

5 WAYS TO MAKE CLASSROOM WALK THROUGH MORE POWERFUL

by:

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Classroom walk-throughs (CWTs) are not a new concept. For years, educators have been walking through classrooms, assessing instructional practices. Unfortunately, CWTs are frequently conducted as a result of downtown mandates rather than an internal desire to improve educational practices. Administrators walk through the motions without the school benefiting from this researched-based activity.

Here are five tips for making your walk-throughs more effective.

Don't go alone.

CWTs should not be performed in isolation. Having an administrator walk through the classrooms and take notes is a good place to start. It is even better to have teachers walk through classrooms with administration. This allows the teachers who conduct the walkthroughs to debrief after each visit, discussing what strategies the teacher used.

Visit Every Classroom Every Week

Too often, CWTs are conducted whenever an administrator is available. They'll go to a few classrooms here and there, but never enough to collect enough data to see trends. CWTs must be prioritized. Every day, time must be set aside so that every classroom can be visited at least once a week. After a few weeks, there will be enough data to see department, grade level, and school-wide instructional trends. Make an effort to visit classrooms at various times of the day.

Share The Data

Data collection will be useless unless it is shared, analyzed, discussed, and acted upon. I recommend that CWT data be shared with staff members once a month. The data can be sorted by grade, department, or individual teacher. Remember to keep the analysis clinical rather than critical. Names of teachers or classrooms should never be used as a "gotcha" in CWT data analysis. You want your employees to embrace and discuss the data rather than be defensive of it.

Use The Data To Make Changes

Data is meaningless unless it is put to use. Once the data has been analyzed, discussed, and digested, use it to determine where you should go with your professional development. Walk-throughs can illuminate a variety of instructional elements such as student engagement, groupings, DOK levels, student and teacher actions, and classroom environment. Choose the most pressing need and provide ongoing professional development in that field.

Provide Immediate Feedback

Many teachers become stressed when another educator enters their classroom to observe them teach. Even worse, having that educator leave the classroom without providing any kind of feedback is unacceptable. The teacher is left wondering if the visitor liked what they saw or if their instruction was interpreted negatively. To avoid this anxiety, at the end of your CWT, leave a post-it notes on the teacher's desk. Choose one positive instructional element and compliment them on it. This will put them at ease and pave the way for potentially uncomfortable future conversations about CWT data.

References:

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