



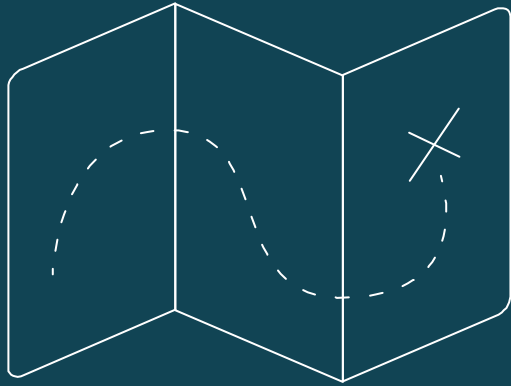
Building Positive Connections Through Purposeful Classroom Visits

Action Research Project by Mark Shadiow – Principal, Waldron Junior–Senior High School



Background Leading to This Inquiry

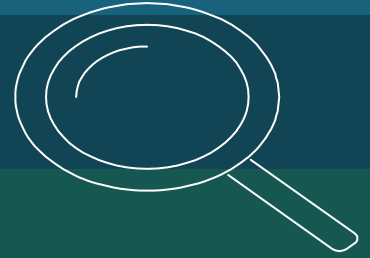
I previously used classroom walkthroughs on a random basis, when I had time. I would sometimes leave a note or send an email, but I never purposefully set aside time for walkthroughs and I didn't give consistent feedback to teachers. I would simply observe rather than interact with students or staff members. As the instructional leader of the school, I had a desire to intentionally schedule time to give more purposeful feedback to teachers in an effort to feel more connected with the individuals and happenings in the school.



Purpose of This Inquiry

The purpose of my action research was to discover the impact of regular classroom visits on my efficacy as a school leader.

My Wondering



By creating a habit of scheduling regular classroom visits, will I feel more confident, competent, and connected as a principal? Will regular walkthroughs help me improve relationships and build trust within my school community?

School Information

Waldron Junior-Senior High School

Shelby County, Indiana

286 students

22 teachers, 5 instructional assistants






New Practice for AR

In addition to two long observations per teacher this school year, I will also schedule 10 classroom walkthroughs per teacher.

Walkthrough Template in Standard for Success

Find Evaluatee ▾Dashboards ▾Reports ▾Support ▾SES Docs ▾Utilities ▾Go To... ▾Where is...? ▾MARK SHADIOW ▾

Sandbox, WJSH 00 : 00 Start Timer

Save as Draft Save and Send

☐ Just Checking In - No Items Selected

The Students Were:	The Teacher Was:
On task	Explaining expectations
Taking a test or quiz	Direct instruction (lecture)
Completing projects	Individualized instruction
Completing worksheets	Group instruction
Using technology	Differentiation of instruction
Listening and/or responding	Modeling
Rate Answers	Using effective questioning strategies
Higher-level Answers	Asking higher order questions
Collaborating	Asking entry level questions
	Using wait time effectively
	Moving among students
	At desk

Classroom Environment:

- Lesson objective clear
- Standards correlation evident
- Visuals in room and used by students
- Classroom rules and expectations posted
- Emergency procedures posted
- Lesson plans available
- Rubrics in use

Add comments here....

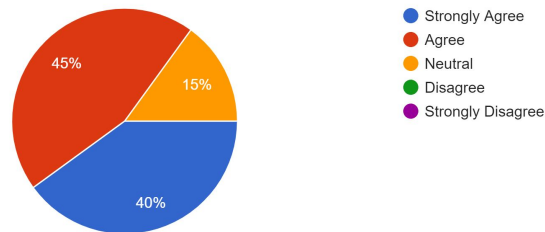
DATA COLLECTION

Reflection Journal
Walkthrough Notes
Staff Survey
Student Survey
Student Assessment Data

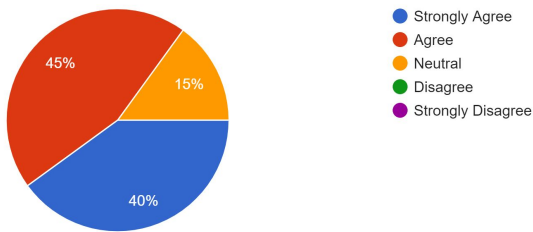


Faculty Survey Results - 1/28/22

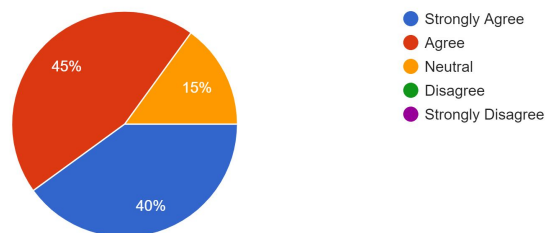
I enjoy having administrators visit my classroom.
20 responses



