

A Proposed Supervision Model for Improving Technical and Vocational Education

Instructor Performance

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to research the best practices associated with performing brief and periodic instructional supervisory walk-through observations by administrators in secondary schools to ensure high teacher performance which can lead to high student achievement on state and federal assessments. These findings will be utilized to propose a research-based walk-through model for career and technical education that emphasizes expected teacher behaviors that are closely associated with higher student achievement.

The reviewed research identifies several areas of interest including the impact of student mandates, the accountability requirements of CTE (Career and Technical Education in the United States), characteristics of quality leadership, and current teaching and walk through observation strategies. Additionally, current types of walk-through strategies being used in schools throughout the United States are identified and described. The primary role in creating effective schools (and career and technology centers) of principals (and directors) is to impact student achievement by influencing the instructional practices of teachers. (Goodwin et al., 2003; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Printy, 2010).

Mandates and Accountability

The pressures placed on educators at the secondary level require schools to keep to strict focus on content goals and student achievement levels. Teachers have difficulty when the students do not have the basic academic skills needed to succeed. According to the *The Clearing House Journal*, teachers often feel inadequate when teaching content and simultaneously, having

to teach basic academic skills (Shuman, 2006). Many teachers also feel frustrated by these seemingly never ending mandates from state regulator authorities. (Barret Kutcy & Schulz, 2006). Frustration for the teachers appears to be stemming from the pressure placed on them for their students to succeed. (Barret Kutcy & Schulz, 2006). To respond to this pressure with accurate and effective instructional pedagogies, teachers and administrators could benefit from a system by which their instructional process and student achievement outcomes could be frequently measured and validated for student performance success. Achieving the validation of success could be reached through enhanced and targeted efforts by instructional supervisors to coach teachers and monitor the frequency of teacher behaviors that are associated with higher levels of student achievements. This approach could include frequent short instructional program visits which are known as administrative walk-throughs.

Administrative Leadership

Educational leaders must be able to motivate instructional staff to become better teachers so that job performance tasks are successfully completed (Hoy & Smith, 2007). If educational leaders intend to motivate teachers, an understanding of “influence” and how influence can change behaviors may be helpful. If educational leaders have a positive influence on teacher performance, students could benefit in many ways including higher levels of achievement. For this reason, the six principles of influence-related positive administrative leadership should be employed (Hoy & Smith, 2007):

1) Attraction – This principle represents the ability of an educational leader to create a common vision with teachers through connections and common interests in pursuing educational goals.

2) Reciprocity - The ability of an educational leader to reciprocate or provide additional assistance when staff members make significant progress on goals involves creating a positive atmosphere so trust can be established and maintained.

3) Collegiality - Collegiality represents the development of trust with quality tenured teachers who in turn have influence over others in the faculty.

4) Commitment - Educational leaders can demonstrate commitment to their faculty by making a verbal commitment to the faculty, placing their belief in an idea or strategy in writing, which will further portray the leader's commitment.

5) Expertise - Educational leaders should demonstrate their expertise through a commitment to the ideals and pursuing substantial knowledge on those ideas. The credibility of the educational leader resides in their ability to communicate their expertise in a supportive and constructive manner.

6) Trust - Educational leaders must have trust with their faculty to avoid feelings of suspicion or negative consequences or questions about the leader's true intentions.

Current Teaching Practices and Administrative Walk-Throughs

According to Downey, Steffy, English, Frase and Posten, (2004) current teaching practices play an important role in "walk-through" instructional observation because they represent the content or the elements of teacher behaviors that the person conducting the walk-through will "look for." These are the teacher behaviors that are associated with higher levels of student achievement that a walk-through is designed to document the presence or non-presence of in the classroom. . Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001) explain in great detail the six components of effective teaching practices, which can represent important "look fors" in classroom or TVET / CTE program walk-throughs. The person conducting the walk-through

could document the presence of these teaching strategies/teacher behaviors during each walk-through. An analysis could be conducted on data from multiple walk-throughs to determine the longitudinal presence of the desired teaching strategies and teacher behaviors. The summaries of these practices are listed as follows.

Identifying similarities and differences

Students need to be aware of what they are learning and how the new information is different from previous knowledge. Students who understand this concept have a better chance of utilizing the new knowledge. This practice could be an important part of a walk-through process if leaders desire students to utilize the knowledge in a contextual setting such as career and technical education.

