content, they were not outcome driven. She was "concerned about what we are asking the kids to do." She said that she wanted to see more student participation. She stated there was too much passive learning.

South Garden Elementary. I shadowed Ms. Thompson on two classroom walk-through visits. The first visit was in a kindergarten class, which lasted five minutes. The second visit was in a fourth grade class and it lasted four minutes. In the first classroom she moved around the room most of the time she was in the room. She glanced around the room noting things that she saw. She did not provide any verbal feedback to the students or teacher. Following this visit, Ms. Thompson said that she was looking for posted learning targets and student engagement. She said that the learning targets were not clearly visible or easily seen. In the second visit, Ms. Thompson stood at the back of the classroom for the entire visit. She read the posted learning targets and made notes on the iPad. She laughed at the jokes the teacher was saying to the students. She did not provide any verbal feedback to the teacher or students. Following the visit, Ms. Thompson said she was looking for posted learning targets. She said that prior to doing the visit she looked at the lesson plans to make sure that the learning targets aligned with the standards. She said that she was pleased with the utilization of Smartboard technology and teacher questioning strategies.   Ms. Thompson said that she forgot to

take the 'Two Hugs and a Push" form with her when she did the walk-through visits; therefore, she would email them their feedback. She said in the first classroom, she said that the 'hugs' were student collaboration and students were engaged in center activities. The 'push' would be to post the learning targets in a more visible way. In the fourth grade classroom, the 'hugs' would be good questioning to problem solve and connecting activities to the learning target. The 'push' would be to do more Kagan (student collaboration) strategies, especially the "Think-Pair-Share," "A-B Buddies" or "Shoulder Partner."

After classroom walk-through visits occur. All three of the administrators stated that they met with their Instructional Leadership Team following the walk-through visits. All of the principals stated that they planned their staff development based on the needs that they saw during the visits. A main difference in this phase of the process was that the administrators at Maple Avenue and South Garden mentioned that they use this time to follow-up with feedback they had provided to teachers; the Birch Street principal could not follow up with feedback because she did not provide feedback to teachers during the visit.

Teachers' role: Teacher development. Teachers play an active role in the classroom walk-through visit process. As school administrators stated in the previous section, classroom walk-through visits provide an opportunity for teachers to develop their skills and improve their practice. Thirty-eight teachers were interviewed in this research study in an attempt to find out their perspective on this initiative that is

becoming routine in many schools. In the following three mini-sections, the findings of

the teacher's role during all three phases of the visits will be discussed and explored.

Before classroom walk-through visits occur. Most of the teachers at all three

schools agreed that the administrators prepared them at the beginning of the year by

explaining the purpose of the walk-through visits and provided them with a list of what

administrators would be looking for when they came around for the visit. Teachers at all

three schools realized that administrators were looking for trends among individuals,

grade levels, and the whole school. Teachers at all of the schools mentioned that they

were shown the Teachscape tool or stated that they were trained on how the visit would

be scored. Only South Garden teachers stated that they had to submit lesson plans to

Dropbox so that the walk-through data could be compared to what teachers had written

on their plans.

During classroom walk-through visits. Teachers at all three schools were aware

of classroom walk-through visits happening when the administrators walked into their

room with their iPad. Teachers at all of the schools agreed that the administrators walked

around the room but remained quiet and unobtrusive during the visits so that lessons were

not disrupted. Teachers reported varying amounts of time that administrators stayed in

their room during the visits.

After classroom walk-through visits occur. Teachers at Maple Avenue and

South Garden shared that they read and reflected on the feedback they were given after

the visits occurred. Teachers at all three schools stated that administrators held whole

staff meetings and grade level meetings to discuss the data that was collected during the

visits. Teachers at all three schools stated that they did attend a lot of staff development and they felt that it was tied to the walk-through visits, but they said that they were not told that directly.

Role of Visionary Leadership

A second category that emerged from my research study on classroom walk-through visits is the role of visionary leadership. The findings on this category will be discussed in detail following a brief overview of visionary leadership.

What is visionary leadership? Visionary leadership is a necessary competency that a principal must have in order to be successful. In order for a principal to be a visionary leader, this person must be given the freedom to initiate change. Today's leaders must be willing to break away from past traditions and practices. The school leader's vision will be the "source of inspiration for his work" (Faidley, 1989, p. 10). The vision can spread and be embraced by others. It often cannot be measured or tied down to a timeline. The motivation to work towards this vision comes from within (Faidley, 1989).

The administrator must have comprehensive goals for the whole school that everyone can accept and work towards. The vision should be positive, creative, and obtainable, with a focus on high standards. A principal who is visionary in nature is more of a transformer, one who is more invested in developing values, ideas and shared responsibility. The administrators need to provide purpose and direction to teachers and students (Faidley, 1989). It is crucial to equip teachers to be creative problem solvers and to take away barriers that might keep the vision from happening. A visionary leader will

empower teachers and build the culture as a means of reaching the vision. Once the

vision has been explained, the principal can recruit others in deciding how to realize the

goals. The leader will find it necessary to construct the culture of the school around the

vision. The principal should make the vision a part of every goal, meeting, or event

(Faidley, 1989).

Robbins and Alvy (2003, pp. 84–85) note several critical considerations when

remembering the importance of visionary leadership:

1. For a vision or mission to be alive, the building process must be a
   participatory one. Being involved in the process brings both ownership and
   commitment to the vision.
2. A vision must be shared by the organization and the organizational members.
   The people who make up the organization must personally believe in the
   power of the vision as a force for creative, continuous improvement and as a
   force that can give personal meaning to their lives.
3. A school vision provides a sense of what is important. A vision helps
   members avoid spending time on what is not important.
4. The principal should play a major role in transforming the values and beliefs
   of the school into a vision. The principal should model and focus individual
   attention on what is important.
5. A school must remain focused on pursuing its vision lest it risk veering off in
   one direction after another. Unless there is a clear focus, we may be spinning
   our wheels, yet remain under the false impression that we are productively
   moving ahead. (pp. 84–85)

Findings from the study that demonstrate visionary leadership. All of the

administrators in this study talked about staff meetings that they held at the beginning of

the school year about the classroom walk-through visits that would occur during the

school year. Principal Johnson stated that she emphasized with the teachers that it was

meant to "improve our practice." She noted that she went through the Teachscape tool

and explained the different parts to the staff. She stressed the importance of improving instructional strategies by telling the staff

> In order for our students to achieve at higher levels, and for them to be competitive whenever they leave us, then we have to increase our rigor and we have got to increase our engagement. If we don't have our kids engaged and they don't see the relevance in their work and we don't provide them with rigorous activities, then the work is going to be meaningless for them. These visits will help us accomplish our goals of providing them with high quality work. They will help us improve our craft.

Some of the teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary shared that Ms. Johnson did provide them with information at the beginning of the year about walk-through visits. Ms. Ingle stated that "At the first staff meeting, we were told that walkthroughs would happen and they would be used as a tool for our School Improvement Plan." Ms. Allen and Ms. Baldwin said that she talked about what it is and let the staff know what she expected to see. Ms. Garrison said, "We were told that we shouldn't worry about them because they are not a formal observation, but we should be prepared for them to walk in at any time." Ms. Baldwin, Ms. Coble and Ms. Ingle commented that she pulled the Teachscape tool up on the Smartboard and showed them the form or template that would be used when administrators were in the classroom doing the visits. Ms. Davidson recalled, "The staff was told that the administrators didn't expect to see everything they were looking for every time they came into our classrooms, but hopefully over the year it balances out."

Principal Brown at Birch Elementary stated that she explained to her staff that the purpose of classroom walk-through visits was to provide her with "a big picture as

though I were stepping out onto a balcony. It is just meant to help me look at what is happening overall in the building." She explained that she held a staff meeting at the beginning of the year that walked the teachers through the different parts of the Teachscape tool. They also practiced scoring different learning targets that had been collected from the previous year.

A majority of the teachers at Birch Street Elementary said that Ms. Brown talked about classroom walk-through visits at the beginning of the year. Ms. Allred said that the principal was a very "good communicator" and told us what to expect during the walk-through visits. "She gave us a copy of the Teachscape tool so that we would know what she was looking for." Ms. Edward, Ms. Faucette and Ms. Dixon also talked about the principal reviewing things that she and the other administrators would be looking for during the visits. Ms. Faucette remembered getting a handout about what they were looking for, but she did not know where she had put her copy. Ms. Clapp said that she remembered that the principal wanted to put us at ease so that we wouldn't stress too much and get nervous. Ms. Clapp also said that the walkthroughs were just a "tool for the administrators to use to guide the school." Ms. Jones stated that the visits were "just for them to gather data." Ms. Lassiter said that the data would be used to "look for trends."

Assistant Principal Thompson said that at South Garden Elementary the principal held a staff meeting and told the teachers just to expect the administrators in the room so that they would know what was going on. "She [the principal, Ms. Robinson] told the staff that we will not know what is going on in your rooms unless we are in there." She

also mentioned that the visits would be on a rotational basis so that the teachers would be

seen by the principal, assistant principal and the academic coach. Ms. Thompson

reported that Ms. Robinson discussed the importance of getting into the rooms as much

as possible by telling the staff

> We want to increase the number of walkthroughs that we did last year. We will
> use the data that we get from the walkthroughs to show us patterns of what we are
> seeing. This year we will provide you with feedback on a paper that is called
> 'Two Hugs and One Push." We will find positive things that are happening in
> your classroom and then we will point out something that we think you need to
> work on. We expect that anytime we come into your room, quality teaching and
> instruction should be occurring. We understand that there will be off days and we
> take that into consideration, but we leave feedback for you to use and improve on.
> If we see that every time we come in, and at different times during the day, it's
> not a matter of it just not being a good time. We are seeing a pattern forming with
> the teacher and it will be documented on the Teachscape tool.

All of the teachers interviewed at South Garden Elementary remembered the

principal talking about the walk-through visits at the beginning of the year. Ms.

Coleman, Ms. Day and Ms. Moore remembered the overall purpose being explained as

"getting a general feeling of self reflection"; "gathering information and seeing trends

happening around the school"; and "getting a picture of our classroom environment and

our teaching." All of the teachers named different things that had been mentioned at the

beginning of the year that the administrators would be looking for. Ms. Alderman, Ms.

Brooks and Ms. Day talked about the meeting being like a training session where they

were shown the form on the Smartboard and told how it would be scored. Five teachers

remembered the feedback papers ('Two Hugs and One Push') being discussed.

Summary of findings that demonstrate visionary leadership. Administrators and teachers at all three schools agreed that meetings were held at the beginning of the school year to explain the purpose of the walk-through visits. Administrators introduced the staff to the Teachscape tool that would be used to collect the data. A general agreement and understanding of the positive outcomes (improving practice, overall understanding of what is happening in classrooms, and gathering patterns and trends) of the visits were shared by the administrators and teachers.

Findings from the study that demonstrate lack of visionary leadership. Rather than looking at each school individually in citing evidences of the vision of the classroom walk-through visit not being carried out effectively, I will address topics that at least one or all of the schools demonstrated.

Beginning of the year information. While administrative and teacher participants stated in the previous section that information about classroom walk-through visits was provided at the beginning of the year, six teachers reported that they did not remember any information being shared. Their answers to the interview question about beginning of year information included the following responses: "I don't remember"; "Not sure any information was given to us"; "I wasn't at the meeting at the beginning of the year"; "I can't think of a meeting we had this year about it. I know we had one last year, but not this year"; "Not sure if they gave us any information about it this year." In addition, even though the administrators reported that they explained the purpose of walk-throughs as being a way to learn more about the schools in a 'big picture' format so that they would know what areas they needed to work on, 13 of the participants reported

that they did not know what the data was collected for. They did not know how it was

being used for the school. Their answers to that interview question included answers

like: "I don't know," "No idea," "Not sure," "Not certain," "They've never shared that

with us," and "I don't know what they do with it."

