Formative Classroom Walkthroughs:
How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement

Presenters

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Traditional Classroom Walkthroughs

⬦ *Purpose: To evaluate the teacher and the teacher's instruction in order to improve it.*
  ○ *A trickle down approach to school improvement—the principal is the "evaluator in chief".*
  ○ *Mini-observations with a collegial supervisory approach.*

⬦ **Sources of Information:** The observer certifies the use of checklist of "best practice" instructional strategies.

⬦ **Focus of Observer's Feedback:** Provide suggestions for increasing the use of the missing or weak instructional strategies.

⬦ **Post Walkthrough Goal:** Observer revisits classroom to assess the degree that the teacher has enacted the observer's suggestions.

Formative Classroom Walkthroughs

"Formative" means contributing to the improvement of learning.

⬦ **Formative Purpose:** Professional learning and school-wide improvement
  ○ Supported by a learning target theory of action (Moss & Brookhart, 2012) resulting in a collaborative and cohesive professional learning process.
  ○ Everyone focuses on what students are actually doing to learn and achieve during daily lessons.
  ○ Everyone—leaders, coaches, teachers *and students*—uses that information to identify, pursue, and assess the success of their learning goals.
⬦ **Leadership Growth As An Intentional Goal: Formative Classroom Walkthroughs** are as much about the professional growth of principals, instructional coaches, and other leaders, as they are about improving teacher effectiveness and student learning.
⬦ **Shifting the Culture - "Sitting in the Student's Seat":** What are students doing, saying, making or writing—during the lesson—to master the concepts and skills they are supposed to be learning?
⬦ **Key Inquiry Point:** If students completed everything the teacher asked them to do during the lesson, what kind of growth in learning and achievement would we expect to see?
⬦ **Shifting the Culture: Two Big Ideas**
  1. **The purpose is formative:** Both the observer and the teacher should learn things about how to improve their practice to raise student achievement.
  2. That **formative purpose** is best accomplished when **the observer looks for what the students are doing first**, and other things (teacher, environment, materials) second.

Formative Classroom Walkthroughs—Looking for Evidence of Student Learning

Observers sit in the student's seat to look for evidence of student learning through seven key learning processes:
  1. A Worthwhile Lesson
  2. A Shared Learning Target
  3. A Performance of Understanding
  4. Student Look-Fors
  5. Formative Feedback
  6. Student Self-Assessment
  7. Effective Questioning

Using Walkthrough Information

✧ Classroom information, no matter how frequently or carefully collected, only becomes evidence when educators use it to improve student achievement.

✧ **Formative Classroom Walkthroughs** use up-to-the-minute classroom information to guide collegial feed-forward, conversations about deepening student learning.

Promoting A Culture of Learning and Improvement

✧ Formative Classroom Walkthroughs emphasize learning inside of practice. They combine four formative learning processes:
  1. A **professional learning target** that describes the next level of work for educators as individuals or groups.
  2. **Professional performances of understanding** that deepen professional learning and produce evidence of professional growth,
  3. Clear and understandable **professional *look-for*s** (success criteria), and
  4. **Feed-forward information** through collaborative inquiry.

Leading By Learning by Feeding Professional Learning Forward

✧ The most effective climate for feedback is a climate focused on learning.
✧ In a school climate focused on learning, everyone learns, not just the teachers and the students.
✧ If feedback is to be effective, it should be given and received in a school culture where learning – everyone's learning – is the prime directive.
✧ The principles of respectful, descriptive feedback—focused on the work and not the person, with suggestions for next steps—remain the hallmarks of effective feedback, whether the learners are children or adults.
  o **The Micro View:** Does the feedback have all the requisite features research has found in effective feedback?
  o **The Snapshot View:** Does the feedback give both the teacher and the observer a snapshot of current learning status? Does each person view the conversation as a learning episode?
  o **The Long View of Learning:** Does the feedback contain information about next steps in learning so that teachers and principals can see their way clear to taking those steps? And, did the conversation bring about improvement in educational practices and student learning?

Formative Classroom Walkthroughs: Taking a Bite Out of the Achievement Gap

✧ Schools improve when educators improve!

✧ The best evidence of improvement comes from what students do to learn in every lesson, every day.

✧ **Formative Classroom Walkthroughs** lead to improvements that rest on this evidence to make a real difference for students.

To Contact the Presenters

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