Summarizing and note taking

Teachers with the ability to help students effectively summarize and record notes about new learning usually increase chances of student success. Students need to be able to learn or identify what information is important and what information will be needed for application in a contextual setting such as within a technical and vocational education training program. This is not only important to the student in the day to day operations in CTE but, is also important when trying to understand questions on end of course summative assessments. This component can be documented through a brief but thorough walk-through observation of classrooms or CTE / TVET program instruction.

Homework and practice

Homework plays an important role in having students practice and retain information. Often, career and technical programs don't emphasize homework; however, it can be a valuable asset to learning. The purpose of the homework should be identified and articulated. In addition,

students should understand that the homework is for extended practice and for continuation of the recently learned knowledge. Homework presented and utilized correctly can help improve student achievement through additional practice and understanding. The presence of this strategy can easily be determined by examining homework assignments, the quality of the homework assignments, teacher lesson plans, or by observing students' written work.

Nonlinguistic Representations

When utilizing this strategy, a teacher attempts to have students identify an image with the content being taught. The image could be a mental picture or a sensation such as an odor or taste. By having students learn in this manner, students can retrieve the information easier at a later time. An educational leader could determine if it were evident by examining lesson plans or observing the strategy being used by the instructor.

Implementation of Daily Objectives

Setting daily instructional or student performance objectives and providing feedback on them is especially important because CTE / TVET curricula is designed in context with industry standards, which apply to each program. If this strategy is used by an instructor and the objective is identified for students, it can easily be observed during an administrative walk-through.

Use of Cues and Questions

In addition to utilizing cues and questioning techniques, teachers should enable the students to focus on what is important as opposed to what is unusual. The use of questioning by the instructor can lead to deeper teacher knowledge of student understanding and whether or not additional teaching might be necessary. While performing walk-through observations, the use of cues and questions can be observed and documented by the supervisor.

Walk-Through Models and Formats

For many schools, walk-through observations have become an accepted strategy for the purpose of tracking school progress in being more accountable for the achievement of their students. Kachur, Stout and Edwards, (2010) in the book *Classroom Walk-throughs to Improve Teaching and Learning* discuss some examples of successful supervisory walk-through frameworks being implemented across the country including:

Hall Walk-Through

This is a five to fifteen minute walk-through model in which teachers have input as to what the “look-fors” will be for the visit. An instructional coach or school administrator conducts the walk-through and leaves a feedback-focused note on the desk of the teacher before departing the classroom. This walk-through style provides immediate feedback for the instructor and can also be used as an evaluation tool. This procedure must be utilized cautiously given that trust between the supervisor and the teacher is essential toward improvement in instruction.

Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) Process

This process focuses primarily on student engagement as well as on higher-order thinking among students. As a result, professional development for the school personnel can be identified, designed and developed based on the prevalence and quality of higher order thinking skills required by teachers to complete assigned tasks.

Instructional Walk-through

This walk-through method being utilized by Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia is a brief non-evaluative visit in which the administrator has “look-fors” as they visit from teacher to teacher. The “look-fors” include instructional practices, curriculum, assessment practices and the learning environment all of which affects student achievement.

The Learning Keys' Data Walks

This walk-through differs from other walk-throughs because it records and electronically stores walk-through data on instructional elements which are previously determined and understood by the administrator and faculty member.

Mayerson Academy Classroom Walk-Through (CWT)

In this model, persons conducting the walk-through interact with students by asking to see their completed work. The goals of this walk-through include improvement of learning and instruction, reaching a consensus on meeting the needs of all learners and enabling students to reach or exceed high standards.

Palisades School District Walk-Through

This walk-through only occurs once or twice a year and is performed by educators within the district but are based out of a different building. The format takes place all in a day and instead of traveling throughout all the classrooms, the person conducting the walk-through conducts student interviews. The goal is to understand student perspectives on their learning and an added benefit is that professional development plans for instructors may be developed and based on the data gathered from students during the walk-through

UCLA School Management Program (SMP) Classroom Walk-Through

The SMP walk-through method has a goal of enabling the instructor to understand their current teaching practice and to clearly identify the instructional changes that teachers much implement to improve. The SMP walk-through is performed by an administrator and any improvements are left up to the individual teacher to decide regarding implementation.