 Frequency of conducting classroom walk-through visits. When the

administrators were interviewed, they talked about the walk-through visits as being a

means of collecting data to see what was happening in their building. They mentioned

that when they used the Teachscape tool as a means of gathering the data, they needed to

get a lot of data in order to get a good representation of what was happening in their

school. One strategy they implemented to make sure they got into the classrooms to get

the necessary data was a schedule that they made that had them going into each

classroom on a regular basis. In fact, Ms. Johnson stated that she planned to go into

every room at least once a week. When teachers were asked during the interview how

many classroom walk-through visits had been conducted in their classroom, the answers

varied. Their answers included "only a handful of times each year," "only a few each

year," "comes in cycles," "once or twice each year," and "three or four times each year."

A few teachers noted more frequency. Ms. Davidson and Ms. Farmer both said that they

occur two times each month. Ms. Ingle said that they come into her room once each

week. Ms. King said that they came into her room three times in one week and then it

was weeks before she saw them again.

 The teachers at Birch Street Elementary did not have as much of a range with

their answers about the frequency of the visits. Most teachers answered the question with

the answers "once or twice each grading period" or "three or four times each year." The most frequent visits were reported by Ms. Grant, who said that they come into her room two times each month, and Ms. Keck, who said they come in her room once each month.

At South Garden Elementary, teachers gave fairly consistent answers for the number of walk-through visits they had in their classrooms. Most teachers said that at the beginning of the year they had about one visit each week. By the end of the year, most of the teachers said that the visits were "nonexistent." Ms. Alderman reported that administrators had only been in her room about six times during the year and Ms. Coleman stated that administrators had been in her room about four or five times during the year. Two teachers reported that they had not seen an administrator in their room since December or January due to "Read to Achieve" that had started with third grade students. Two teachers reported that they were not bothered by the decrease in the visit. They explained that "This is just the way it pans out" and "When they don't come into my room as much at the end of the year it just means that they trust me."

Feedback. The last area where a striking disconnection occurred between what was told to teachers at the beginning of the year and what the teachers reported to me in the interview dealt with the feedback that was provided to them following the visits. Ms. Johnson stated in her interview that while she did not give feedback every time, she did feel that she was very consistent. Five teachers reported that they either did not get any feedback at all or it was very little. Ms. Baldwin said that when she does not get feedback from her lesson she just "assumes that things are acceptable." At Birch Street Elementary, the principal reported that she did not give feedback to teachers and the

teachers also said that they did not get feedback. When teachers were asked if they would prefer to get feedback following the observation, most of them said that they would like to receive something just so they would know what the principal was thinking. They felt like feedback would help them focus more on what their job was and it would help them to grow professionally. It should be noted that at South Garden Elementary, all 13 teachers reported that they received the feedback form titled "Two Hugs and a Push" following almost every visit they received.

Summary. The lack of visionary leadership fell into three categories: beginning of year information, frequency of visits, and feedback. Some teachers at each of the schools did not remember receiving information at the beginning of the school year about walk-through visits. The frequency of the visits reported by the teachers did not seem to match with the principals' accounts of how often they visited each classroom. The number of visits reported by the teachers also did not appear to be enough to be able to obtain accurate trend data for individuals, grade levels or the whole school according to what the administrators said was needed in order to be able to identify what was happening in their school. Finally, the inconsistent feedback that teachers reported that they received indicated a disconnection between what the administrators said they intended to do at the beginning of the year and what the actual practice during the school year was.

Role of Technology: Collection and Use of Data

Technology is an integral part of schools. It is almost unimaginable to think of any aspect of schools without the use of technology being incorporated into its operation.

Technology, through its efficiency, is meant to facilitate the education of knowledge and skills for teachers as well as students. The ultimate goal of technology in schools should be to increase student achievement.

Schools use technology to collect and analyze data. Salpeter (2004) asserts that "for some districts, the current obsession with data grows out of the need to comply with No Child Left Behind and accountability-related mandates" (p. 30). She notes that some districts felt the need to collect data even before "data-driven decision making rolled so frequently off the tongues of educators." Salpeter contends that

> there is no denying that an integral part of the business of K-12 education today is to collect, manage, analyze, and learn from a wide array of data. In response, the past few years have witnessed an explosion of technology-based tools, consulting services, professional development opportunities, and other resources designed to help schools move beyond being data rich but information poor. (p. 30)

She cautions that an essential ingredient to data-driven decision making is looking at information that is collected over an extended amount of time so that schools can monitor trends and track effectiveness of interventions. Salpeter (2004) stresses that "the most important component of an effective data-driven program is not the data or the analytic tools; rather, it is the school culture in which the data inquiry takes place" (p. 34). Salpeter pointed out that the administrators she interviewed noted the "importance of setting the right tone and creating a positive atmosphere in which data was being used to support and not punish" (p. 36).

"Today's schools are so data rich that administrators and teachers are being required to develop data literacy skills. Building data skills allow staff members the

ability to use data effectively and target instructional improvement areas" (Lachat, Williams, & Smith, 2006, p. 17). Lachat et al. (2006) contend that three practices are necessary when developing data literacy among staff and establishing a purposeful use for data: organize data use around essential questions; use technology that allows for purposeful data disaggregation; and use a data team. Organizing data around the most essential questions allows staff members to use data and maintain a clear focus. Purposeful disaggregation of data allows information to be connected. Data teams help support the use of data and expand the control of data analysis beyond a handful of administrators to a group of staff members.

The use of technology was a critical part of the Classroom Walk-through Visit process in Dogwood School District. The technology that was used to collect and analyze the data was Teachscape, an online program that was purchased by the school district and put on all administrators' iPads. Details about how the Teachscape program collected and used the data from the walk-throughs will be discussed in the following section.

How data are collected and used during classroom walk-through visits. A majority of the participants responded that the data from the classroom walk-through visits was collected using Teachscape that was on the administrators' iPad. The administrators and a few teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary and South Garden Elementary said that occasionally a laptop computer was used during the visit. When laptops were used, the purpose was mainly to collect descriptive data that could be used to send teachers feedback and later used to enter information into the Teachscape tool.

All three of the administrator participants said that the Teachscape tool was a district

initiative to collect data across the entire school system.   The majority of the teacher

participants said that the Teachscape program was a district initiative to collect data and

the teaching staff did not have any input into what data was being collected.

All three administrators said that the Teachscape program had a variety of tools

that would organize the data. Ms. Johnson at Maple Avenue Elementary stated that

> I put the [classroom walk-through-visit] information in to Teachscape and then I
> can choose which questions specifically I want to focus on and run reports. For
> example, we can look at learning targets or student active participation. It will
> create graphs and charts and we can see where trends are happening over time.
> We can see where we have significant needs and where we are having difficulty.
> I can see where I need to support them [the teachers] in the classroom by buying
> them materials. It's going to show me where we need to provide professional
> development. It tells us what kind of tasks we're asking our students to do. It
> provides a wealth of information, but it ultimately determines how we support our
> students and teachers learning in our building and the resources that we ultimately
> end up providing.

At Birch Street Elementary, Ms. Brown stated that

> We use Teachscape because that is what the district purchased and provided for
> us. Teachscape organizes the data we collect. Teachscape gives us a variety of
> different ways to print it out and look at it. You can go down and pull data on just
> one specific area of the tool or you can look at two or three of them and you can
> use it to make bar graphs. You can print the data by individual teacher, grade
> level or the whole school. It's just how you filter it to print the data you want.

At South Garden Elementary, Ms. Thompson shared that

> The data that I gather is collected and organized by Teachscape. It can do a
> spreadsheet that breaks the data down into tables and graphs for the teachers and
> it helps us identify trends. Ms. Robinson is fabulous with making spreadsheets
> and disaggregating the data so it can be individual data or it can be grade level

data. We do get to look for patterns in different grade levels. It's a good way to see areas of strengths and areas of need. We use our data from Teachscape to help us implement our school improvement plan. If we see large areas that need focus as a whole staff then that's what helps us do revisions to our school improvement plan.   We also use it to try to help teachers see the strengths in what they're doing and also to improve their instruction. Even though it's my first year at the school, we use the data a lot to help teachers in driving their performance and their instruction. We use student data to determine what the needs are, and so we use this data to see if teachers are addressing those needs.

How collected data are shared with staff. Once data are collected, the Teachscape tool has the capability to run reports and generate charts and graphs that can be used in many ways. Ms. Johnson at Maple Avenue Elementary stated the way that she shares the data.

> On Mondays there is not a lot of time to go into classrooms for walk-through visits to collect data because we have data team meetings. That is a good time for us to have conversations about what we're seeing. During the data team meetings, we are looking at primarily student data, but we also like to share things that we saw during walk-throughs as they are reviewing student data because they have to brainstorm instructional strategies and things that they're doing, so we might compliment them on what we saw them doing. We might say we saw you doing this and that was really good or I saw your students were really struggling with that [concept] when I was doing a walk-through. So I try to bring that into the context of what they're working on. What they're working on in terms of student data kind of brings all of it together, so that's one way that we've been able to kind of bring the walk-throughs back so that they're not just something separate, but—it's all kind of tied to reflection and improvement for the student because ultimately we want students to improve and that looks at the instructional strategies and it bring in that student learning piece because they're working on designing informative assessments and that piece is an important part as we are looking at instructional strategies and adult behaviors.

The teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary had mixed responses about how the data was shared with them. Ms. Allen's response was, "When we had an A.P. he would make graphs and charts to show the data. But that was last school year when he did that.

We do have PLC meetings, and sometimes the administrators are there, but they don't

mention classroom walk-through visits." Ms. Coble stated, "I remember last year the

administrators talked about classroom walk-through visits and trends that they noticed,

but we haven't talked about it this year. They used to print out graphs that would show

direct instruction, small group work and kid activities." Ms. Hale said that in years past

she remembered seeing bar graphs, but it had been a while, probably last year, since she

has seen any data presented. Ms. Coble gave a different answer to how information

about walk-through visits is shared. "I remember having staff meetings and they share

information about what they saw." Ms. Jackson commented, "Administrators come to

PLC meetings, but they don't mention this is what I saw during the classroom walk-

through visits and this is what we want you to work on." Ms. King reported that some

information is shared during whole staff meetings, but the administration does not talk

specifically about walk-through visits during PLC meetings. Mrs. Langley said, "As the

media coordinator, I don't know if they go to grade level meetings, but I know that data

is not shared with the whole school."

Ms. Brown at Birch Street Elementary reported the following about collecting

data and sharing it with the staff.

> Last year we did a lot with collecting it [data] and showing it, collecting data and
> showing it, because we wanted them to see their progress with those learning
> targets. This year with our focus, you know, I think teachers would say I haven't
> seen the Teachscape data this year because this year the data's been more for us to
> use to drive our professional development for them. Does that make sense? So
> they haven't seen a lot of the data we've collected because we're using that to—
> it's a different purpose, I guess. You know, last year, I wanted them to be able to
> go—because we provided professional development on learning targets, you've
> gone and worked on it, this is where you are. This year we have used it more of,

okay, here's the area we need to focus on, so let's provide professional development. Now where are we, what do we need to do next for them? And so this year's data's been more about what do we need to do as a leadership team to provide professional development for them because I think the—what the Teachscape tool showed us early on is they needed some help with this. And one professional development wasn't going to get it, this has been a process, does that make sense? So I think it—I mean, I think it's important to recognize what your needs are.

The teachers at Birch Street Elementary gave a wide range of answers about how walk-through data is shared with the staff. Ms. Dixon and Ms. Hall both stated that walk-through data has not been shared with the staff this year. Ms. Clapp and Ms. Keck remembered getting an email following the completion of a round of walk-through visits. Ms. Keck said that sometimes the grade level chair person will get the information and then bring it back to the grade level team. Ms. Grant stated that she remembered during a staff meeting, the administrators referred back to a recent walk-through visit. Other teachers, Ms. Isley and Ms. Jones, remembered information about walk-through visits being shared at staff meetings, but could not remember the details of what was said.

