

Learning Walks: A Component of Whole System Change

Alan Blankstein and Pedro Noguera (2015) link specific factors to measurable student results that target a raising of the bar and closing the achievement gap to:

1. Foster deep commitment to the moral imperative.
2. A small number of ambitious goals relentlessly pursued.
3. Establish a developmental culture and invest in capacity building.
4. Build leadership at all levels.
5. Cultivate district-wide engagement.
6. Learn from the work.
7. Use transparent data to improve practice.
8. Monitor for innovation and improvement.

The extent to which observations actually result in improved teaching and learning is linked largely to the leaders’ purpose and theory of action underlying the walkthrough (Wallace Foundation, 2011).

**Type → Purpose → Supporting Theory → Logistical Considerations → Actions for Consideration →**

How can leaders use a walkthrough process, with a clearly defined purpose, to improve teaching and learning (evidence and rationale)?

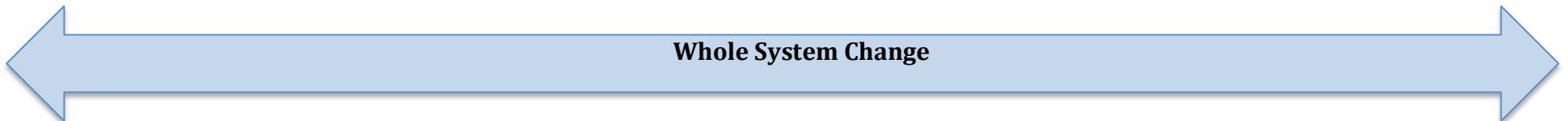
**Evidence → Analysis → Guide Improvement →**

First, consider:

“If the state accountability region does X →	then district offices and principals will be able to do Y →		which will help coaches and teachers do Z →		which will help all students learn at higher levels.”
How is our structure, practice, and system at the <b>state accountability region</b> affecting our district office and principals’ ability to	How is our structure, practice, and system at the <b>district office</b> affecting our principals’ ability to lead for instruction?	How is our <b>principals’</b> practice affecting our coaches’ and teachers’ impact on student learning?	How is our <b>coaches’</b> support affecting our teachers’ ability to impact student learning?	How is our <b>teachers’</b> instruction affecting our students’ learning?	What’s going on with our <b>students’</b> learning?

<p>lead for instruction?</p>					
<p><i>Description or Anecdote:</i></p> <p>What most concerns us about the quality of leadership in our state accountability regions' practice, structure and system?</p> <p>What specifically does the state accountability region do in practice that concerns us?</p>	<p><i>Description or Anecdote:</i></p> <p>What most concerns us about the quality of leadership in our district's practice, structure and system?</p> <p>What specifically does the district office do in practice that concerns us?</p>	<p><i>Description or Anecdote:</i></p> <p>What most concerns us in our principals' system that captures the quality of principal leadership?</p> <p>What specifically does the principal do in practice that concerns us?</p>	<p><i>Description or Anecdote:</i></p> <p>What most concerns us about the quality of coaching in our system given the issues we see in teacher application and student learning?</p> <p>What specifically do our coaches do in practice that concerns us?</p>	<p><i>Description or Anecdote:</i></p> <p>What most concerns us about the quality of teaching in our system given the issues we see in student learning?</p> <p>What specifically do our teachers do in practice that concerns us?</p>	<p><i>Description or Anecdote:</i></p> <p>What most concerns us about our students' learning in our system?</p> <p>What specifically is happening for those students?</p> <p>How prevalent do we think these issues are?</p>
<p><i>Evidence/Data:</i></p> <p>What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that could help us understand the scope of the problem that the state accountability region practices, structures, and systems represent?</p>	<p><i>Evidence/Data:</i></p> <p>What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that could help us understand the scope of the problem that district office practices, structures, and systems represent?</p>	<p><i>Evidence/Data:</i></p> <p>What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that could help us understand the scope of the problem represented (and how is it affecting the performance of coaches and teachers)?</p>	<p><i>Evidence/Data:</i></p> <p>What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that substantiates the problem represented (and how it is affecting teacher application and student performance)?</p>	<p><i>Evidence/Data:</i></p> <p>What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that substantiates the problem represented (and how it is affecting student performance)?</p>	<p><i>Evidence/Data:</i></p> <p>What evidence of student performance do we have that substantiates our concerns above?</p>
<p><i>Problem(s) of Practice:</i></p> <p>Given the issues identified in the state accountability</p>	<p><i>Problem(s) of Practice:</i></p> <p>Given the issues identified in the district offices'</p>	<p><i>Problem(s) of Practice:</i></p> <p>Given the issues identified in coaches' and teachers'</p>	<p><i>Problem(s) of Practice:</i></p> <p>Given the issues we see in teacher application to</p>	<p><i>Problem(s) of Practice:</i></p> <p>Given the issues we see in student learning, what</p>	<p><i>Problem(s) of Learning:</i></p> <p>Given our evidence above, what aspects of student learning</p>

