

# Instructional Rounds: Learning From Each Other

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## **Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:**

In our K-5 elementary school, we offered opportunities for new teachers to observe experienced teachers during their reading and math blocks. This was never an option for teachers who had over a year of experience. After completing the survey from Marzano's high reliability model, our team realized that this was an area we could improve. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to allow teachers to learn and improve by participating in instructional rounds.

## **Statement of Your Team's Wondering:**

With this purpose, we wondered if participating in instructional rounds would improve and/or confirm teachers' instructional practices in a non-threatening collaborative environment.

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insights into our wondering, we set up meetings with all of the grade level teams. Teachers collaborated and participated in creating a Benjamin Franklin Instructional Guide. This guide allowed us to identify the routines and strategies we wanted to see daily in our school. It also confirmed behaviors and strategies we should never see in the school. Teachers would use this instructional guide to drive conversations during instructional rounds.

Copies of the instructional guide were distributed at one of our faculty meetings, along with information explaining instructional rounds and the purpose behind them. Teachers were asked to place a checkmark next to areas they would like to see modeled. They were also asked to highlight areas they would feel comfortable modeling for their colleagues. If they wanted to observe a particular teacher, they were asked to indicate this by writing the teacher's name on the sheet.

The leadership team collected the information and immediately got to work on a schedule. Our goal was to allow teachers to observe others at least once per semester.

The following guidelines were explained and discussed prior to the start of the rounds:

- 3 teachers observed a classroom teacher in action (all agreed to be quiet and discreet)
- Students were informed that the observations were taking place prior to the group walking into the classroom
- Teachers observed for about 15-20 minutes
- Round leaders facilitated discussions immediately after the observations

Data was collected from response sheets we asked teachers to fill out, immediately following the classroom observation. They responded to the following prompts: What did you see that reaffirms something you

already do? What did you see that you would like to know more about? What did you see that you would like to put into your own practice?

### **Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:**

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include: 1) Instructional rounds helped promote positive discourse among our teachers; 2) Instructional rounds provided an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other.

Instructional rounds helped promote positive discourse among teachers. It was noted that teachers who had never really interacted, started talking about transitioning, reading blocks, and number talks. It was truly incredible! They were talking in the hallways, lounge, and during end-of-day duties. Instructional rounds offered the opportunity for teachers to talk about teaching.

Instructional rounds provided an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other. One item that was noted on the response sheet, repeatedly, was how a particular teacher had transitions that took less than a minute. She used a strategy that many of the teachers were able to use in their own classrooms. Others noted new technology programs and websites they were able to take back to incorporate in their classrooms. Some were able to learn new ways to structure their reading groups, and how to organize observational notes during guided reading.

### **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

Incorporating instructional rounds at Benjamin Franklin Elementary has been a positive experience. Allowing teachers to observe others allowed everyone to learn strategies and practices without having to leave the building. We can't imagine starting another year without having this practice in place!

### **References:**

Marzano, R. J., Warrick, P., Simms, J. A., & Livingston, D. (2014). A handbook for high reliability schools: the next step in school reform. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.