Ms. Thompson, at South Garden Elementary, explained how classroom walk-through data is shared with teachers at her school.

This year, back in the fall, around October or November, after our first 400 [walk-through visits] we shared the data with the teachers about how many observations we had done, the strengths, areas that we saw that were pretty consistent across the grade levels, and patterns that we were seeing. We did that at a staff meeting. We also share walk-through data at grade level/data team meetings. We will share grade level data and sometimes the teachers get a little defensive about the timing of the visits. We tell them that this is not punitive, this is saying okay, we can see based on this information which aligns with our thing, you know, the two hugs and a push, that this is a problem across the grade level, not necessarily with one individual person, we share grade level information and not individual teacher information. If we share the individual information, the name of the teacher is

blacked out so they don't know which teacher, but so they can see okay, yeah, this is a problem, how will, as a grade level, what can we do to fix it, because they do grade level planning, they do data meetings as a grade level, they're their own little family and so we, when we share that with them a lot of times, you know, after we get past the defensive comments, it's like, okay, this is what we can do to improve in that area.

The teachers at South Garden Elementary had fairly similar answers about the way in which classroom walk-through data is shared. Several teachers reported that data was presented at grade level meetings. Ms. Alderman, Ms. Day and Ms. Kimrey reported that they were given graphs at the grade level meetings. Ms. Day reported that the graphs were compiled data that helped them identify trends. Ms. Alderman, Ms. Brooks, Mr. Gentry and Ms. Harrison said that when classroom walk-through data is shared at staff meetings, they receive information through a graph and it is only about their particular grade level. Mr. Gentry added that usually during whole staff meetings they are broken up into grade level groups. He said, "We never see data for other grade levels." Ms. Brooks said that they also get reports at their data team meetings. Only two teachers, Ms. Coleman and Ms. Moore, said that classroom walk-through data is "really not shared." Ms. Moore said that she has "never seen anything based on classroom walk-through visits."

Documents of Teachscape and teacher feedback. All three administrators provided me with Teachscape documents that illustrated what they were looking for when they conducted their Classroom Walk-through Visits. Appendix D provides detailed information about the areas of focus on the Teachscape template. The blank Teachscape form was eight pages long. Six Learning Principles are written in paragraph

form with a box that administrators can type in optional comments for the teacher they are observing. There are five questions that are open-ended in which the principal types sentences for the answers. The remaining questions have answer choices that can be selected. In order for Teachscape to be able to identify trends within the school, 40 entries must be be put into the program.

The administrators shared bar graphs that were generated based on the data that was entered into the Teachscape system. All of the graphs (individual, grade level, school-wide) listed the same categories as shown in Appendix D.

Ms. Thompson shared two examples of "Two Hugs and a Push!" feedback form that she had left with two teachers. The positive notes dealt with good questioning strategies, effective use of whiteboards/student materials, good use of student examples/non-examples, and student time on task. The pushes dealt with learning targets connecting to lesson, student engagement and questioning the differentiation of learning activities.

Summary. All of the participants at all three schools noted that the iPad, with the Teachscape tool loaded on it, was the main device used to collect data. Teachscape would collect and organize the data, filter data based on areas of focus and need that the administrators identified, and then run reports and generate charts and graphs. There was a discrepancy among the participants about the sharing of data with the staff. Some participants commented about receiving information about the visits and others said they had received little or no data from the walk-through visits.

Role of Human Relations: Collaborative Relationships, Attitudes, and Emotions

While principals have many roles and responsibilities, the importance of working with the teaching staff, as well as getting teachers and staff to work together, is an essential part of the job. Robbins and Alvy (2003) write,

> Displaying effective and ethical human relations is a key to leadership on every level. It is a thread that runs throughout the organization and affects the culture, climate, personnel practices, and every individual who has contact with the school. It impacts the relationship between the school and the larger community. Human relations skills include working with people, building trust, creating a climate for teachers to comfortably discuss their own classroom practice, and helping individuals reach their potential. When positive human relations skills are manifested, people feel comfortable in taking risks, experimenting, collaborating, and communicating ideas and feelings; these behaviors enable students and staff to work at high levels. (p. 45)

In this section, I will discuss the findings of how classroom walk-through visits impact or were impacted by collaboration, attitudes and emotions.

Administrators' views on classroom walk-through visits and collaboration. During the interviews, I asked all three administrators how classroom walk-through visits transferred to what happened in their Professional Learning Communities. I was especially interested if these visits created a more collaborative environment so that teachers and staff did not feel that they were working in an isolated atmosphere. All three administrators shared how classroom walk-through visits impacted the collaborative efforts of the staff at their schools.

Principal Johnson talked about how classroom walk-through visits gave her the opportunity to encourage collaboration with teachers at Maple Avenue Elementary.

I'm really trying to create that culture of grade levels working together—people being open to communicating with one another and sharing practices, and so if I can brag on something that somebody's done during their walk-through, then I will do that. For instance, "Wow, I was in Laura's room and she did this great lesson on a scavenger hunt with them applying their math skills and the kids were so engaged and they were having a great time," then that allows me to use that walkthrough data that I collected in a positive way to get conversation and collaboration going. There are certainly times that it's not positive—that I have to share that we're really struggling with looking at our rigor level, or we're really struggling with responding, or our kids are not having opportunities to talk, like our teachers—we are doing a lot of teacher talk.

Principal Johnson mentioned that not only did she use the Teachscape data with her teachers, but she also used data from an "Instructional Analysis Chart." She showed her teachers what information was collected on the chart, such as adult behaviors, brainstorming, instructional strategies, rigor and things like that. She mentioned that the third-grade team had been under a lot of pressure with the *Read to Achieve* initiative and she found an opportunity to share information she had collected from the Instructional Analysis Chart with the third grade team.

One of the third grade teachers started talking about how they needed more rigorous reading passages. I was then able to say that I was just in somebody else's room, and you know what, she had this great passage and it was really rigorous. Then the third grade continued to have that conversation, and then they said, well, you know, doing these passages, this is just boring to the kids, so, you know, how are we going to engage them? How are we going to make sure we keep their attention? One teacher said we need to put this up underneath the document camera. And so, Beth [my academic coach] and I were like, great, like, they've got this conversation going themselves. Those were two of our goals we were really working on, rigor and engagement. And you know, we pipe in and kind of chime in, but we really want them to own those PLCs, but we have to sometimes lead and provide that guidance. Like in that particular instance, they were on track, but then we were also talking about how are we going to make sure that they're engaged because, just because we put the passage up underneath the document camera, that does not ensure engagement. So, what are we going to do? And so then they really got into their instructional strategies. We really need

to do close reading strategies and then the other teachers said we need to read like a detective, so here are these strategies. I think we could try this. Those kinds of conversations make me feel like they are applying what we have been talking about. I can't say that happens at every grade level, but . . . those are the kind of conversations that we are seeing, the conversations that we're kind of able to coax and kind of push, whenever they're meeting in grade level PLCs.

Ms. Johnson also mentioned that she believes you have to share trend data with the grade level and with the school in order for them to understand how as a school culture this fits with our school improvement plan and with the overall picture. Ms. Johnson stated, however, that

> Teachers have to be open and trusting with their colleagues. I think there's a lot to be said about trust in terms of walk-throughs, in terms of them knowing that what you see as an administrator is not going to be out and about all over the school. So, I think that is another factor—they have to feel that there's protection that everything that happens in their room isn't going to be shared.

Principal Brown, at Birch Street Elementary, talked about classroom walk-through visits and a culture of collaboration.

> We have done a lot of work this year focusing on our PLCs. When the teachers are looking at this data as a grade level or in a PLC, it really helps [for them to see that] we do need to get better about this. So it starts the conversation as a grade level, okay, what can we do as a PLC to make sure that our standards are matching our targets and our targets are matching what we're teaching and our teaching is matching what we're assessing? So it's created some good conversations. [And] as far as walk-through visits allowing for a collaborative work environment, I think it's the culture you create. I think it's in how it's presented and carried out with the staff, as far as how that comes across.

Principal Brown stated that she was in her third year as principal at Birch Street Elementary. She stated that when she began her principalship at the school, she

immediately started working on improving the culture by conducting book studies and

team building strategies. She felt it was important to separate culture from curriculum

and instruction.

> I did things to build us as a team—things that promoted communication, trust, and so my belief is, and I think this is where as school leaders we miss the boat sometimes. You can be all about curriculum and instruction, and do walkthroughs and have all this great data, but if you don't have a culture that supports being able to make those changes that have come out of all of this, then I think you've missed the boat. So my goal as a new principal was to create this positive culture and then it would allow me to have the conversations that I need to have about curriculum and instruction, because what they know is first of all I care about them as a person first, and so now let's talk about what you're doing in the classroom.

Assistant Principal Thompson, at South Garden Elementary, talked about how

classroom walk-throughs created a collaborative environment between the teachers,

especially during grade level planning.

> We've seen a big change with the teachers' planning process. Our teachers do a fabulous job with team planning. They meet weekly and they share their lesson plans. They share their activities and they reflect on what is being taught. The walkthroughs are important because they know we're coming in and we're looking at specific things and that we want to see the students engaged and that we want to see facilitative learning, teachers interacting with the students and students interacting with other students. And I think that helps with their planning time because they know what's expected.

Ms. Thompson went on to say that she really looks at the lesson plans, as well as

the walk-throughs, to see evidence of grade level collaboration. She commented that

walk-through visits have given her the opportunity to initiate conversations with

individual teachers as well as several grade level teams about the rigor of work being

provided for students as well as not staying on track with what was written in the lesson plans.

Ms. Thompson talked about the academic coach being assigned to work with teachers as a result of classroom walk-through visits.   She explained why she preferred having the academic coach collaborate with teachers instead of administrators.

> When we see [during our walk-throughs] that teachers have a certain weakness, that's when we utilize our academic coach. She's one of our support staff. She is not as threatening as having an administrator come in and try to provide you support. We've had a couple of teachers who required extra support this year, and when we asked her to start working with them, that changed our rotation of how we did our observations. We would make sure that they were on her rotation for more than just the two weeks or three weeks, depending on the calendar. We wanted her to be able to go in consistently at different times during the day, but she's the one that we've heavily relied on to support those teachers. We would provide them feedback, but as I said before, coming from an administrator, it's not always as welcomed as if it's coming from somebody who is here specifically for academic support.

Teachers' views on classroom walk-through visits and collaboration. The teachers that I interviewed had opinions and comments about how classroom walk-through visits encouraged collaboration between administrators and teachers.   At Maple Avenue Elementary, Ms. Farmer said that the walk-through visits encouraged teachers to share more with each other. Ms. Hale said,

> Classroom walk-through visits help increase positive relationships between administrators and teachers. It helps when your administrator can help you with areas that you are struggling with in your classroom. It also helps relationships between teachers because you can collaborate with each other when one person needs help. These visits keep teachers from working in isolation. It's good to collaborate, especially if you have a bad or weak area. Then you can talk to someone who is good in that area. In years past when graphs from the visits were

brought to the grade level meetings, we could look and see where our grade level
was. That would affect our lesson plans a lot.

Ms. King stated, "These visits help us talk about what we are doing. We share ideas. We make sure that we have the same learning target, topic and reading passages. We become aware of who works well together."

At Birch Street Elementary, Ms. Allred said, "Walk-throughs help people share work. Working in isolation doesn't help anyone. We plan together in our PLCs, write learning targets together to make sure they match." Ms. Dixon stated, "The teachers on my grade level are collaborative, so we plan everything together. When they [the administrators] go in our rooms, they see that we teach the same standard. We write our lesson plans together, so they are uniform lessons throughout each class. Walk-throughs make us more collaborative because we know as a team what is expected." Ms. Faucette said that classroom walk-through visits probably does encourage collaboration, "especially with the reflection part because then I talk about it with my neighbor and check to see what she is doing. It does definitely impact." Ms. Keck said in the interview that walk-through visits encourage the teachers on her grade level to talk with one another. They make sure they are focused on the same things, especially with where they are on the curriculum map and they make sure their learning targets match perfectly. Ms. Lassiter stated, "We do talk in grade level meetings, especially about the 'I can' statements. It makes us talk about things as a grade level."