<p>regions' practices, structures, and systems, what aspects do we need to work on?</p> <p>Why are we prioritizing these particular issues?</p> <p>What specifically does the state accountability region need to do differently?</p> <p>What makes us think that changes the state accountability regions' practice, structure or system in these ways will improve district and principal performance?</p> <p>What support and/or system changes will the state accountability region need to make these changes successful?</p>	<p>practices, structures, and systems, what aspects do we need to work on?</p> <p>Why are we prioritizing these particular issues?</p> <p>What specifically does the district office need to do differently?</p> <p>What makes us think that changing the district offices' practice, structure or systems in these ways will improve principal performance?</p> <p>What support and/or system changes will the district office need to make these changes successful?</p>	<p>performance, what aspects of principal leadership do we need to work on?</p> <p>Why are we prioritizing these particular issues?</p> <p>What specifically do principals need to do differently?</p> <p>What makes us think that changing this practice in this way will improve the performance of coaches and teachers?</p> <p>What supports and/or system changes will principals need to make these changes successful?</p>	<p>learning, what aspects of the coaches' practices do we need to work on to improve teacher application and student learning?</p> <p>Why are we prioritizing these particular practices and issues?</p> <p>What specifically do coaches need to do differently?</p> <p>What makes us think that coaches changing their practice in these ways will improve teacher application and student learning?</p> <p>What supports and/or system changes will coaches need to make these changes successful?</p>	<p>aspects of teachers' instructional practices do we need to work on to improve student learning?</p> <p>Why are we prioritizing these particular practices and issues?</p> <p>What specifically do teachers need to do differently?</p> <p>What makes us think that teachers changing their practice in these ways will improve student learning?</p> <p>What supports and/or system changes will teachers need to make these changes successful?</p>	<p>do we need to work on?</p> <p>Why are we prioritizing these particular aspects of student learning as issues?</p> <p>What changes in teacher practice or other instructional resources do we think will make a difference?</p>
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Now, a specific example with instructional walks:

**IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE\***

<b>“If the state accountability region does X →</b>	<b>then district offices and principals will be able to do Y →</b>	<b>which will help coaches and teachers do Z →</b>	<b>which will help all students learn at higher levels.”</b>
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Based on a shared vision of effective teaching and learning, **IF** the state accountability region establishes a focus on learning while nurturing a culture of continuous improvement, innovative and public practice while simultaneously developing, monitoring, and evaluating district and school performance to improve instruction . . .

**THEN**, the transformation practices of:

- Effective use of data, evidence and inquiry to analyze student learning as well as to assess district, leadership, coach and teacher practice will be used;
- Research-based instructional frameworks to observe district, leadership, coach and teacher practice while engaging in cycles of inquiry and planning individual and collective professional development and coaching needs will be aligned; and
- Data and evidence of student learning cohesive with teacher, coach, principal and district practice will be used to inform feedback.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Potential Sources of Evidence</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What might we take notice of while developing an understanding of current capabilities and learning needs?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The district’s or principal’s portfolio of data that describes:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The strengths and weaknesses in student performance in relation to Florida Standards and content standards</li> <li>b. The trends in problems of leadership and instructional practices across disciplines/grade levels/populations of students</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. A professional learning plan for staff that is job-embedded and driven by the data on student performance and school improvement plan</li> <li>3. The principal’s modeling effective practice with staff</li> <li>4. The principal’s use of a variety of data to evaluate teachers</li> <li>5. The principal’s and staff’s use of data analysis protocols by grade level, department, and whole staff.</li> <li>6. Recent school and classroom data that is posted for staff, students, parents, and other visitors to view.</li> <li>7. Teachers’ use of multiple forms of student data to plan instruction.</li> <li>8. Principals’ conducting frequent observations (with purpose noted) as reflected in their calendars, journals or other forms of documentation.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Guiding Questions</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What are important questions to ask ourselves when developing an understanding of those we lead?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What evidence is there that school leaders’ efforts are resulting in the improvement of teaching practice and student learning?</li> <li>2. How is leadership distributed to ensure collaboration and collective leadership and that the tasks of instructional leadership are accomplished?</li> <li>3. What data does the school leadership collect to learn about trends in instructional practice as well as student performance and problems of learning?</li> <li>4. What is the evidence that among staff there is a shared vision of effective teaching and learning and that the improvement of instructional practice is guided by that vision?</li> <li>5. What role does a research-based instructional framework play in the observation, analysis, feedback and inquiry about instructional practice?</li> <li>6. How does the school leadership use monitoring or instruction and evaluation in the improvement of instruction?</li> </ol>
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Possible Artifacts	Possible Observation Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff use of an instructional framework to ground instructional practice</li> <li>• Principal’s classroom observation and evaluation forms</li> <li>• School improvement plan</li> <li>• Professional learning plan</li> <li>• Agendas from staff meetings/professional learning sessions</li> <li>• Instructional framework</li> <li>• Classroom observation form</li> <li>• School-generated student performance data reports and presentations</li> <li>• Collection of principal/staff-generated theories of action based on the data analyzed</li> <li>• Collection of principal/staff-generated reflections about instructional actions they’ve taken with students and the efficacy of their efforts</li> <li>• Feedback sheets from staff development sessions or PLC’s</li> <li>• Data analysis and student work protocols</li> </ul>	<p><i>How might we go about developing a better sense of where we might want to further grow and develop leadership?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talk with students about their learning targets and levels of performance.</li> <li>2. Observe a professional learning session/staff meeting.</li> <li>3. Observe video of principal giving feedback to a teacher.</li> <li>4. Engage in a data-focused discussion with the principal about school and student performance and the instructional plan for improvement in relation to Florida Standards and content standards.</li> <li>5. Go on a classroom walkthrough with the principal using the school’s instructional framework.</li> <li>6. Engage in a grade-level or subject-area conversation with principal and teachers planning a unit of study or assessing student understanding.</li> </ol>
<p>* = IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE is one of four leadership dimensions of focus from the Wallace Foundation. The additional focuses to be considered for a whole system approach are: Vision, Mission and Culture Building; Allocation of Resources; and Management of People and Processes.</p>	