Instructional Walkthrough Guidance

DESE Instructional Planning and Observation Tools Collection | Pilot Version 2024-2025

About Walkthroughs

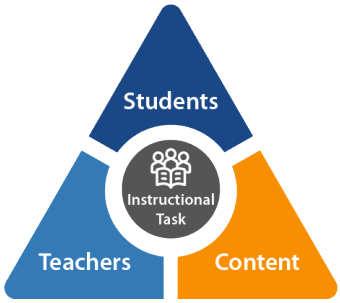
Walkthroughs are classroom observations through which a quick scan of teaching and learning provides insight into how the system is operating.

By surfacing teaching and learning trends across schools and classrooms, successes and strengths can be celebrated and areas needing further attention, development, or resources can be supported to ensure student learning is grounded in grade-appropriate instruction.

Purpose	Obtain a quick snapshot of instructional practice and student learning across classrooms and schools
Goal	Promote school and district continuous improvement and instructional equity for students through grade-appropriate instruction
Frequency	Regularly, can be weekly, twice monthly, or monthly
Duration	10-15 minutes
Feedback	May offer brief, informal individual positive feedback on the spot or share out feedback in the aggregate
Evaluation	Not used for teacher evaluation

Instructional walkthroughs:

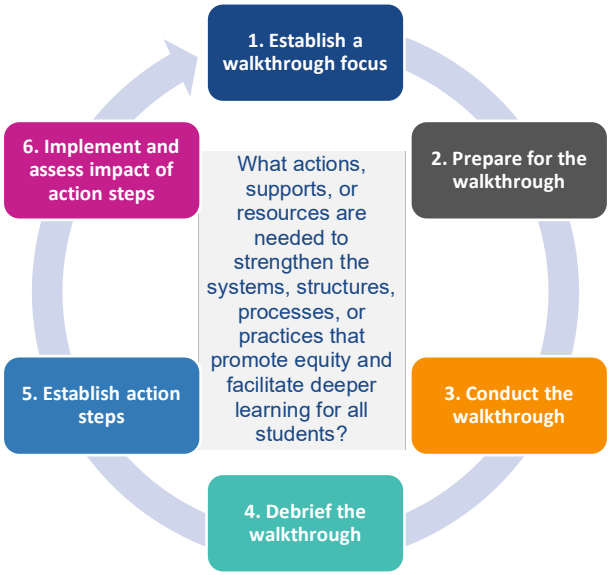
- Involve observations to (a) gather information about teacher-student-peer interactions, student engagement, and instructional practices and (b) collect data for analysis using a common tool.
- Promote continuous improvement of the systems, structures, processes, and practices that facilitate equitable student learning experiences, academic achievement, and outcomes.
- Can be effective for monitoring progress of initiatives that involve instructional change (e.g., implementing high-quality instructional materials, evidence-based early literacy practices, inclusive practices, culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy, technology integration, etc.).



Walkthroughs focus on the instructional core: the interaction between teacher (mindset, knowledge, skill, practice) and student (engagement, ownership) in the presence of content (grade level (or beyond), relevant, real-world, interactive). Change in one element necessitates change in the other two for student learning, at scale, to occur.

The Instructional Walkthrough Cycle

Instructional walkthroughs are effective only if they are done with regularity as part of ongoing and effective data processes and systems that drive equity-centered instructional improvements. At right is an example of an instructional walkthrough cycle that supports continuous improvement.



Using the Observational Tools

Before the Walkthrough

- ❑ Familiarize yourself with the tool.
- ❑ Calibrate with your team on using the tool.
- ❑ Choose priority indicators that align with the instructional walkthrough focus and is coherent with district/school instructional initiatives and goals.
- ❑ Review the look-fors and calibrate with the team on expectations for those indicators.
- ❑ If the walkthrough is for the purpose of coaching: schedule a pre-walkthrough conference to collaboratively determine focus and goals.

During the Walkthrough

- ❑ Take low-inference notes—without interpretation—of teacher and students' words, actions, and interactions.
- ❑ Whenever possible, circulate to look at student work (in progress or completed during the observation), including both the task and student responses to the task.
- ❑ Note pacing and alignment to lesson standards and objectives (of both content and language development).

Example of Low Inference Notes

Observation Notes: Teacher [1]	Observation Notes: Students [25: 17m/8f]
• Page 395. [T moves towards front of class where document camera is. Current worksheet projected.] • "Today, we're going to take this a step farther like I asked you to and we're gonna think about how we learn to write and think about relationships a little bit more carefully because today, we're going to take these patterns, we're gonna see how they're related, and then, what is the next step we're gonna do?" [T looks over table group at right where a student begins to answer] • [2 secs] "We're going to turn them into line graphs. And we're gonna be able to see patterns in our table and in our line graphs. OK? So what I'd like you to do is read this please with your neighbor and we'll see how we can fill this table. Go ahead and please and do that." • T walks over to table group of students on her right. Leans over one in a grouping of 5. • [50 seconds after] T walks back to front of room. "This is a real-life example, right? We saw yesterday how often food and recipe and batches can follow these patterns. What are they making in this recipe?" [Nods towards students at left who begins to answer.] "Hot cocoa. What's another word for 'hot cocoa' for those of you who don't know that?" [1 sec] • "How many of you have ever had hot chocolate marshmallows in the winter? It's good right?"	• All students turn math workbook to page 395 and have it open. • Four students raise their hand. One begins to answer. • Students begin to read the math problem. Of 13 students in my view, two pairs are oriented towards each other and reading aloud the math problem to each other. The remaining students are reading aloud solo. One is grooming his nails, eyes off the page while his partner is reading aloud. 11 of 13 students complete the task within 2 minutes, and wait for the teacher, orienting their body and eyes towards the projector. • All students stop talking, and face teacher moving towards the projector. • 4 males, 2 females raise their hands. "Hot chocolate" one shares out. • All students raise their hand and nod their head in response.

Interpretation *[Example]*

While most students (20/25) were attentive and on task, there were limited evidence of practices that support all students to meet the lesson objective and grade-level content and language development standards: T's math language was imprecise, with articulated task/activity not clear, nearly no wait time between questions, which did not support students to grapple with the core content or purpose of the lesson; scaffolds and other resources to support students who may need them were not referenced or observed being used by students; peer-to-peer opportunity did not facilitate purposeful discourse; expectations and accountability for working with peers were also not evident. Affirming and asset-based language that fosters student risk-taking and sense of belonging are areas to lean into for further teacher observation/data collection (e.g., "...like I told you to...for those of you who don't know").

After the Walkthrough

- ❑ Review and revise notes, as necessary.
- ❑ Reflect on and analyze what you observed.
- ❑ When possible, review the lesson plan for the observed lesson to note alignment to targeted objectives and standards (of both content and language development).
- ❑ Use the rating scale on the observation tool to quantify/qualify your interpretation of the observation, aligned to the walkthrough focus indicators.
- ❑ Use a protocol to debrief the walkthrough as a group.
- ❑ Determine and prioritize individual or team action steps to strengthen systems, structures, processes, and grade-appropriate instructional practices that promote equity and deeper learning for students.
- ❑ If the walkthrough is for the purpose of coaching, schedule a post walkthrough conference to support reflection, provide feedback, discuss implications, and determine next steps.