Several teachers at South Garden Elementary discussed the ways in which classroom walk-through visits encouraged collaboration. Ms. Alderman stated, "We

work together as a grade level in writing our plans and we use the feedback from the visits to help us with our lesson plans." Ms. Brooks said, "We have the print outs for our grade level data. We talk about what we can do to improve in the different areas. We picked three things to work on—learning targets, rigor, and students working together." Ms. Day said that when they are given grade level graphs made from Teachscape, they look at it and talk about it. Ms. Faircloth stated, "We collaborate on our lesson plans together, especially reading and math. We want to make sure those have the same learning target. For science and social studies, we are on our own and do our own thing." Ms. Kimrey felt that walk-through visits encouraged collaboration because "we have to turn in our lesson plans online. They know what we are supposed to be doing and they look to see that we are all doing about the same thing." Ms. Moore stated, "Walk-throughs definitely encourage collaboration. We work together very well as a grade level. We plan together and do very similar things. We share because it would be crazy not to. The administration expects collaboration."

While there were several teachers at each school that did see collaborative relationships as a benefit of Classroom Walk-through Visits, I talked with teachers at each of the schools that did not see collaboration being a result of the visits. At Maple Avenue Elementary Ms. Allen said, "Classroom Walk-throughs do not necessarily keep teachers from working in isolation. If these visits went away, we would still work together and share the work load because it is easier that way. For us at this school, we are required to work with other people." Ms. Coble stated, "Information from the walk-through visits does not transfer to what happens in our PLCs." Ms. Davidson said, "We

haven't seen any data in a while. There is no walk-through data to use in our PLCs. I

guess I could take the initiative to ask for the data, but I haven't done that." Ms. Farmer

stated, "We haven't said 'This is what happened in my walk-through visit. We need to

do this next time. Let's plan accordingly.' None of that has ever happened in my grade

level." Ms. King said that she and her grade level plan together and spend a lot of time in

each other's classrooms, but she was not sure if that was a result of classroom walk-

through visits or the teacher personalities. Ms. Langley stated, "I don't want to admit my

weaknesses. Teachers tend not to reach out when they need help."

At Birch Street Elementary, four teachers reported that they did not feel

classroom walk-through visits impacted collaboration at their school. Ms. Baker replied,

"Classroom walk-through visits are not a factor in the teacher's working environment. It

doesn't prevent teachers from working in isolation and it does not encourage

collaboration. We are a team, but the visits are not a factor." Ms. Clapp stated, "We do

plan together and write our curriculum maps together. Everybody is on the same page,

but the walk-through visits don't contribute to people working together." Ms. Grant

stated, "We work together anyway and I don't think walk-through visits affect it either

way. I don't know that walk-through visits have any effect. We would collaborate even

if there weren't any classroom walk-through visits." Ms. Hall stated, "I can't say that

when my grade level works together it is due to walk-through visits. I think it is due to

other factors. We do everything pretty much the same, but I don't think it's due to

classroom walk-through visits."

At South Garden Elementary, four teachers did not feel that collaboration was an effect of walk-through visits. Ms. Evans stated, "I just don't know that the walk-throughs require us to collaborate. We do work together because we have grade level planning and PLCs. We would collaborate anyway, even without the walk-through visits." Mr. Gentry said, "We don't get together and plan lessons based on classroom walk-through visits. No one has ever said that we need to be doing the same thing." Ms. Harrison stated, "We only talk in general about the walk-through visits. We don't use any walk-through feedback when planning lessons as a grade level." Ms. Ingold said, "Classroom walk-through visits do not carry over into lesson plans. We bring stuff and share with others. We don't fill out our lesson plans together. We each do it in our own way. We would collaborate even if there weren't walk-throughs."

All of the administrators in the study felt that classroom walk-through visits encouraged collaboration between administrators and teachers as well as among teachers. Teachers had differing views about the relationship between walk-through visits and collaboration. Some of the teachers felt there was a strong positive connection between the visits and the collaborative work relationship among the teachers. Other teachers felt that walk-through visits did not influence a close working relationship among teachers because they would adopt that kind of working relationship anyway because it made their job easier.

Principals' attitudes toward classroom walk-through visits impacting school culture. The principals in this study generally had a positive attitude toward classroom walk-through visits impacting the culture in the schools. Ms. Johnson felt like there were

pockets of people who liked them and pockets of people who did not like them. She said that the culture of reflection that she was trying to create with the feedback that she gave to teachers was one of the biggest benefits that she saw coming out of the walk-through visits. She said that emphasizing to the teachers that it was not "I got you," that she was just trying to provide teachers with trend data allowed the grade levels to work together to improve instruction.

Ms. Thompson felt that the walk-through visits created a positive culture. She said that she saw a visible change in attitude and student performance. She said, "I've seen a good shift this year with student engagement because that has been an expectation. We have focused on teaching behaviors that support the whole child approach to instruction. I feel that the walk-throughs are a good way to see strengths and areas of need. When we get into the classrooms, we can look for patterns across the different grade levels."

Ms. Brown said that the walk-through visits did not change the culture of the way teachers taught or the way students learned at her school. She said that the work she did on creating a positive culture allowed the classroom walk-through visits to be effective.

Teachers' attitudes toward classroom walk-through visits impacting school culture. When I analyzed teachers' reactions to how classroom walk-through visits affected the culture, I noticed a slight disconnection between teachers based on their years of experience. All of the teachers with three or less years of experience reported that they saw classroom walk-through visits as being beneficial to them. At Birch Street Elementary, Ms. Isley stated, "The visits set a high standard for teachers. What the

teachers do with the data, how they implement what they find from the data, is where the change comes from." At South Garden Elementary, Ms. Alderman said that the walk-throughs help her do things more efficiently and smoothly. She reports that the administrators see things that she does not see. Ms. Evans said that she liked the walk-throughs because it was good to hear from someone different. It is good to hear what others see and think. Ms. Faircloth said that she found the constructive criticism to be helpful. Mr. Gentry stated, "Walk-throughs help me know something I can improve on. That improves my teaching skills. I can use what I learn from walk-throughs and reference it for other lesson plans." Ms. Joyce had somewhat mixed feelings about the visits. On one hand she said they helped a lot, especially with student engagement; but on the other hand, she stated that the lack of consistency made it difficult to gauge how effective they were.

Veteran teachers (four or more years of experience) ranged in their attitudes about the effectiveness. At Maple Avenue Elementary, positive reactions from veteran teachers included "it requires us to reflect," "it causes us to be accountable," and "it makes sure we are always ready because someone could walk in at any time." At Birch Street Elementary, positive reactions included "they keep us current with trends," "the administration makes themselves available to us when we need them," "principals are more connected to the teaching and learning in our classrooms," and "children are more accountable." At South Garden Elementary positive teacher comments were "it's helpful to see what they see" and "it helps me see what my classroom is like from an outsider."

Veteran teachers also expressed negative attitudes toward classroom walk-through visits. Ms. Coble said, "They are not effective because there are not enough visits." Mr. Euliss said they could be more effective if teachers were held accountable for what the principals recorded. Ms. Ingle said that it was not a positive change in culture because they were so "monitored." Ms. Jackson said, "It's not effective if you can't ask questions. It's a gotcha." Ms. King said that she could not see any changes in her classroom or the school. Ms. Manning said that walk-through visits do not change the culture because "it's intrinsic in a teacher. A classroom walk-through is not going to make a bad teacher into a good teacher. Some people are just awkward with their delivery." At Birch Street Elementary, Ms. Grant said that she could not attribute a change in culture to classroom walk-through visits because there were just too many other factors to consider. Ms. Hall said that walk-through visits could potentially change the culture, but the administration does not do enough of them. At South Garden Elementary, Ms. Brooks said the administrators were in the classrooms for too short of an amount of time to see what is going on. Ms. Day felt like she did not ever get any feedback that she did not already know. Ms. Harrison, as a pre-k teacher, felt like the data was not useful to her.

Two of the principals, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Thompson, felt that the attitudes of the walk-through visits positively impacted the school culture. Ms. Johnson felt like the walk-through visits encouraged a culture of reflection, while Ms. Thompson felt that the visits encouraged a culture of analyzing instructional strategies that would improve student engagement. Ms. Brown did not feel that walk-through visits encouraged a

change in the culture of the way teachers taught or students learned. Teachers varied in their views on the effect that walk-through visits had on school culture. While a novice group of teachers felt that the visits had positive and beneficial results, veteran teachers were split in their opinions. Some veteran teachers felt that there were many positive outcomes from the initiative (accountability, reflection, principals connected to classrooms), while other veteran teachers felt that there were no positive effects of the visits due to lack of frequency and duration of the visits, approachability of the administrators, and individual weaknesses in teacher abilities.

Summary

Interviews with administrators and teachers in three elementary schools, along with observations of classroom walk-through visits and classroom walk-through document analysis, revealed four emerging categories in this research study: Role of Educators; Role of Communicating the Vision; Role of Technology and Data; and Role of Human Relations.

The finding concerning the role of educators identified responsibilities that administrators and teachers had during each phase of the walk-through process. Prior to beginning walk-through visits, administrators noted that they scheduled walk-through visits for the entire year and met with their staff to explain the purpose of the walk-through visits and shared what they would be looking for. During the visits they observed and recorded adult and student behaviors. Two of the administrators provided feedback to the teachers based on what was observed. After the visits, the administrators met with the instructional leadership team and planned staff development according to

the needs they observed based on the walk-through visits. Administrators also had

conversations with individual teachers, grade levels and an entire school staff to address

trends that were identified from the visits. Additional walk-through visits were made to

follow up with staff development sessions.

Roles and responsibilities for teachers were also identified for all three phases of

the process. Before walk-through visits occurred, some teachers noted that

administrators did hold meetings or training sessions that explained the purpose of the

walk-through process and what items would be looked for. During the walk-through

visits, teachers noted that they just continued teaching their lesson, but they also noted

that they were aware of what the administrators were doing while they were in the

classroom. After walk-through visits were conducted, the teachers that received feedback

noted that they would read and reflect on the comments so that they could evaluate

whether the ideas were something they felt could be implemented in their classroom.

Some teachers who did not receive feedback were left frustrated because they wondered

what the administrators thought about their classroom and lessons. Other teachers who

did not receive feedback felt that by not receiving feedback it meant that administrators

were satisfied with the observation.

The category of "Visionary Leadership" identified areas that did and did not

demonstrate visionary leadership. Visionary leadership was displayed by holding staff

meetings at the beginning of the year to introduce walk-through visits. The purpose of

the visits was explained and the rubric for how the visits would be scored was reviewed.

A lack of visionary leadership occurred when not all staff members remembered

administrators talking about the visits at the beginning of the year. Additional examples

that showed a lack of visionary leadership included inconsistency in the frequency of the

visits and the lack of feedback given to some teachers.

The category of technology identified the important role that technology played in

collecting data during the walk-through visits. All administrators used a program called

Teachscape that was on their iPad to collect walk-through data. The Teachscape program

organized the data and had the capability of generating a variety of reports and graphs.

The principals stated that they shared the charts and graphs with their staff in various

ways (individual, grade level, and whole staff); however, some teachers said that they had

not seen any data on a regular basis.

An interesting finding that came out of the "Role of Human Relations" was that a

collaborative working environment was an important benefit of the walk-through visits.

Principals were having conversations with teachers and teachers were exchanging ideas

with their peers. Some teachers, however, felt that collaboration could not necessarily be

attributed to walk-through visits. These teachers felt that they would collaborate even in

the absence of walk-through visits. Another important finding in the role of human

relations was that while all of the principals had a positive attitude toward the visits, not

all of the teachers shared the same feeling toward these visits. While all of the new

teachers with less than three years of experience felt they benefitted from these visits,

experienced teachers varied in their opinions of the visits.