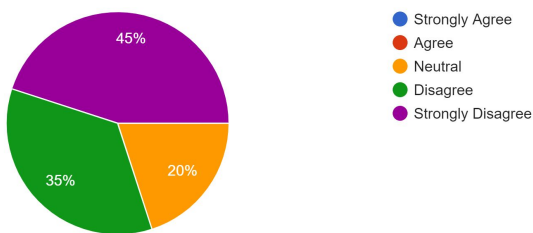
I receive valuable feedback in Standard for Success from administrators after walkthroughs.
20 responses



Classroom walkthroughs help make me feel supported as an educator.
20 responses

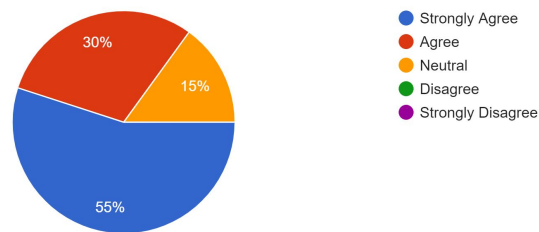


I would prefer to NOT receive feedback from walkthroughs.
20 responses

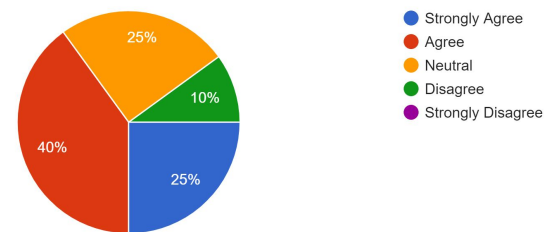


Faculty Survey Results - 1/28/22

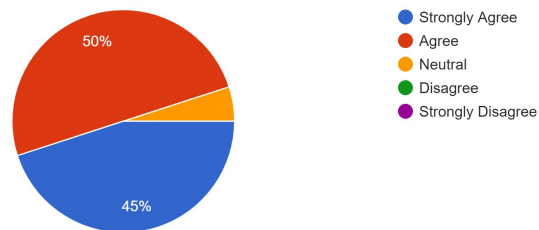
Walkthroughs have a positive impact on student behavior in my classroom.
20 responses



Walkthroughs have a positive impact on student academic achievement in my classroom.
20 responses



I feel that classroom walkthroughs have a positive impact on our school culture.
20 responses



Survey comments from faculty

Walkthroughs are tremendous accountability for us as educators. They let us know that what we are doing matters to our administration, they show our learners the administration takes time to come to our classrooms because they care about learning & care about what is going on in our classrooms, and it gives a presence that we need. The culture of our school depends upon all of us feeling as if we are part of a team, and by having these walkthroughs it ensures team unity & accountability.

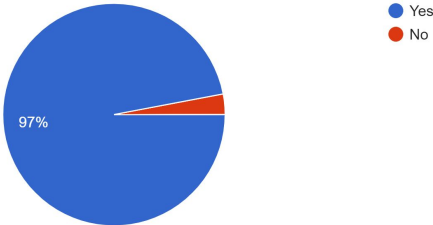
I LOVE when administrators come into my classroom! I feel like my subject area is important and validated. The students love seeing you as well! They talk about it afterwards and LOVE showing you what they have done/are doing.

I truly enjoy when you guys come in and see what we are doing in class. I also appreciate when you jump in and participate with the kids, I know they enjoy that as well!

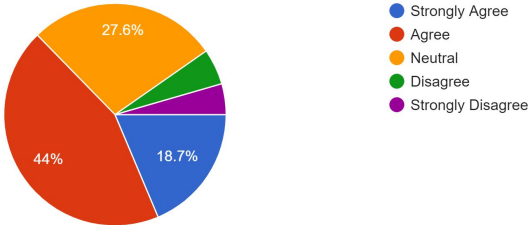
Having more walk-throughs each semester helps me to feel more comfortable for the long observation. I also appreciate the frequent feedback. It makes it so the comments at the end of the semester are not a surprise, and gives me a chance to improve things before the final evaluation.