The Downey Walk-Through Method

This model includes a five-step process that is performed with the goal of being in the classroom no longer than three to five minutes. The first step involves observing student work activities and behaviors in the classroom through a window or from a discrete location. Step two focuses attention on the teacher to identify decisions related to the lesson content. In step three, the observer identifies the instructional techniques being used that enable the students to learn the content. Step four requires the administrator to observe the visual items on the wall to determine the graphic educational environment and understand the general surroundings for learning. Step five involves making sure the safety and welfare of the students is being addressed. . This could be as simple as making sure there are not any tripping hazards to checking to see if all the lights are working (Downey et, al, 2004).

School Management by Wandering Around

This style of walk-through is based on administrator preference and does not have a strict observational protocol. It is simply embedded in daily administrative work and practices. Time for conducting the walk-through is not rigidly scheduled and the observations are done on an extemporaneous basis depending on the individuals schedule for a given day. A key point of this method is for the administrator to be visible in the building and personally observe events as they unfold. As the administrator or supervisor personally attends to the general operation of the school facility, they have “look fors” that they are integral to their daily work (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010). In addition, administrators need to keep in mind effective school and classroom management so students can learn and are ensured of a positive and safe environment (Frase & Hetzel, 2002).

The Walk-through Observation Tool

Graf and Werlinich (2002) provide examples of core beliefs that can make the walk-through observation tool successful. The first core belief is that all students, given appropriate supports and time to allow for all abilities, can learn. The second core belief is that pervasive walk-throughs open up the school to allow for coaching and mentoring by fellow teachers and administration by promoting collegiality, collaboration, trust, and commitment.

eWalk Walk-Through Tool

The eWalk tool is designed to be an electronic database in which data can be collected, stored and retrieved at a later time for analysis. Walk-through rubrics are integral to this process. As an administrator performs walk-throughs, they are able to collect specific data on each teacher and analyze the data collected from a walk-through at a later time. Once the administrator accesses the walk-through data, graphs can be created using the software to show areas of success and areas of need. The time invested by an administrator entering walk-through data from a sheet of paper into the computer is eliminated because of the electronic nature of the format. Once the walk-through analysis is complete, a copy can be sent to multiple recipients including the teacher. Data can be kept and walk-throughs can be analyzed from day to day, month to month, or year to year. This tool enables administrators to accurately document classroom and CTE / TVET program instructional practices throughout the school on a consistent basis. (M. Curley, personal communication, September 9, 2010).

The preceding review of literature provided evidence that administrators and teachers are accountable for student performance on end of course occupational assessments in career and technical education. Additionally, students also understand the need to demonstrate their learning on end of course occupational assessments. In addition, current teaching practices must constantly be monitored to provide educational leaders with the needed information to help

instructors teach TVET concepts more accurately and to help students learn and perform better on their job skills, tasks, and occupational assessments. Educational leaders are required to think, analyze instructional and student achievement data, and determine the appropriate strategy they are to facilitate with teachers to increase student performance and achievement. A sound research based instructional monitoring and evaluation system inclusive of walk-throughs can be a major component of overall educational leadership practices of administrators.

Relational Goals for the Administrator and Teacher

A primary goal of a well designed and well implemented walk-through observational model is to have administrators and teachers collaborate on important instructional issues. Both administrators and teachers need to have the common understanding that high levels of student achievement in CTE or TVET are the priority for improving instruction. As previously mentioned, Hoy and Smith (2007) created a list of influential leadership qualities or principles, which can be associated with the educational climate and the implementation of walk-throughs. However, the principle of trust is perhaps the most important. The principle of trust is something that cannot happen overnight so implementing a walk-through may take prior commitment by the educational leader to ensure there is trust with employees throughout the building. Input and active participation from the teachers represents another important goal of implementing a walk-through. If teachers are not confident about the process and trusting of those implementing the process, the chances of it being successful are not very high. Once trust has been established, walk-throughs can become a vital component of improving the educational process.

Classroom Goals for the Walk-Through

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) outline various techniques and strategies, which were identified in the literature review that enable students to be more engaged and successful in

the classroom. Teachers need to understand these new strategies and how they are implemented before participating in a walk-through strategy. Communication and trust is important, as teachers need to be comfortable with administrators to express their levels of knowledge about the walk-through process and what administrators will be expecting to observe during the process. A support process needs to be in place to enable teachers to learn new strategies through sustained administrator lead or peer lead professional development. For example, one common strategies used for walk-throughs should include measuring student engagement time with the curriculum content being addressed by the teacher. Another goal should be to measure student engagement and progress towards mastering state mandated program or trade competencies and whether or not teachers identify crucial content to students. Career and technical classroom and program goals should include students obtaining industry credentials, which directly reflect the linkage between the program's curriculum and performance standards in the CTE program's industry.

A Proposed Walk-Through Model Rubric

Previously in this article, multiple walk-through models and their relationships with current teaching strategies were described and highlighted. One strategy for documenting “look-fors” is to have either a paper or electronic rubrics to make sure each teacher is being held to the same standard and to document the presence or lack of presence of an element of the instructional process in a CTE program. Walk-through models such as the Learning Keys' Data Walk, Teachscape Classroom Walk-Through and the eWalk Walk-Through Tool were used as resources to propose a model for career and technical education. Although the proposed walk-through is not identical to any one particular walk-through previously described, similarities exist between them.

The proposed rubric design was modeled after a combination of the Hall, Instructional, and Downey Walk-Throughs in which specific “look-fors” administrators expect to observe during a walk-through observation. Since the majority of walk-through models only provide overall goals and descriptions, the authors propose a more explicit instrument for career and technical education.

Previously, current teaching strategies discussed by Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) were also added to the proposed walk-through as specific “look-fors.” Research performed by Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) indicates that if teachers are utilizing the strategies outlined in the research, student achievement has the potential to increase. The proposed walk-through also requires the administrator or supervisor to observe an objective linked to a standard. Once the objective and standard is identified the proposed walk-through asks if Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) strategies are being used in the classroom. Finally, the rating scale of the walk-throughs was not mentioned in the literature so a Likert scale was developed to rate each area in the proposed walk-through to assist the person conducting the evaluation. Please see the following proposed walk-through model rubric:

A Proposed Walk-Through Model Rubric for Technical and Vocational Education Training

(E-walk Model Rubric)

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

For each section below the following Likert scale will be used.

Exceptional

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

Poor

Students are on task upon arrival.

Notes: _____

Instructional Objective/CTE Competencies Posted for Each Student _____

Comments: _____

The objective or competency is based on an industry standard. _____

Notes: _____

Research-based Instructional Strategies Observed

- Identifying Similarities and Differences _____
- Summarizing and Note Taking _____
- Opportunities for Student Practice _____
- Nonlinguistic Representations _____
- Equipment is Operational _____
- Appropriate Objectives/Competencies _____
- Cues/Questions/Instructor Feedback _____
- CTE Laboratory Program Safety _____

Notes: _____

Date walk-through was reviewed with the instructor. _____

Overallnotes: _____

Figure 1. Proposed model for walk-throughs in career and technical education

The above rubric can be customized for the e-Walk instructor supervision platform for electronic data collection on desired instructor behaviors for short term and long term teacher performance assessment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The review of literature regarding teacher observations and administrative walk-throughs offers a wealth of information for the career and technical administrator. With a focus on increasing student achievement, career and technical leaders can utilize the research and formulate strategies for helping instructors to better target their instruction and provide the

instructional coaching that makes a difference in student achievement. Research documented in this paper provides compelling evidence that specific teacher behaviors are directly linked with increased student achievement. Being able to enhance the quality and presence of those behaviors represents a noble and essential priority for career and technical leaders as they create educational environments that value student achievement. The walk-through approach to teacher observations can significantly add to the arsenal of tools available to the administrator in their efforts to make instructional and teacher classroom changes. The walk-through approach offers multiple methods of observing teacher behaviors. These approaches include a simple five minute random observation, a weekly consistent observation period, or perhaps a planned longitudinal approach that includes specific teacher behavior detection and generating frequency data on those teacher behaviors. By utilizing electronic data collection devices such as hand-held computers (tablets, phones), data can be collected by simply completing an electronic form and sending it to a central server or connecting it to a desktop or laptop computer. Data collected from multiple walk-throughs can be aggregated, analyzed, and reviewed to determine the frequency and quality of those desirable teacher behaviors which are positively linked by research to increased levels of student achievement. Consequently, the findings from reviewing the data can be reviewed with instructors in a coaching context so they will have evidence of their teaching focus and so they will have detailed information on the behaviors they need to exhibit in a greater frequency. By following this approach, career and technical leaders will have a strong and research-based strategy to measurably increase student achievement in career and technical education.

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