The findings in these categories assisted in identifying positive and negative

attributes of classroom walk-through visits and how administrators and teachers can use

this knowledge to make effective use of this cultural and instructional reform. The

categories that emerged from the data assisted in answering the research questions and

offering recommendations for each question. The answers to the research questions and

recommendations will be explored in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview and Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to determine the conditions that enable classroom walk-through visits to change the culture of teaching and learning in schools and classrooms. As mentioned in Chapter II, organizational culture focuses not on what happens, but instead on the *meaning* of what happens. Symbols are used in cultures to define what is important. In this research study, the symbol of classroom walk-through visits was explored, and an attempt was made to find out the meaning and influence that these visits had on changing the teaching and learning cultures in the schools and classrooms. A qualitative study was conducted so that the participants could express their personal experiences with these visits. Three elementary schools in one school system in the Piedmont region of North Carolina were chosen as the research site.

Data were collected in multiple ways. First, one administrator and 12 to 13 teachers from each school were individually interviewed. Second, observations of administrators conducting classroom walk-through visits occurred in each school. Third, documents from the Teachscape program were collected which showed the kinds of information that was collected from the classroom walk-through visits.

After all of the data was collected and analyzed, four categories emerged from the findings: Role of Educators Before, During and After Classroom Walk-through Visits;

Role of Communicating the Vision; Role of Technology and Collection and Use of Data;

and Role of Human Relations: Collaborative Learning Relationships and

Attitudes/Emotions. This chapter will discuss findings and conclusions related to the

research questions, suggest recommendations to educators and provide implications for

future research studies. I will also reflect on this research experience and express how it

has been meaningful for me.

Review of Research Questions

Chapter IV presented the findings from the research that was conducted with the

interviews, observations, and document analysis. This chapter will seek to answer the

research questions based on the data that was collected and shared in Chapter IV. The

overarching research question in this study focused on how classroom walk-through

visits affect the culture in schools, specifically the teaching and learning culture in

classrooms and schools. The four research questions that were answered are:

- How do administrators intentionally and purposefully prepare for classroom
  walk-through visits?

- How do administrators conduct classroom walk-through visits? What do
  administrators do during and after classroom walkthrough visits that is
  connected to the teaching and learning culture in the school?

- What do administrators and teachers say about how classroom walk-through
  visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

- How do administrators and teachers say data is used from classroom walk-
  through visits?

Review of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that was introduced at the end of Chapter II indicated a definite and ongoing cyclical progression about how classroom walk-through visits changed the teaching and learning culture in schools.   The initial framework (see Figure 1 on page 45) suggested an orderly sequence of events in which walk-throughs occurred:

- principal conducts walk-through visits;

- principal provides feedback to teachers;

- teachers reflect on the feedback;

- teachers share feedback and thoughts in professional learning communities;

- professional development is provided to teachers based on walk-through visit and conversations that took place during professional learning communities;

- instructional practices change and student learning is improved.

The findings in this research study indicate that while all of the parts of the initial conceptual framework were identified in the schools, the components did not happen on a consistent or necessarily a sequential basis as originally thought. Instead of a cyclical graphic with solid arrows showing the progression of events that occur during classroom walk-through visits, a radial cycle would be more appropriate, as shown in Figure 2.

In the initial conceptual framework, there was not any discussion about the principal planning for the visits or the introduction of the classroom walk-through visits by the administrators to the faculty. It is critical for these events to happen. Without staff being provided clear information about the purpose and expectations of walk-through visits, teachers are left unsure about the purpose or expectations of the visit.

Also, in the original framework there was no indication that there was a definite list of things that principals looked for when conducting the visit. The findings from this research indicate that the principals had a preconceived list of items that they were looking for and expected to observe.
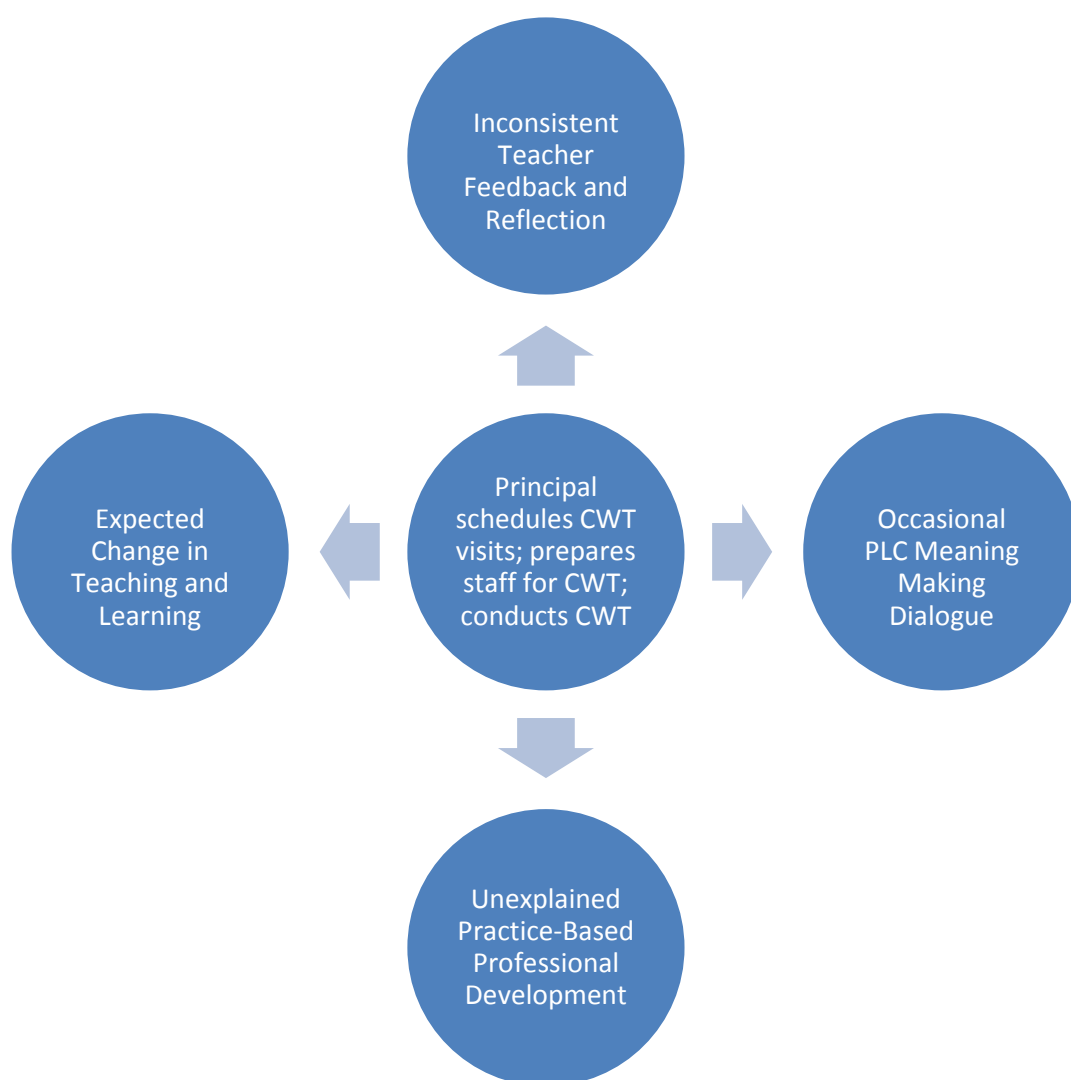
Figure 2. Classroom Walk-through Process as Described by Study Participants.

The original conceptual framework indicated that feedback would always be provided to teachers following every visit. The research findings indicate that while feedback was given following some walkthrough visits, the feedback was inconsistent because it was not provided to every teacher after each visit. Moreover, at one school feedback was not given at all to any of the teachers during the school year after the visits. The lack of feedback caused some teachers to have difficulty reflecting on their teaching practices.

The initial conceptual framework showed that teachers would meet in professional learning communities to discuss the outcomes and results of their classroom walk-through visit. Administrator participants said that they would meet and talk with their teachers about the walk-throughs during PLCs and data meetings. While some of the teacher participants agreed that they would meet and have conversations with other teachers about the walk-throughs, other teacher participants said that there were no discussions about the walk-throughs with administrators or other teachers. Additionally, while administrators said that data was shared at whole school staff meetings and grade level meetings, teacher responses were inconsistent about how data was shared with the school or their grade level.

The initial conceptual framework suggests that professional development was derived from the conversations that came out of the teachers working in their professional learning communities. Research findings indicate that administrative leadership teams would meet and talk with each other following the walkthrough visits to discuss what they observed. Then the administrators would plan and base their staff development on

what they observed in the visits. Many teacher participants were unsure about how the staff development topics came to be.

Finally, the original framework ends with changed teaching and learning as a result of the staff development. While administrator participants did see evidence of improved teaching practices with their staff as a result of the walkthrough visits, the teacher participants were not as confident that improvements could be linked to the walk-through visits. Administrators noted that following staff development, they would return to the classrooms to do additional walk-through visits to make sure that teachers were implementing what had been taught to them. By administrators focusing on learning targets, engagement, collaboration and rigor levels of the lessons, they felt that students were showing improved learning.

While there are similarities between the two frameworks, the stark difference rests with the revised framework illustrating the administration being the driving force in classroom walk-through visits. The administrators are implementing an agenda that they feel will benefit their students, teachers, and the school. The comparison of the two frameworks clearly exemplifies different roles that administrators can play in the process. The initial conceptual framework shows administrators being part of an interactive, team building approach in which cooperative problem solving strategies are utilized. The revised framework demonstrates a more controlled climate in which the process is dictated due to preconceived ideas and expectations. The initial framework emphasizes how all of the pieces of the process are connected and fit together to create a meaningful

learning environment while the revised framework illustrates detached parts that lead to outcomes and results that can be sporadic, unintended, and ambiguous.

Interpretations and Conclusions of the Findings with Recommendations

How do administrators prepare for classroom walk-through visits?

Table 1 summarizes the findings and recommendations concerning how administrators prepare for classroom walk-through visits. Following the table, a more detailed account is provided.

Table 1

How Administrators Prepare for Classroom Walk-through Visits

Best Practices	Recommendations
• Examined School Improvement Plan • Beginning of Year Meetings explained purpose of visits • Trained staff on Teachscape tool • Scheduled and planned dates and times of visits	• Articulate purpose multiple times throughout the year • Adhere to schedule of visits • Develop relationships and trust with staff • Provide general date of visit

School administrators examined their School Improvement Plan and used the document to assist them in knowing what their staff needed to focus on during the visits. This focus allowed them the opportunity to concentrate on the specific needs of their school.

All three of the elementary administrators in this study reported that they held meetings at the beginning of the school year to discuss the classroom walk-through visit process with their staff. They explained that the purpose of the visit was not to be a

"gotcha" for a teacher evaluation in which data from the walk-through visits would become a part of their permanent personnel file; rather, it was meant to help the staff learn and grow so that they could meet the needs of the students.

Two of the administrators also reported that they trained their staff on the Teachscape tool. At Maple Avenue Elementary the principal showed them a template of the tool and talked about all of the different parts that would be used to score the teacher's performance. At Birch Street Elementary the teachers were given the opportunity to take Learning Targets from the previous year and score them with the rubric from Teachscape. Providing this opportunity helped the teachers to understand what was being looked for, as well as made them aware of the different degrees to which each item on the "look for" list was being scored.

Part of the preparation that goes on with these visits is more "behind the scenes." Before the school year starts administrators make schedules on spreadsheets that enable them to make sure that every teacher receives walk-through observations. Plans are later refined during the week of the visits to make sure they know exactly which day and time they will visit teachers. To emphasize that this is not an evaluation or a gotcha, Ms. Brown, at Birch Street Elementary, would send out an email the week before the visits informing the staff that at some point during the week the administrators would be stopping by for a visit. This general time-frame announcement made the staff feel less stressed about the visit and appreciative of the consideration of not being caught off guard.