Student Survey Results - 3/10/22

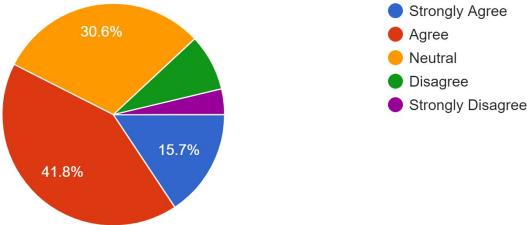
An administrator (Mr. Shadiow or Mr. Engelbert) has visited one of my classes this school year.
134 responses



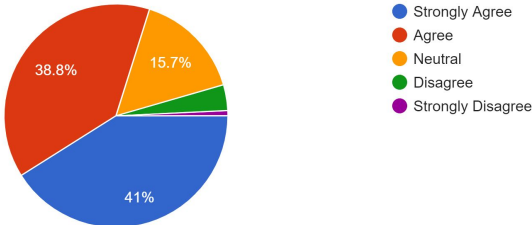
I believe our school's administrators value my interests.
134 responses



I believe my school's administrators help my teachers improve.
134 responses

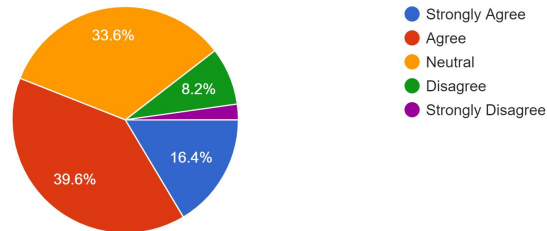


I feel that students perform and behave better when administrators visit classrooms.
134 responses

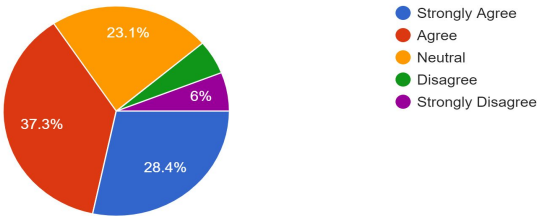


Student Survey Results - 3/10/22

I feel that the administration knows what I am learning in each of my classes.
134 responses



I feel comfortable discussing questions or concerns with at least one of the administrators at my school.
134 responses





Journal Excerpts

10/29/21: A parent called me with concerns regarding the teaching practices in an AP course. I was able to draw upon notes from four previous walkthroughs about what students were learning and best practices for that particular class.

12/2/21: Students shared concerns about a classroom environment, and I made a special visit to that classroom during the period these students had the class. They followed up with me telling me they appreciated me taking their concerns seriously and looking into the issues.

12/3/22: I had a great conversation with a student in geometry class who was not working on the assignment. I used some basic questioning techniques to help get him started. He remained engaged for the rest of the time I was in the classroom and seemed to have a better understanding.

1/12/22: Students in FACS class were excited that I decided to come in to try their apple crisp.

1/24/22: I noticed a student acting out in a new teacher's classroom. This presented me the opportunity to praise the teacher on how she handled the situation without causing major disruption to the lesson. I was also able to offer further support in the area of classroom management and worked with the student, parent, teacher, and coach to improve behavior. Had I not been in the classroom, I may have missed this learning opportunity.

2/16/22: In a school safety committee meeting on, I noticed that the three teachers on our committee were speaking openly and honestly to me about various situations I otherwise wouldn't have heard about.

2/17/22: We had a student behavior concern, which I was able to monitor through classroom walkthroughs and discuss at length during a monthly special education meeting.

2/22/22: A student who has historically struggled academically and behaviorally in school got an "A" on a math quiz in a room I was visiting. I congratulated him quietly in the classroom and followed up with him later in the hallway. He seemed to be appreciative of the recognition, and I'm glad to have seen that he did so well.

3/4/22: During a post conference to review a formal observation, a teacher commented that she feels better prepared and more knowledgeable of my expectations for teachers as a result of my frequent walk-throughs in her class. She also commented that students enjoy when I interact and participate with them.