Recommendations for Preparing for Classroom Walk-through Visits

First, while several teachers remembered the 'Beginning of the Year' meeting and could articulate the purpose of the visits, not all teachers remembered this discussion. The purpose should be thoroughly communicated multiple times during the year, not just at the beginning of the year. The teachers that received a handout of the Teachscape tool and practiced using it to score Learning Targets had a much greater memory and understanding of the purpose of the walk-through and how it was being used. Providing teachers with hard copies of the Teachscape template and including an explanation of the visit, as well as having the teachers put the information in a binder, could be beneficial to the staff retaining this knowledge. Teachers can use this material as a reference when planning lessons so that they can ensure that they are attending to the features they will be scored on.

Second, after a schedule for the walk-through visits is made, it is imperative to adhere to the schedule throughout the year. While teachers will understand if administrators do not visit their rooms occasionally, not visiting for weeks or months at a time sends the wrong message to the staff. Teachers at all three schools commented that the visits were irregular in their frequency. This lack of consistency caused some teachers to question the validity of the data, especially when it seemed to several teachers that walk-throughs were only taking place close to the time that administrators outside of the school were coming for a visit. Also, the Teachscape program that was being used in this district was expensive. In order for the customer to get 'their money's worth,' walk-through visits must be conducted on a regular and consistent basis. The financial aspect

is a concern because schools are already dealing with financial budget constraints.

Schools are being forced to make tough decisions on how money is spent. Not making

full use of the technology on a regular basis can create questions of legitimacy in the need

for the program.

Third, administrators must also strategically plan to develop relationships with the

staff. Developing and maintaining trust is a crucial element that must be attended to in

order for an initiative like this to be successful. Some teachers felt nervous and anxious

about other adults coming into their classrooms. In order to deal with the defensiveness

of "nay-sayers," developing an atmosphere of mutual respect and maintaining a

commitment of high standards for everyone may ensure teachers will be motivated to

find value and worth in the initiative.

Fourth, providing teachers with a general date for a visit is an excellent way to

lessen teacher anxiety about the visits. This allows them to feel more secure and

confident that the visit is focused on creating a learning culture for the entire school

instead of being used as an informal evaluation tool.

What do administrators do during and after classroom walk-through visits that is
connected to teaching and learning?

Table 2 summarizes the findings and recommendations that address what

administrators do during and after classroom walk-through visits that is connected to

teaching and learning. Following the table, a more detailed account is provided.

Table 2

What Administrators Do during and after Classroom Walk-through Visits

Best Practices	Recommendations
• Observant during visits • Reviewed lesson plans prior to visits and compared it to instruction • Provided feedback • Administrators met with Instructional Leadership Team	• Provide feedback on a regular and consistent basis

All of the administrators in this study exemplified instructional leadership actions and behaviors that demonstrated they were connected to the teaching and learning that was occurring in the classrooms. Administrators were very observant. They were watching what teachers were doing and they were looking at the kind of work students were being asked to complete. While they usually did not participate in lessons on a regular basis because they did not want to disrupt the lesson, administrators would quietly interact with students by asking them questions about their assignments.

At South Garden Elementary, the administrators reviewed the lesson plans that teachers submitted online and compared those with the instruction that was being observed during the visit. They assessed the quality of the learning targets, student active participation, rigor level of the assigned work, communication between teachers and students, and the alignment of the standards and content that was being taught.

Administrators at Maple Avenue Elementary and South Garden Elementary would leave feedback with the teachers. This communication enabled the teachers to understand the positive things administrators saw happening in their classroom, as well as

areas that needed to be worked on. For the most part, the teachers appreciated receiving

feedback so that they were not left wondering what administrators thought of their

classroom or teaching. Teachers liked knowing specific things to work on because they

wanted to improve their practice. Teachers also liked referring back to previous feedback

when planning lessons. Administrators would follow-up with teachers and have

conferences with them. Sometimes the conferences were initiated by the teachers; other

times the administrators had to take the lead in talking with teachers. The discussions

helped clarify questions or misunderstandings that teachers had based on the feedback

their received.

Following classroom walk-through visits, administrators met with their

Instructional Leadership Team and studied the data that was collected so that they would

know how to support their teachers. They used this data to plan the Professional

Development activities that were needed for their staff. Some of the administrators

actually conducted the Professional Development themselves, modeling instructional

strategies that they wanted their faculty to use in their classrooms with their students.

Administrators would go back into classrooms after following the Professional

Development ensuring that teachers were implementing the skills and strategies that had

been taught.

Recommendations for What Administrators Should Do during and after Walk-through Visits

The main recommendation for administrators is to provide teachers with walk-

through feedback on a regular basis. If feedback is not given to teachers, they feel either

like they are being "left hanging" or in some cases they are given a false impression that

the quality of their work is satisfactory. Some teachers reported that "No news is good news" when they did not receive feedback. The reflective questions or thoughts left by administrators may cause teachers to reconsider their practice and it creates an opportunity for discourse between administrators and teachers. It also can encourage communication and collaboration between teachers.

What do administrators and teachers say about how "Classroom Walk-Through" visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

Table 3 summarizes the findings and recommendations concerning what administrators and teachers say about how classroom walk-through visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools. Following the table, a more detailed account is provided.

Table 3

How Classroom Walk-through Visits Change the Teaching and Learning Culture in Schools

Best Practices	Recommendations
• Raised expectations and set high quality standards • Brought sense of awareness • Actions and behaviors were more intentional • Transformative (isolation vs. collaboration) • Opportunities for reflection	• Provide teachers with opportunities to give input into what is looked for • Include teachers on the walk-through team

Classroom walk-through visits raise expectations and set high quality standards in classrooms at all times. Classroom walk-through visits bring a sense of awareness to

administrators and teachers. Teachers know more of what is expected from them and all

of their actions and behaviors are more intentional because they know what

administrators are going to look for when they enter their classroom. Teachers are more

prepared because they never know when an administrator will make a surprise visit.

Classroom walk-through visits can transform classrooms from an area of isolation

to a vibrant and collaborative working environment. This initiative gives principals the

opportunity to have a first-hand account of what is happening, instead of hearing about

issues from other people. Instead of administrators remaining in their office, they are in

the classrooms having conversations with teachers and interacting with students. They

are staying current with the curriculum and instructional strategies. The active role

allows teachers to gain respect for their administrator's knowledge and it makes them feel

like administrators are approachable when they have questions and concerns.

Classroom walk-through visits provide opportunities for reflection, and it

encourages collaboration and communication between the faculty. This occurs with the

individual feedback, grade level PLC meetings, vertical articulation meetings and whole

staff meetings. If an administrators notices that a teacher is struggling in certain areas,

then that teacher can be assigned an academic coach to get differentiated and focused

support to ensure the teacher and student success.

Recommendations for Improving how Classroom Walk-through Visits Change the Teaching and Culture in Schools

The schools in this study used their School Improvement Plan, which was driven

by the district, to dictate what items were going to be assessed when principals visited the

classrooms. Providing teachers with the opportunity to give their input on the items that

would be looked for during the walk-through observations could help teachers feel more a part of the process. Perhaps the teachers want to suggest an area that is of particular interest to them or a specific area in which they are struggling and they know they need assistance with. These kinds of things may not be included on the list that was provided by the district. Creating this "teacher buy-in" could possibly make the Classroom Walk-through Visits more meaningful and provide more immediate relevance.

In all three of the schools that participated in this study, only the administrators participated in the classroom walk-through visits. Including teachers on a regular basis when conducting the walk-throughs could send a strong and important message that the leadership values teachers' knowledge, experience and insight into creating a learning atmosphere for all so that the goal of helping all students be successful can be attained. Giving teachers this opportunity builds teacher capacity and provides them with an opportunity to feel appreciated for their professional judgment and experience.

How do administrators and teachers say data is used from "Classroom Walk-through Visits"?

Table 4 summarizes the findings and recommendations concerning how administrators and teachers say data from classroom walk-through visits are used. Following the table, a more detailed account is provided.

Table 4

How Data from Classroom Walk-through Visits are Used

Best Practices	Recommendations
• Collected data based on goals in the School Improvement Plan • Identified trends • Shared with individuals, grade levels, and whole school • Brought sense of awareness to teachers from "outsider" viewpoint	• Make sure teachers know how classroom walk-through data is being used • Present data on a regular basis

The data that were collected in this study were based on goals included in the

School Improvement Plan. Administrators studied the data from Teachscape and

identified trends that were taking place with instruction in classrooms and across grade

levels and the entire school. Classroom walk-through data was merged with student

assessment data. Administrators and teachers analyzed all of the data in an effort to find

out what could be changed in an effort to meet the needs of the student. The data were

shared with individual teachers, grade levels and the whole school. The data brought a

sense of awareness to the teachers about what an "outsider" sees when they come into the

classroom. The data also helped initiate conversations between teachers and

administrators about what was taking place with the teaching and learning in the

classroom and across the school.

Recommendations for Using Technology and Data from Classroom Walk-through Visits

My first recommendation is making sure that teachers know how the data from

the walk-through visits are being used. Several teachers at all three schools responded

that they did not know for what purposes the data were used. The use of the data needs to be transparent so that teachers do not feel that this initiative is a "gotcha." Make sure that the purpose of sharing the data is always tied back to improving student achievement. The data should be discussed as it relates to student achievement and intentional lesson planning. Teachers need to be aware of what instructional strategies need to be utilized or changed in order to increase student achievement.

A second suggestion is to present data on a regular basis. Presenting data will underscore the importance of the initiative. Again, several teachers at all three schools discussed that they had not seen data in a while or even at all during the school year. If data is not shared with teachers, they question the purpose of the initiative. When data is not shared with teachers, they cannot monitor their own individual progress or the progess of their grade level or school in regard to their performance on the items that are being looked for. Teachers cannot use the data if it is not shared with them. They cannot make instructional changes if they are not aware of the changes that need to be made.

General Implication

After looking at the data of the three schools in this study, no single school stands out as "nailing" the classroom walk-through visit as **"the"** way to change the teaching and learning culture of the schools; however, as evidenced in the "Conclusions" sections above, positive findings did occur. In addition, all three schools participating in the research study had areas in which they excelled. The principal at Maple Avenue Elementary took the necessary time during the walk-through visits to really capture what was happening in the classroom. She then used her observation data from the walk-

through visits as a tool to begin conversations with teachers in professional learning communities about instructional practices that would bring about increases in student learning. At Birch Street Elementary the principal developed relational trust between the administrators and the teachers. She also trained the staff on the purpose of the visit as well as the Teachscape tool that would be used to "score" visits. At South Garden Elementary the administrators studied the curriculum before doing a walk-through visit so that they could compare it to what they were observing, and they consistently provided feedback to the teachers. In all of the schools the Instructional Leadership Teams used findings from their classroom walk-through visits to determine what staff development would be provided to the teachers.

One might wonder if there were so many positive things happening in the schools with the walk-through visits, why was there a feeling that more could be done and why were the visits not having more of an effect on changing the culture of the teaching and learning in the schools? The answer lies in the fact that the administration/instructional leadership team was driving the initiative. In spite of all of the efforts that the individual administrators did at the schools, there needs to be an understanding that individual people do not easily change the culture of schools (Fullan, 2014). Fullan offers the idea that *groups* of people are better equipped with the necessary power to change the *group*. It is unproductive and futile for the principal as a micromanaging instructional leader to go after instruction in detail teacher by teacher. Instead, he agrees with Marzano and DuFour that time should be spent building the capacity of all teachers to work in teams. Fullan states that "principals should shift from focusing on one-to-one work with each

individual teacher to leading collaborative work that improves quality throughout the

faculty" (p. 32). He further states that

> It [Instructional leadership] can be incredibly time consuming for principals,
> diverting them from doing other things that can shape learning more powerfully.
> Supervising teachers into better performers is simply impossible if you have a
> staff of more than twenty teachers. Principals who find themselves in districts
> that require that they spend X amount of time, say, two days per week, observing
> in classrooms will be less effective overall because they can't influence very
> many teachers in any given time period; they can't be experts in all areas of
> instruction; and they will end up neglecting other aspects of their role that would
> make a bigger difference, such as developing the professional capital of teachers
> as a group, along with other key aspects of leadership essential for motivating
> people to work together with the leader and others. (pp. 39–40)

Teams of teachers must build a culture in which the main focus of learning is

emphasized every day. Building this culture is the best way to strengthen the teaching

that goes on in classrooms. Fullan (2014) states that "the primary issue is to change the

culture of the school and the district so that learning is the work –that is, so that people

are getting better at what they do because learning to be more effective is built into the

values and routines of the organization" (pp. 32–33). This goal can be accomplished by

realizing that

> Hierarchical leadership can never influence masses at any scale, but purposeful
> peers can have this effect. The principal's role is to lead the school's teachers in a
> process of learning to improve their teaching while learning alongside them what
> works and what does not. (p. 55)

Fullan notes that "The key to generating widespread impact on student learning then,

resides in mobilizing the group to work in specific, intense, sustained ways on learning

for all students" (p. 67). When investments are made in "Professional Capital" (human,

social, decisional) and collaborative learning environments of groups of teachers becomes established in the day to day work of the school, the work becomes less dependent on the work of the principal and more of a function of how the staff carries on their daily routines. As a result, everyone learns from each other and a culture is created that the principal and the teacher are "in this" together.

There is an important side note for the involvement of teachers participating in classroom walk-through visits. The student learning that administrators expect to see in classrooms should align with the way administrators have their teachers learn in the schools. The Teachscape protocol states that the following should be observed in the classroom: access and activate prior knowledge; teacher input; authentic student participation; evidence of student learning. The principals in all of the schools accessed and activated prior knowledge (reviewed walkthroughs in previous years), provided teacher input (stated the purpose of the visit and explained the Teachscape tool), and they provided evidence of learning (showed data that was collected during the walkthrough visits using graphs and charts at grade level and whole staff meetings).

The critical part that was overlooked was the "Authentic Student Participation". Allowing teachers to participate in these visits would allow them to construct meaning that could be transferred back into their classrooms. The teachers should be afforded the opportunity to participate in these visits so that they could see for themselves what was and was not happening in the classrooms. It is a cliché to say that "a picture is worth a thousand words," but in this instance it is certainly an appropriate comment. It is more meaningful to the teachers to actually see what is happening in classrooms rather than

someone tell them what is happening in the classrooms. This implication is supported by John Dewey's "Inquiry Approach" to learning (Shermis, 1992; Spring, 2005;Tomlinson, 1997) and Piaget's "Constructivist Approach" to learning (Clark, 2005; DeLisi, 2002; Nurrenbern, 2001).

Dewey believed that students were a "democratic community of problem solvers." The most important aspect of Dewey's belief was that learning occurs within a social setting. People are social creatures and they are interconnected with one another. The interaction that occurs within the confines of a social environment is the reason that people have evolved to the complex creatures that we are today. This blend of interaction and experience is the foundation of our knowledge. The social element of people is also essential for education—signifying that the experiences that we get from social interactions imply that education is a social process. Dewey was aware that educators did not appreciate the importance of the community relationship of the students. Dewey also knew about the schedules, rules and procedures in the traditional educational organizations that obstructed the learning process; therefore, he actively campaigned for students to work together more frequently in cooperative social groups. He believed that this type of social interaction needed to be cultivated in order in order for the students to receive their fullest benefits (Spring, 2005).

Dewey is very much aware of the traditional view of knowledge--information and skills have already been identified, learning comes from what is written, student life experiences are unimportant, and the purpose is to acquire as much information as possible to prepare them for their futures. Dewey objects to this form of education

because he believes that knowledge comes from students learning from events that they have personally experienced or acquired. Dewey is adamant that the control of the student learning should reside with the student and that their past experiences should be used to help students make sense of the present and future. He also was a strong believer that the knowledge that the students acquire is not categorized into individual and separate compartments, subsequently preventing students from understanding the relationship and interconnectedness between their learning and real life situations. An interpretation of this is that Dewey was in support of skills being taught within the framework of an authentic, meaningful experience rather than an arbitrary and isolated lesson.

Another significant aspect of Dewey's belief was the role of the teacher (Spring, 2005). He considered the teacher to be a guide to the experiential learning process, rather than an individual who distributes bits of knowledge to students. A requirement of teachers in this progressive role is that they must be knowledgeable of the content and how the individual student learns. In addition, they must ensure quality experiences for the students. Shermis (1992) offers insight into the absolute philosophical assumptions for reflective thinking and Dewey's thoughts on the American school. "Reflecting, thinking, and teaching are thououghgoingly relativist, and therefore they are non-absolutist" (p. 9). This means that "the only reality that humans can know is what they interpret of the world around them" (p. 9). He reasons that each of us interprets the things that go on around us, and based on our interpretations we devise our own reality. "When we put our perceptions together, and negotiate agreement about the world, it is

called the 'social construction of reality'" (p. 9). Shermis argues that the significance of this is that

> if meaning involves an interaction between a person and his or her world, then there is no meaning *out there*, waiting to be known on its own terms. Teaching, consequently, is neither a matter of a teacher's requiring students to come into proper relationship with an absolute ideal, nor a matter of having students latch onto the 'right' value. (p. 9)

Shermis adds that advocates of critical thinking should dismiss absolute premises because those assumptions are untested and they are based on the idea of the curriculum is a compilation of concepts and facts assembled as curriculum specialists have arranged them.

The constructivist theory of learning is concerned with knowing and understanding what is happening inside people's brains when they are learning. This learning theory is based on several premises:

1. Learning outcomes depend not only on the learning environment but also on the knowledge of the learner.
2. Learning involves the construction of meaning. Meanings constructed by the students from what they see or hear may or may not be those intended. Meaning is influenced by existing meaning.
3. The construction of meaning is a continuous and active process.
4. Meanings can be accepted or rejected.
5. Learners have the final responsibility for their learning.
6. There are patterns in the types of meaning students construct due to shared experiences with the physical world and through natural languages. (Clark, 2005, p. 672)

One of the people who did much of the early work on the constructionist theory was Piaget. His approach to understanding the way in which students learn was built on four major points:

1. Schemata are cognitive and individuals use mental structures to adapt and organize the environment. Schemata are not physical objects; rather, they are more of a process inside the nervous system that identifies and classifies incoming stimuli.
2. Assimilation is the cognitive process that individuals use to integrate new perceptual, motor, or conceptual matter into the existing schemata. Assimilation does not result in a change of schemata, but it does affect the growth of the schemata.
3. Accommodation is concerned with changes in schemata, meaning that either a new schemata has to be built or an existing schemata has to be changed. Once accommodation takes place, then the stimulus can be assimilated.
4. Equilibration is the state of balance between assimilation and accommodation. It is a self-regulatory process whose tools are assimilation and accommodation. (Clark, 2005, p. 672-673)

Piaget's constructivist learning theory has significantly influenced education. Nurrenbern (2001) notes that

> the description of individuals as active participants in their intellectual development broadens our knowledge base and perspective about the learning process and possible approaches to classroom teaching. The perspective that learners are active participants rather than passive receivers of knowledge challenges the behavioristic, receptive, empty-vessel model of learners widely applied in many education situations. (p. 1107)

Harlow (2006) warns that educators need to be careful to ensure that they not solely rely on the assimilation part of the process because this is the passive part that requires the minimum amount of effort on the learner's part. Instead of easily getting caught up in the rote memorization and top-down model of instruction with little active involvement, the

learner needs to be offered experiences that cannot be easily assimilated so that they become an active participant in the construction of knowledge as the new information is accommodated.

Piaget's theory of students actively taking part in the teaching-learning process can be merged with classroom practices in which reflective inquiry is used (De Lisi, 2002). De Lisi specifically refers to reflective inquiry combined with peer learning in educational settings and identifies the benefits that can be achieved. One goal of peers working together is that it improves student achievement, especially in the areas of listening and communication. Feeling free to discuss topics and having relevant conversations about a given topic allows students to develop a more intense level of understanding. A second benefit of peer learning is that students learn how to manage exchanges and relationships with each other. The students learn how to successfully share differing opinions and build mutual respect in order to create an effective and cooperative team experience.

Specific Implication for Administrators

The main implication for administrators who want to change the culture of teaching and learning in their schools is to embrace their teaching staff as a collective group of talented professional educators who are motivated to do their best to help children learn. The faculty and staff need to be invited to accompany the instructional leadership team on the walk-through visits or permitted to do visits on their own. When looking at the teachers in all three of the schools in this research study, all of the schools had teachers with advanced degrees or National Board Certification. In many cases these

teachers are as much of an instructional expert as the principal. None of the schools in this study used the wisdom and insight of these experienced teachers as a part of the team that did the walk-through visits. This "wealth of knowledge" was completely ignored. This sent a message that only a few people were qualified to give input and identify areas that would help students reach higher levels of achievement. In addition, at all three of the schools a major finding was that the walk-through visits happened on an inconsistent and very infrequent basis because of the multiple demands of the principal. If administrators help teachers develop the skills to do classroom walk-through visits, then the administrators are "freed up" to do other areas of leadership while the whole staff is afforded an opportunity to continue the walk-through visit initiative and move forward with their professional growth and development. When this happens teachers will be less likely to view this initiative as an inspection and more likely to see it as a way to enhance the teachers' learning and the students' learning.

Specific Implication for Teachers

The main implication for teachers is to use their professional voice to insist on being included in classroom walk-through visits. Teachers need to use their professional expertise to offer and receive constructive feedback in order for their professional growth and development to occur and student learning to increase. Teachers need to acknowledge their professional knowledge and background and become comfortable in initiating and engaging in conversations regarding curriculum and instruction. Teachers need to feel confident that they can add value to the learning among fellow teachers as well as their students.

Suggestions for Future Research

The research that I conducted studied three schools in one school system after a year's worth of classroom walk-through visits had taken place. In this district an online program called Teachscape was used to collect and analyze the data from the visits. A suggestion for future research would include a longitudinal study in which the researcher would begin the study at the start of the school year and follow the process and development throughout the entire school year. A second suggestion for further research would be to compare two data collection processes—one with an online program and one without. It would be interesting to see the differences in the way the data is collected, analyzed and used by the administrators and teachers. A third suggestion for further research would be to study a classroom walk-through initiative in which teachers were participants in the classroom visits.

Researcher Reflection

As an experienced teacher who has experienced administrators coming through my classroom daily for walk-through visits, I learned so much from this study. While it involved a tremendous amount of work and attention, I really enjoyed the learning process. What I learned was very applicable and meaningful for me. I gained a greater appreciation for the work and competing demands that administrators and teachers face on a daily basis.

The part of this experience that I enjoyed the most was talking with the participants. Their insight and perspective on educating students was powerful and

reassuring. I was reminded of the caring and talented teachers and administrators that are in our schools and the important work that they do.

I entered into this research with a slightly negative opinion and attitude towards Classroom Walk-through Visits. The experience I had with these types of visits was very different from the experiences that the participants shared with me. I really thought that all teachers that I interviewed would say that they had principals conducting walk-throughs on a daily basis. I also thought that they would say that they did not like the visits and they distracted them from the work they were trying to do in their classroom. I was very surprised at the positive attitudes that most teachers shared. To me, that demonstrated confidence in their teaching ability and the positive relationship they had with their administrators. The impact that this has had on me is that I want to embrace this initiative as an opportunity for me to learn and grow as a professional. The most important learning that I want to take away from this study is that I, and all teachers, can continue to grow and improve as an educator. Teachers need to set the example of being lifelong learners within their profession.

There were surprises that I found in the study. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the lack of consistency in performing the visits. I suppose this surprise comes from my experience of having the visits on a daily basis. For me, these visits had become a normal routine practice. I was really quite shocked when participants said they did walk-throughs on a routine basis of once each week or month. In my experience, that would be completely out of the ordinary.