Discoveries - Personal Leadership Capacity

I felt more educated on the happenings in each classroom and the curriculum being taught

I feel that teachers value my input as an instructional leader and use my feedback to improve their instructional practices

I developed stronger relationships with students in each grade level

I felt more confident talking to stakeholders who have concerns about what is taking place in the classroom

I felt appreciated by teachers, students, and staff

I found that I developed stronger, more trusting relationships with teachers and that our conversations are more “real”

Discoveries - Building Level

Teachers desire frequent, specific feedback from administrators and use that feedback to inform instructional decisions.

Students feel that they perform better when administrators take interest in their studies

Students feel more comfortable interacting with administrators when they are present in the classroom on a regular basis

Students notice how “well connected” administrators are with the happenings within the school



Learning Statements

- Learning Statement One: I found that my presence in classrooms is valued by students, faculty members, staff members, and families. I noticed that teachers use my actionable feedback to inform instructional decision-making.
- Learning Statement Two: Adding classroom walkthroughs to my calendar ensured that I was equitable with the time I spent visiting classrooms in each subject area and grade level. This led to more positive interactions with a broad range of students and staff members.
- Learning Statement Three: I felt more confident talking to stakeholders about what is taking place in the classroom.
- Learning Statement Four: I felt that I developed stronger relationships with students and staff by spending more time in the classroom.



Where I Am Heading Next

- I plan to continue scheduling walkthroughs on a regular basis, and plan to encourage other administrators in the building do the same. I enjoy feeling more connected with what is happening in the building, and teachers and students value our interactions during walkthroughs.
- Now that I see the impact of these walkthroughs on my personal leadership capacity, I wonder what larger impact these regular walkthroughs will have on our school culture and student performance.



Bibliography

Burgess, S. & Houf, B. (2017). *Lead like a pirate*. San Diego, CA: Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc.

Dana, N. (2009). *Leading with passion and knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Downey, C.J., English, F.W., Poston, W.K., & Steffy, B.E. (2010). *Advancing the three-minute walkthrough: Mastering reflective practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Regier, N. (2020). *Seeing people through: Unleash your leadership potential with the process communication model*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

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School Name: Waldron Junior-Senior High School
Principal's Email Contact: mshadiow@ses.k12.in.us

Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)

When I looked for ways to improve as an instructional leader, I noticed that I did not make intentional use of my time to schedule classroom visits on a regular basis. I would occasionally stop in classrooms to observe for a few minutes, but would not schedule or document every visit, nor would I typically interact with students or teachers on my visits. Because of this, I noticed that when I conducted formal observations for the purpose of teacher evaluations, I felt somewhat disconnected from what was happening in the classroom. I would discuss the lesson and provide feedback to the teacher in post-conferences, but that may be the only time teachers receive feedback from me. I recognized this as an area for improvement and learned how to leverage the walkthrough tool in our district's employee evaluation software to provide more timely and relevant feedback to teachers throughout the school year. I also made an effort to positively interact with students during my scheduled classroom visits. This desire to become more connected and build stronger relationships within my school led to this inquiry.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to discover the impact of regular classroom visits on my efficacy as a school leader. I want to provide meaningful feedback to teachers that will allow them to reflect on their practice. I also want to connect with students in a way that shows that I am interested in what they are learning, and that I want to help facilitate a positive learning environment in their school. The classroom walkthrough was the vehicle for these positive changes in my leadership efficacy.

My Wondering (Slide 4)

By creating a habit of scheduling regular classroom visits, will I feel more confident, competent, and connected as a principal? Will regular walkthroughs help me improve relationships and build trust within my school community?

My Actions (Slides 5-7)

I began by familiarizing myself with the walkthrough tool in our teacher evaluation software, Standard for Success. The evaluation software has an app that includes a checklist of instructional practices and basic observations, along with an option to include a comment. I set a goal to intentionally schedule and conduct 10 classroom walkthroughs per teacher this school year. Each time I visited a classroom, I would use the app to conduct a walkthrough with feedback that gets sent to the teacher immediately upon completion. I also made an extra effort to jump in and participate with students in activities, ask them questions, and take photos to post to social media in an effort to engage positively with students.

Data Collection (Slide 8)

My data collection comes from my reflection journal and walkthrough notes, staff and student surveys, and eventually student assessment data.

My Data (Slides 9-14)

I was able to visit most classrooms five times halfway through the school year, and I am well on my way to reaching my goal of 10 walkthroughs per teacher. Making time in my schedule for classroom visits has helped me make intentional use of my time toward this initiative.

Late in the first semester, I had all teachers complete a survey to give me feedback on whether they found the walkthroughs to be beneficial to their instructional practice. I used the survey data to determine that teachers enjoy visits from administrators and value the feedback given through the Standard for Success walkthrough tool. Teachers feel that my increased presence in the classroom makes them feel supported. The staff survey data also suggest that the walkthroughs have had a positive impact on student behavior, student academic performance, and overall school culture.

Below are some comments from faculty members regarding my new practice of frequent walkthroughs:

“Walkthroughs are tremendous accountability for us as educators. They let us know that what we are doing matters to our administration, they show our learners the administration takes time to come to our classrooms because they care about learning & care about what is going on in our classrooms, and it gives a presence that we need. The culture of our school depends upon all of us feeling as if we are part of a team, and by having these walkthroughs it ensures team unity & accountability.”

“I LOVE when administrators come into my classroom! I feel like my subject area is important and validated. The students love seeing you as well! They talk about it afterwards and LOVE showing you what they have done/are doing.”

“I truly enjoy when you guys come in and see what we are doing in class. I also appreciate when you jump in and participate with the kids, I know they enjoy that as well!”

“Having more walk-throughs each semester helps me to feel more comfortable for the long observation. I also appreciate the frequent feedback. It makes it so the comments at the end of the semester are not a surprise, and gives me a chance to improve things before the final evaluation.”

Midway through the second semester, I sent out a survey to students and received 134 responses. The data from these surveys show that students see administrators in their classes

regularly, and students believe administrators positively influence teacher and student performance in the classroom. Since I have been trying to engage more positively with students, I noticed from the survey data that a majority of students feel comfortable discussing questions or concerns with me.

Since I began the practice of scheduling walkthroughs on a regular basis, I started journaling about my visits and subsequent interactions that have been strengthened by my more frequent presence in the classroom. I've highlighted some of these journal entries below:

12/3/22: I had a great conversation with a student in geometry class who was not working on the assignment. I used some basic questioning techniques to help get him started. He remained engaged for the rest of the time I was in the classroom and seemed to have a better understanding.

1/24/22: I noticed a student acting out in a first-year teacher's classroom. This presented me the opportunity to praise the teacher on how she handled the situation without causing major disruption to the lesson. I was also able to offer further support in the area of classroom management and worked with the student, parent, teacher, and coach to improve behavior. Had I not been in the classroom, I may have missed this learning opportunity.

2/22/22: A student who has historically struggled academically and behaviorally in school got an "A" on a math quiz in a room I was visiting. I congratulated him quietly in the classroom and followed up with him later in the hallway. He seemed to be appreciative of the recognition, and I'm glad to have seen that he did so well.

3/4/22: During a post conference to review a formal observation, a teacher commented that she feels better prepared and more knowledgeable of my expectations for teachers as a result of my frequent walk-throughs in her class. She also commented that students enjoy when I interact and participate with them.

My Discoveries (Slides 15-17)

Learning Statement One: I found that my presence in classrooms is valued by students, faculty members, staff members, and families. I noticed that teachers use my actionable feedback to inform instructional decision-making.

Learning Statement Two: Adding classroom walkthroughs to my calendar ensured that I was equitable with the time I spent visiting classrooms in each subject area and grade level. This led to more positive interactions with a broad range of students and staff members.

Learning Statement Three: I felt more confident talking to stakeholders about what is taking place in the classroom.

Learning Statement Four: I felt that I developed stronger relationships with students and staff by spending more time in the classroom.

Through my action research, I have learned a great deal about the teachers and students at my school, as well as a great deal about myself as a leader. I saw the benefits of being intentional with my time, as I felt more visible, more valued, and more confident in speaking about what is happening at school.

Where I am Heading Next (Slide 18)

I plan to continue scheduling walkthroughs on a regular basis, and plan to encourage other administrators in the building to do the same. I enjoy feeling more connected with what is happening in the building, and teachers and students value our interactions during walkthroughs.

Now that I see the impact of these walkthroughs on my personal leadership capacity, I wonder what larger impact these regular walkthroughs will have on our school culture and student performance. As a part of this ongoing practice, I want to continue to ask students about what they are learning and how well they understand the content in various classes.

Bibliography (Slide 19)

Burgess, S. & Houf, B. (2017). *Lead like a pirate*. San Diego, CA: Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc.

Dana, N. (2009). *Leading with passion and knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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