While I do not feel there is a definite set number of walk-throughs that should be completed during a school year, I do feel that they can offer tremendous benefits to schools if they are used properly. Schools are learning organizations, for teachers as well as students. I suppose I have been in nearby research hospitals too many times with family members who have had serious medical conditions. I have watched teams of doctors visit patient rooms. The "lead doctor" will interact with the patient by talking and asking the patient questions, while the interns listen intently. Then the group of doctors steps out into the hallway. They have a short conference about the patient's medical condition and what treatment should follow.

This scenario is how I visualize classroom walk-through visits should work effectively in schools. Teams of teachers should be given the opportunity to walk around with administrators or academic coaches and observe classrooms and discuss the findings. This should occur on a regular basis. This should not be reserved for just administrative level positions. All teaching faculty should be a part of this wonderful opportunity to advance their learning so that they can improve their effectiveness in their classrooms.

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

Classroom walk-through visits offer a unique opportunity for teachers and administrators in our schools that can advance adult and student learning. The endless possibilities that can come from this initiative make the required effort and work worthwhile. When this initiative is conducted with purposeful communication of the vision and careful attention to details, everyone wins: students, teachers, administrators

and schools. I am excited about being a part of a reform that looks for ways to improve the culture of teaching and learning in today's schools. I am appreciative of having the opportunity to study a topic that has relevance in the present and future school settings and offers the potential of remarkable school improvement.

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APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(These are the kinds of questions that I used to gather responses. The interviews were open-ended and informal. The interviews were conducted in a conversational style.)

    1. **How do administrators conduct classroom walk-through visits?**

- Describe the organizational method you use for planning, scheduling and conducting CWTs.

    - Do you have a certain system or routine that you use for planning?

    - How do you keep track of your visits to ensure you visit all staff?

    - Is there a priority you consider when planning and scheduling CWTs?

    - How long does each CWT take?

    - How many visits do you complete each day?

    - How do you record information from the observation?

- Describe who conducts classroom walk-through visits at this school (principal, assistant principal, other school leaders).

- How does the team reconvene to discuss the data that will identify trends?

- Is there a school-wide or district-wide protocol for CWTs?

- How do you record or document the data that is collected during the CWT visit (checklist, open-ended form, paper template, software program)?

2. What do administrators intentionally do to prepare their school faculty for Classroom Walkthrough Visits?

- What (if any) information do you share with teachers, especially new staff, at the beginning of the year about CWTs?

- How is the focus and purpose of CWTs explained to teachers?

- Do you have a focus point for each visit?

- How often do you change your focus point?

3. What do administrators say about how "Classroom Walk-Through" visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

- Describe what you look for during the Classroom Walk-through visits.
  (How did you devise the list of what you look for? Was this list your idea, the district's idea, and/or did you involve the staff?)

- Describe the kind of feedback you leave with the teacher.
  (When do you give feedback to the teacher? How often do you give feedback? Do you have conversations with the teachers about the visit and/or feedback?)

- How do you organize your data from the CWTs so that you can identify trends?

- How does the data inform you about what is happening at your school with teaching and learning?

- Describe how the culture of your school has been affected by CWTs.

- How does what you find in your Classroom Walk-Throughs transfer to what happens in your Professional Learning Communities? How do Classroom Walk-Throughs prevent teachers from working in isolation? How do CWTs allow for collaborative working environments?

4. **What do administrators do during "Classroom Walkthrough Visits" that is connected to the teaching and learning culture in the school?**

- Describe what you do while you are in the classroom.

- (Where do you stand? Do you move to various places in the classroom? Do you interact with students? Do you get involved with the lesson as a participant?)

- How do you record the data that you observe while you are in the classroom?

5. **How do administrators say they use data from "Classroom Walk-through Visits"?**

- Describe how the data from CWTs is used after it is collected.

- How do you know if Classroom Walkthrough Visits are changing the culture at your school? Do you look for evidence from successive visits to see if teachers have reflected and taken action on feedback from prior visits?

- How do you share information about what you observe in your CWTs? Do you have meetings with individual teachers? Do you meet with grade level teachers during their PLCs? Do you share information with the whole school? If so, how is the information shared?

- Have your CWTs ever made certain trends apparent that made you consider

  staff development opportunities?

APPENDIX B

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(These are the kinds of questions that I used to gather responses. The interviews were open-ended and informal. The interviews were conducted in a conversational style.)

1. **How do administrators conduct classroom walk-through visits?**

   - Describe what a typical classroom walk-through visit is like.

   - Describe who conducts classroom walk-through visits at this school (principal, assistant principal, other school leaders).

   - Is there a school-wide or district-wide protocol for CWTs?

   - Discuss the feedback that administrators give teachers.

2. **What do administrators intentionally do to prepare their school faculty for Classroom Walkthrough Visits?**

   - What (if any) information did administrators share with faculty, especially the new staff, at the beginning of the year about CWTs?

   - How is the purpose and focus of CWTs explained to teachers?

   - Is there a focus point for each visit?

   - How often is the focus point changed?

3. What do administrators/teachers say about how "Classroom Walk-Through" visits change the teaching and learning culture in schools?

- Describe what you think administrators look for during the Classroom Walk-through visits.

- How did administrators devise the list of what they look for? Was this list the administration's idea, the district's idea, and/or was the school staff involved in creating the list?)

- Describe the kind of feedback administrators leave with teachers.

- When do you receive feedback from administrators? How often do you get feedback? Do you have conversations with the administration about the visit and/or feedback?

- How do teachers reflect on the feedback they receive from administrators? Do you discuss the feedback from classroom walkthrough visits with other teachers?

- Do you organize and save data/feedback from the CWTs?

- How does the data inform you about what is happening in your classroom with teaching and learning?

- Describe how the culture of your classroom and school has been affected by CWTs.

- How do Classroom Walk-Through visits transfer to what happens in your Professional Learning Communities? How do Classroom Walk-Throughs

prevent teachers from working in isolation? How do CWTs allow for collaborative working environments?

4. What do administrators do during "Classroom Walkthrough Visits" that is connected to the teaching and learning culture in the school?

- Describe what administrators do while they are in the classrooms. (Where do they stand? Do they move to various places in the classroom? Do they interact with students? Do they get involved with the lesson as a participant?)

  How is observational data recorded while administrators are in the classroom?

5. How do administrators and teachers say they use data from "Classroom Walk-through Visits"?

- Describe how the data from CWTs is used after it is collected.

- How do administrators share information about what they observe in CWTs? Do administrators have meetings with individual teachers? Do administrators meet with grade level teachers during their PLCs? Do administrators share information with the whole school? If so, how is the information shared?

- Have your CWTs ever made certain trends apparent that made teachers request staff development opportunities?

- How do you know if Classroom Walkthrough Visits are changing the culture at your school?

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

School: _____   Principal: _____

Date: _____

	Physical Setting *Where does principal position himself in room? *One location or move around? *Length of visit?	**Data Collection** *How is data collected? *Follow school or district protocol? *Does principal document teacher action, student action & involvement, lesson plan objectives, classroom schedule, climate of the classroom?	**Interaction/Feedback** *Does principal have interaction with teacher or students during visit? *Who speaks to whom? *Who is listening? *When does principal give feedback? *Non-verbal communications taking place?	**Debriefing** *Have conversation with principal and document the findings made during the visit.
Teacher 1 Begin Time: _____ End Time: _____				
Teacher 2 Begin Time: _____ End Time: _____				
Teacher 3 Begin Time: _____ End Time: _____				

APPENDIX D

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

School: Maple Avenue Elementary

Study Participant (Pseudonym)	Position	Years of Experience in Position
Ms. Johnson	Principal	2
Ms. Allen	Teacher	4
Ms. Baldwin	Teacher	22
Ms. Coble	Teacher	9
Ms. Davidson	Teacher	14
Mr. Euliss	Teacher	8
Ms. Farmer	Teacher	1
Ms. Garrison	Teacher	10
Ms. Hale	Teacher	4
Ms. Ingle	Teacher	27
Ms. Jackson	Teacher	15
Ms. King	Teacher	10
Ms. Langley	Teacher	20
Ms. Manning	Teacher	23

School: Birch Street Elementary

Study Participant (Pseudonym)	Position	Years of Experience in Position
Ms. Brown	Principal	3
Ms. Allred	Teacher	30
Ms. Baker	Teacher	10
Ms. Clapp	Teacher	31
Ms. Dixon	Teacher	12
Ms. Edwards	Teacher	4
Ms. Faucette	Teacher	15
Ms. Grant	Teacher	13
Ms. Hall	Teacher	11
Ms. Isley	Teacher	5 months
Ms. Jones	Teacher	31
Ms. Keck	Teacher	7
Ms. Lassiter	Teacher	17

School: South Garden Elementary

Study Participant (Pseudonym)	Position	Years of Experience in Position
Ms. Thompson	Assistant Principal	1
Ms. Alderman	Teacher	1
Ms. Brooks	Teacher	2
Ms. Coleman	Teacher	25
Ms. Day	Teacher	9
Ms. Evans	Teacher	2
Ms. Faircloth	Teacher	1
Mr. Gentry	Teacher	1
Ms. Harrison	Teacher	15
Ms. Ingold	Teacher	12
Ms. Joyce	Teacher	1
Ms. Kimrey	Teacher	27
Ms. Lane	Teacher	2
Ms. Moore	Teacher	5

APPENDIX E

TEACHSCAPE PROTOCOL

Learning Principle 1: Content is framed in terms of core ideas and transferable processes, not discrete facts and skills. Knowledge is organized around transferable core concepts to guide students' thinking and integrate new knowledge in meaningful ways.

Learning Principle 2: Teaching engages students in complex thinking to deepen their learning. Different types of thinking are utilized: classification and categorization, inferential reasoning, analysis, synthesis, and metacognition to enhance learning.

Learning Principle 3: Learners reveal and demonstrate understanding by applying, transferring, and adapting learning to new situations and problems. Teachers teach for transfer. Students should have many opportunities to apply learning in meaningful and varied contexts.

Learning Principle 4: New learning is built on prior knowledge. Learners use experiences and background knowledge to actively construct meaning. Students must be helped to actively connect new information and ideas to what they already know.

Learning Principle 5: Learning is social. Therefore, teachers should provide opportunities for interactive learning in a supportive environment.

Learning Principle 6: Accommodating a learner's preferred learning style, prior knowledge, and interests enhances learning. Pre-assessing student's prior knowledge, learning preference and interests permits differentiation of instruction to address these differences.

Learning Focus:

(Learning Principal 1)

- What is the learning target for the lesson?

- How was the target communicated?

- What is the appropriateness of the learning target?

- Observable Evidence/Notes

Access/Activate Prior Knowledge

(Learning Target 2, 4, 6)

- What activities does teacher incorporate into instruction?

- Observable Evidence/Notes

Teacher Input

(Learning Principles 2, 4, 6)

- What teaching practices were observed?

- Was modeling observed?

- Observable Evidence/Notes

Authentic Student Participation

(Learning Principles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

- Focus on Practice: What do instructional strategies require students to do?

- Focus on Practice: Is there evidence of teacher facilitation of learning?

- Focus on Practice: What supportive materials are available and accessed by

  students?

- Focus on Practice: What evidence is there of differentiation of specific learning needs?

- Focus on Practice: How does teacher promote reflection and rethinking?

- Focus on Learning: Reading—Is there a clearly defined purpose for reading?

- Focus on Learning: Writing—Is there a clearly defined purpose for writing?

- Focus on Learning: Speaking—Are students engaged in purposeful content discourse?

- Focus on Learning: Active Listening—What were students actively listening for?

- Focus on Learning: What were students involved in?

- Observable Evidence/Notes:

Evidence of Learning

(Learning Principle not identified)

- Focus on Practice: What evidence of learning was observed?

- Focus on the Student: What do the assessments that were utilized during lesson require students to do?

- Observable Evidence/Notes: