DIFFERENTIATED TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS:
A COMPARATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
under the Supervision of
Gail F. Latta, Ph. D.
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies

Xavier University
Cincinnati, OH
May 2017
DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

Xavier University
Leadership Studies Doctoral Program
Dissertation Approval Form

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Title of Dissertation ___________ DIFFERENTIATED TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS: A COMPARATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ___________

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DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

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Advisor: Gail F. Latta, Ph.D.

Abstract
The purpose of this exploratory phenomenological study is to capture the lived experience of high school teachers participating in instructional walks. The study also seeks to explore if the experience of these teachers is differentiated based on the type of instructional walk format: Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), or the individual conducting the observation. The goal of this comparative phenomenological study is to explore the overall experience of an instructional walk from the perspective of receiving educators. Specifically, the study seeks to describe teachers’ reflections about instructional walks as a holistic experience. The guiding research question asks: What is the sense of lived experience reported by high school teachers who have been recipients of instructional walks during the past two academic school years?. Data collection and analysis are structured to focus discretely on three phases of the experience: planning (preparation), acting (observation), and reflecting (retrospection). Through semi-structured interviews the utility high school teachers place on instructional walks as a means for continuous improvement of the teaching craft was captured. Findings are reported in terms of three overarching themes that emerged from analysis. Teachers who participated in this study recalled a range of experiences under the themes of feelings of anticipation/apprehension...
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and varying feelings of control, while also reflecting a variety of experiences relating to the lack of utility of the instructional walk as a continuous improvement strategy.

Teachers express a desire to be more actively involved in the design and implementation of instructional walks.

*Keywords: Instructional Walks, Instructional Rounds, Learning Walks, Evaluative Walk-throughs, Teacher Perception, Continuous Improvement*
I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people who have supported and encouraged me throughout the preparation of this dissertation. I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Gail F. Latta, for her continual support and encouragement throughout this process. Her untiring edits, suggestions, and willingness to discuss my topic are much appreciated. I am also grateful to the members of my committee, Drs. Bradley and Curtis, for their support in discussing and providing feedback a worthy educational topic.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at Indian Hill Schools. They tirelessly listened to my ideas, my excitement, and my love of learning throughout this journey. Their flexibility and support while I was in the field researching was appreciated.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family: my three wonderful children – Tyler, Megan, and Morgan, my parents, and the rest of my extended family for supporting me through all of the late nights and weekends spent writing and researching. I love you all.
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Chapter 1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

“Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.” ~Steven Covey

Research Topic and Background

Educational scholars have asserted that teachers can have a lasting impact on the students they teach (Marzano, 2007; Hattie, 2008). They impart wonder in a classroom through engaging activities, connection to life-long learning, and opportunities for deep reflective thought. Some students recount those amazing teachers for what they bring in the form of lessons, personalize learning, memorable activities, and relevant stories. These educators represent both the art and science of teaching (Marzano, 2007). According to Marzano, the art of teaching as a craft is the essence of the instruction and the meaning behind the content, whereas the science of teaching is the content knowledge and instruction itself. Using both art and science in their craft, teachers have been shown to have a direct and lasting influence on student achievement (Hattie, 2008).

Marzano (2007) proposes that teachers are the single most important factor impacting student achievement. Further, meta-analytic data suggest effective instruction leads to greater student learning (Hattie, 2008). This holds true regardless of a student’s aptitude, age, location, demographics, or socio-economic status (Hattie, 2008; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004). A direct correlation has been documented between effective instruction provided by highly qualified teachers and increased student achievement (Colvin & Johnson, 2007). Teacher satisfaction is further attributed to student success on assessments, a high level of classroom autonomy, and influence in school-wide decision-making (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000). Research reveals that educator attrition at some schools is very high; high enough to disrupt instructional cohesion and likely
disadvantage students academically (Boyd et al, 2010). Instructional quality is, therefore, associated with positive student results. Because teachers are essential in impacting student achievement, school principals prioritize ways to maintain and increase teachers’ quality and capabilities through ongoing continuous improvement efforts.

Numerous studies claim schools’ instructional leaders have a positive and lasting impact on school culture (Hattie, 2008). Several decades of work describe the importance of principals as instructional leaders in buildings (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hattie, 2008). However, only a small body of research links principals directly to student achievement, a much larger research base documents principals’ effects on school operations through motivating teachers and students, identifying and articulating vision and goals, developing high performance expectations, fostering communication, allocating resources, and developing organizational structures to support instruction and learning. (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2010, p. 26)

Teachers continue to be a mediating factor in providing direct impact on students’ achievement. Great instructors yield great results, and poor instructors yield poor results. One could conclude then that teachers must be exceptional in their craft. As in any field, ongoing calibration and training are essential. Further, both federal and state mandates require highly qualified teachers in schools (Ohio Department of Education, 2016; US Department of Education, 2016). Therefore, the processes principals employ, as instructional school leaders, to continually hire, induct, calibrate, and retain high quality teaching staff are vitally important in ensuring quality instruction in every classroom.
Principals shape the expectations in schools. Equally important, leaders are charged with setting the instructional tone. To do so means principals must be aware of the quality of instruction present in every classroom. Principals’ presence throughout the school, in and among classrooms, provides one path for knowing and further directing the instructional tone of the school. Presence is most often defined as visibility in and around a school (Hattie, 2008). Daily presence can provide principals essential information about teachers’ craft.

One ongoing continuous improvement strategy thought useful in maintaining principal presence, as well as gaining insights in the instructional quality of the school is that of an instructional walk. Loosely defined, an instructional walk is a technique used by educators when they briefly enter a classroom for the purpose of observing both teacher and student behaviors (Marzano, 2007; Silver, Strong & Perini, 2007). This short observation, lasting typically between five and 10 minutes, allows the observer an opportunity to gain a sense of the teacher’s craft, as well as overall enacted instructional focus. Feedback from the instructional walk is then shared with the instructor. Sharing may take many forms, individual feedback in the case of instructional coaching or as evaluative feedback shared both with the instructor, as well as collectively through school-wide data dialogues or instructional improvement conversations (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Knowledge of instructional quality and ongoing visibility are maintained by principals walking the school.

Instructional walks are a generic term used to encompass the many variations of formats and roles of personnel conducting the walks. These walks may be both formative and summative in nature. The Learning Walk (principal) is a walk often associated with
the principal as the primary observer. He/she enters the classroom for a short amount of
time with a specific set of “look-fors” aimed at both teacher and student learning
behaviors (Silver et al., 2007). These walks are formative. The Instructional Round
(colleague) involves peers conducting observations of one another. In an Instructional
Round (colleague), the principal calls on others in the building to visit and be visited by
fellow teachers. These walks are non-evaluative, formative, and based on instructional
topics and school initiatives. The Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) is used in
conjunction with annual evaluations of performance (summative). This walk is conducted
by the teachers’ evaluators. Overall feedback to the observed teachers is intended in each
of the instructional walk (generic) formats. However, the specific nature and extent of the
feedback may vary through informal conversations, as formative coaching, or even in
summative appraisals (Marzano, 2011).

While the principles underlying each format of the overall instructional walk
(generic) vary, in each instance, those principles are based on the assumption that when
teachers improve their craft they increase student learning. “Good teachers gradually
improve any district, and often help improve their fellow teacher” (Peterson, 2002, p. vii).
The short duration of time spent in each classroom and the less formal aspects of the
instructional walk (generic) have encouraged administrators, as well as fellow teachers,
to observe a teachers’ instruction and provide feedback more frequently (Milanowski,
2011). The instructional walk (generic) as a continuous improvement strategy supports
the ongoing notion of educators helping fellow educators improve the overall craft of
teaching.
Other frequently mentioned purposes by educators employing forms of instructional walks (generic) include aiding in the development of a school-wide culture focused on instruction (Marzano, 2007). Professional development efforts are often aligned to data gathered from instructional walks (generic) (Silver et al., 2007). It is also widely thought by practitioners that instructional walks (generic) provide leaders a better position to quickly become aware and understand the concerns of the staff. It is believed that educators are more comfortable when the purpose of the instructional walk extends beyond their own individual classroom performance to larger school goals resulting in a benefit to the school as a whole (Kachur et al., 2010).

District leaders and principals additionally report that the data from instructional walks (generic) give them a better understanding of how well teachers are able to identify and move students in and out of intervention and support programs (David, 2008). Kachur et al. (2013) note that student benefit beyond the teacher’s instructional improvement may become apparent when instructional walks (generic) are conducted. Students report seeing teachers working collaboratively, cross-curricular connections emerging, adult awareness in classroom learning activities increasing, and fellow students sharing with visitors what they are learning (Kachur et al., 2013). Other studies describe the value that practitioners using district-designed walks develop in shared understandings of high-quality practice across the school (Silver et al., 2007). Evidence gathered through instructional walk (generic) observations provide principals the opportunity to guide teachers through frequent and ongoing targeted instructional coaching (Marzano, 2007). There appear to be numerous benefits resulting in a variety of reasons to conduct instructional walks (generic).
Many articles, editorials, books, and empirical research have been created in an effort to link instructional walks (generic) with student achievement. They further assert that the benefits of such walks have the potential to raise the instructional capacity of an entire school to a higher level of continuous improvement and performance (Kachur, Stout & Edwards, 2013). Kachur et al. (2013) state that when purposeful and focused school-wide learning is articulated at the forefront, teachers work together to make instructional decisions aimed at continuous improvement. Instructional walks (generic) do not operate as a standalone school improvement effort. They are embedded in the larger school improvement plan including professional development, meetings and trainings, mission articulation, and review of student achievement data. The data on student learning acquired from both observations of and interactions with teachers and students during instructional walks (generic) may indeed complement professional development activities resulting in the overall improvement of the teachers’ craft, however, more must be known about teachers’ experience while observed. The body of current research unsuccessfully demonstrates more than a plausible correlation between instructional walks (generic) and student achievement as a single continuous improvement strategy (Kachur et al., 2010).

Several researchers have found that both principals and others who observe report that general feedback shared with teachers after an instructional walk (generic) is of value (Oliva, Mathers, & Laine, 2009; Lee, 2011; Skretta, 2008). However, there is little information regarding the experience and perspective of the teachers who are the targets of such walks, or what those observed teachers actually do with the feedback to change their classroom instruction. Even more evident is the lack of empirical research regarding
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the planning of the walk, how teachers prepare for the experience, what the process of being observed is like for these instructors, and the nature of the direct feedback shared with observed teachers. There is little examination of value teachers place on the walks, and how or why teachers respond to observations and feedback provided to them after a classroom visit.

Unfortunately, individuals observed have voiced that they often lack a clear understanding of the intentional purpose of the instructional walk (generic) conducted in their classrooms (Kachur et al., 2010). Additionally, the purpose, if it is articulated, often fails to include the individualized needs of those observed. A walk’s purpose has often been conveyed as an “all or nothing” approach to school-wide continuous instructional improvement regardless of individual teacher’s professional learning needs. Therefore, teachers lack a voice in their own continuous learning and growth said to be a factor in teaching satisfaction (Goddard et al., 2000). It is plausible to assume a teacher’s engagement and choice, as has been reported with students (Hattie, 2008; Marzano, 2007), positively impacts one’s learning and achievement. Given these limitations, it is reasonable to explore the perceptions and experience of observed teachers’ during instructional walks (generic) in an effort to better understand the utility of this form of continuous improvement activity.

Statement of the Problem

The primary focus of this exploratory study is to describe and interpret the lived experience of instructional walks (generic) from the perspective of the observed teachers. The aim is to capture holistically the reflective experience and interpretation of teachers who are the target and intended beneficiaries of the event. This study focuses on the
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comparative phenomenology of the event by asking how different types of instructional walks (generic) show themselves in the experience and consciousness of high school teachers as recipients. Specifically, it is the aim of this study to determine if the experience high school teachers associate with instructional walks (generic) differ based on (a) the articulated purpose of the walk, whether formative or summative, or (b) who conducts the walk, specifically supervising principals or teaching peers. Of particular interest is assessing the overall utility of the instructional walk (generic) system as a whole by determining whether the observed teachers perceive these continuous improvement efforts as enhancing their personal development and professional practice.

Previous research lacks an exploration of the constructed meaning and subsequent value educators, specifically high school teachers, associate with receiving instructional walks (generic) in the form of Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). While research suggests that the single most important factor in promoting student achievement is the teacher (Marzano, 2007), little empirical research exists that explores the instructional walk (generic) as an effective continuous improvement path for cultivating the growth of these instructors. Additionally, few research studies explicitly ask for teachers, as individual recipients of instructional walks (generic), to provide reflective insights gleaned from the walks themselves. This leaves one to question the perceived utility and value high school teachers place on the action of instructional walks (generic), as well as any accompanying feedback resulting from the walks, aimed at improving teachers’ instruction and pedagogy. Phenomenological insights in the overall experience, interpretation, and
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subsequent value teachers place on this lived experience may ultimately lead to enhancements in the practice of instructional walks (generic) aimed at promoting the continuous improvement of one’s teaching craft.

Many high schools have chosen to implement instructional improvement practices comprised of either Learning Walks (principal) and/or Instructional Rounds (colleagues). Little commentary or research investigates the differentiated experience and interpretation educators associate with these instructional walks (generic). Specifically, an understanding of the utility high school teachers find in the anticipation of, observation by, and feedback from colleagues is lacking. As noted in an article by David (2008), research on instructional walks (generic) is limited, with available studies revealing wide variation in their usefulness and effects. According to an in-depth study of three urban districts conducted by the Rand Corporation, administrators find instructional walks (generic) more useful than do teachers and those doing the walks report learning more than do those who are observed (Gill, et al., 2005). This lack of empirical research about the phenomenon leads one to wonder about individuals’ experience “in the moment” as recipients of the walks, as well as the meaning they associate with the feedback provided after the event.

It would be beneficial to understand what utility educators, as individual recipients themselves, associate with the lived experience of instructional walks (generic). Without specifically and intentionally asking those observed we can never fully begin to know a walk’s pragmatic meaning and significance. Methodologically, when we focus our reflective awareness on individual’s experiences, we adopt a phenomenological attitude of discovery and approach the experience as a phenomenon rather than a
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preconceived notion (van Manen, 2014). Experiences arise and are cultivated by the everyday existence and context of a known phenomenon. The construct of instructional walks (generic) and more specifically the possible differentiated utility and value associated with alternative instructional walk (generic) formats, arrange themselves in such a lived phenomenon. Further investigation in this topic from a phenomenological perspective is therefore warranted.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to capture the lived experience of high school teachers participating in instructional walks (generic). The study also seeks to explore if the experience of these teachers is differentiated based on the type of instructional walk (generic) format or the individual conducting the observation. Clarity and understanding as it relates to the articulated purpose established in the system of instructional walks (generic) and the value attributed by the teachers observed is also sought. The teachers interviewed were asked to recall perceptions of value and utility gained or lost from the experience including experiences before, during, and after, an instructional walk (generic) as a continuous instructional improvement strategy. Lastly, the teachers observed were asked to describe the nature of feedback, if any, and the perceptions that feedback may have added to the experience.

All knowledge begins with experience (van Manen, 2014). Information valuable in building a body of knowledge addressing the differentiated meaning that teachers give to instructional walks (generic) will be sought. This remains important because the original value placed on an event sets the stage for usefulness and application later. Further, to gain an awareness of continuous improvement, teachers must see the
relevance and objectivity in the observation, sense the purpose, know the “look-fors,” and understand that each walk represents a single snapshot of overall performance (Goldhorn, Kearney & Webb, 2013). If teachers dismiss the utility or set forth purpose of the instructional walk (generic) among continuous improvement efforts, they will likely have little value and attribute less meaning to the feedback provided at a later date. This perception may lead teachers to suggest the often heard phrase that “this pendulum of instructional reform will too swing in the other direction.”

Looking at the lived experience of teachers observed as part of an instructional walk (generic) system, this investigation aims to address the recipients’ experience and perceived utility of instructional walks (generic) as an improvement strategy through a qualitative phenomenological study. The study investigates those perceptions using in-depth interviews of high school educators. Phenomenology does not direct its attention to the external but reflectively to one’s own experiences, or better to the way that the experience appears in consciousness (van Manen, 2014). Consciousness of behaviors such as anticipation, reaction, and reflection on teaching is sought. Knowledge and accounts as the basis for the phenomenological reflection lie in the memories of what is experienced (van Manen, 2014). The data collected and analyzed provides insight in the subjective utility of different instructional walks (generic) in continuous improvement efforts as perceived by those receiving teachers.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theories and models discussed below provide a conceptual structure to orient this phenomenological study of instructional walks (generic) as one strategy among many continuous instructional improvement efforts aimed at teachers. Given the variations
among instructional walks (generic), a lens of continuous improvement is central to guiding and supporting teachers as ongoing learners. Teachers are active learners and as such evolve cyclically with respect to their professional learning needs, practice of their craft, and subsequent growth and development (Hattie, 2008). Continuous improvement, or continual improvement, is evident across teachers and schools (Redding, 2006) as educators are challenged to be better, think deeper, and deliver knowledge and information in enhanced ways (Fullan, 2003; Hattie, 2008; Marzano et al., 2004). Such improvement is a necessary reality for achieving educational excellence.

Many continuous improvement efforts utilize a loop of learning inclusive of planning, activating, and reflecting (Reddy, 2006; Park, Hironaka, Carver & Nordstrom, 2013). Thinking from those observed, the entirety of the walk becomes important in the improvement of one’s teaching craft. Planning establishes the collective purpose or “look-for” of the walk. Acting is the action in the walk process of observing and being observed. The final stage of the continuous improvement loop, reflecting, has two duties, that of giving/receiving feedback, as well as self-internalization. Exploring each of these aspects of continuous improvement becomes important in gaining an understanding of the lived-experience of teachers as receivers of instructional walks (generic). Probing what these teachers experience and reflect upon before, during, and after the walk itself will provide a subjective perspective on the overall experience, as well as its potential utility to those observed.

Differentiated formats of instructional walks (generic) have evolved and are supported by different theories of leadership. Of particular interest is Heck and Hallinger’s (2010) Theory of Instructional Leadership and the influence of the theory as a
structure for the principal as leader. The concept of distributed leadership also offers a perspective on the possible importance of teaching peers as leaders who provide observation and feedback on learning opportunities. Lastly, the distinction of evaluative instructional walks, as promoted through legislative mandates and policies, is significant because principals are required to visit classrooms and observe teacher instruction on a regular basis. Table 1 organizes and defines the variety of instructional walks (generic) to be included in this study and specifies their underlying conceptual support structures.

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Table 1. Instructional Walk Formats in a Continuous Improvement Cycle

The definition of educational leadership in scholarly literature remains diverse. Generally, instructional leadership is defined in terms of traits, behaviors, roles, and processes. The Theory of Instructional Leadership has been shaped by the pivotal work of Heck and Hallinger (2010). They suggest that instructional leadership behaviors and actions are common among effective principals. These skills are comprised of three dimensions: defining the school’s vision and mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning culture (Heck et al., 2010).

Researchers agree that improving and sustaining effective schools requires that principals exhibit strong skills and expertise in instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2009; Heck et al., 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). The notion of principals’ presence as an ongoing formative model of awareness about the instructional climate and underpinnings of the
school culture is valuable. This theoretical basis supports instructional walks (generic) conducted by principals, the Learning Walk (principal).

Credited with shaping today’s view of instructional leaders, Heck and Hallinger (2010) employed aspects of distributed leadership in framing their theory of instructional leadership, drawing upon the work of Spillane (2005). Distributed leadership supports the framework of the instructional leader through the intentional disbursement of leadership responsibilities (Spillane, 2005). Spillane notes that shared leadership tasks and skills across staff build collective cohesion. His “leader-plus” (Spillane, 2005, p.144) philosophy recognizes that leading and managing schools can involve individuals in addition to the principal, often including others such as assistant principals, mentors, lead teachers, and curriculum coaches. A distributed perspective allows for the possibility that individuals without any formal leadership designation take responsibility for the work of leading in schools. This notion speaks to the collective process often found in Instructional Rounds (colleagues). Further, Heck and Hallinger (2010) offer descriptive evidence of the impact of shared leadership on instruction. Collaborative leadership as a school improvement strategy reinforces partnership and community resulting in enhanced school-wide culture and climate.

Instructional and distributed leadership provide frameworks for thinking about the lived experience of teachers participating in Learning Walks (principal) and Instructional Rounds (colleagues), respectively. However, the third type of instructional walk (generic), the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor), is informed more by contextual influences than a particular leadership theory. While policy is not often thought of as theory, direct and specific influence in the realm of education is often guided by federal
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and state legislative policies. Through policies, states are supporting the expanded notion of evaluative strategies such as walk-throughs to aid in the depth of teacher evaluations (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). Federal mandates such as “No Child Left Behind” (US Department of Education, 2016) and its reauthorizations, and most recently the “Every Child Succeeds Act” (ESEA) (US Department of Education, 2016), have impacted the focus and parameters of many decisions in schools and should, therefore, be considered a framework of importance in research studies (Sun, Frank, Penuel & Kim, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2016; US Department of Education, 2016).

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide the lenses through which the research questions and methodological design of this study will be framed. The conceptual frameworks noted above provide an avenue for the collection and analysis of descriptive evidence to add to the growing body of knowledge on instructional walks (generic). Further, they support the aim of a methodological design of phenomenology to describe and analyze the data gathered through the exploration of teachers’ lived experience. The use of a lens of continuous improvement, as well as leadership theories and educational policy, provide a common framework among schools hosting a variety of instructional walks (generic), allowing for the exploration of the overall experience of walks by high school teachers observed.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions served to guide this comparative phenomenological study of instructional walks (generic): What is the sense of lived experience reported by high school teachers who have been recipients of instructional walks (generic) during the past two academic school years?
1) What is the overall experience high school teachers as recipients associate with instructional walks (generic) at each stage of the continuous improvement cycle (planning, acting, and reflecting) and is that experience differentiated by the type of walk: (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor)?

   1a. Planning: What is the experience of high school teachers prior to receiving an instructional walk (generic) and is that anticipatory experience differentiated by the type of walk?

   1b. Acting: What is the experience of high school teachers while being observed during an instructional walk (generic) and is that observational experience differentiated by type of walk?

   1c. Reflecting: What is the experience of high school teachers following the completion of an instructional walk (generic) including follow-up feedback and self-reflection, and is that outcome experience differentiated by type of walk?

2.) What overall utility do high school teachers as recipients associate with instructional walks (generic) and is that utility differentiated by the type of walk: (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor)?

   2a. Is the utility high school teachers report connected to the understood purpose(s) of the differentiated walks?

   2b. Is the utility high school teachers report connected to the received feedback by those observing?
2c. Is the utility high school teachers associate with instructional walks (generic) connected to their engagement in the continuous improvement of their teaching craft?

**Methodology**

This study focuses on the phenomenology of the lived experience of instructional walks (generic). A phenomenological question may arise at any time when an experience brings us to pause and reflect (van Manen, 2014). This study creates an opportunity to pause and reflect on the experience and utility teachers formulate as recipients of three forms of instructional walks (generic) within a series of continuous school improvement efforts. “Phenomenology, as a lens of understanding, attempts to show how our worlds, concepts, and theories inevitably shape and give structure to our experiences as we live them” (van Manen, 2014, p.58).

Phenomenology may bring light to an experience often thought ordinary. This focus illuminates how the experience of an instructional walk (generic) may influence and shape the continual improvement of teachers’ craft. This particular method calls attention not to theory, but rather practice itself as the source of meaning in our lives as educators. Phenomenology as a method further sets aside all constraints imposed by preconceived beliefs and assumptions to free one to view the instructional walk (generic) holistically from the teachers’ description and reflection. Further, the utility associated with the instructional walk (generic) as a lived experience is both reflective and conscious (van Manen, 2014). The meaning internalized is significant to each individual’s reflection of an event, and is vital in supporting and shaping subsequent walks received. However, as noted in previous research, meaning and value are often
asked of and interpreted by the observer, rather than, asked of those observed. This results in the potential misunderstanding of the value reflectively attributed to the instructional walk (generic). The direct and subsequent value of individual accounts is delineated by the personal and individual interpretation and utility placed on the lived experience. The instructional walk (generic) as a lived experience of those observed is the phenomenon sought.

As a method, phenomenology aims to be sensitive to moments of thoughtfulness, moments of insight, and even moments in which we may experience our world in terms of mystery, disorientation, or incongruity (van Manen, 2014). Reflecting on teachers as singular calls to light the question of how individuals make sense of their own experience (van Manen, 2014).

It is futile to speak of general phenomenology of perception since people from different cultures see differently, and people see and understand their worlds differently from the ways that their close and distant forebears did, just as their own children will perceive the world differently. (van Manen, 2014, p. 204)

Further understood, teachers as individuals from unique school cultures and contexts place individual meaning on the notion of an instructional walk (generic), as did their predecessors and will their future colleagues. Teachers’ investment, acceptance, value, and the meaning attributed to the purpose, as well as engagement around continuous improvement, specifically instructional walks (generic), seem to play an important role in increasing and supporting efforts to grow student learning and achievement (Kachur et al., 2010). Additionally, teachers’ perceptions of why they are being observed
instructionally should be acknowledged in order to capitalize on the process and time investment for both the individual being observed, as well as the observer (Marzano, 2011).

To better understand teachers’ experience of being the subject of instructional walks (generic), participants in this exploratory study consist of high school educators geographically located in Southwestern Ohio. As required by Ohio’s legislation, all public schools must include Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) as one aspect of every teacher’s overall summative appraisal. Therefore, all educators participate in these events resulting in a similar experience among the State’s educators.

Study participants consist of a stratified purposive sample of high school teachers from four sites located in Southwest Ohio. The sample was generated using the personnel list of all certified teachers in each school(s) having met the study criteria. To further focus the study to those individuals who have recently received an instructional walk (generic), a purposive sample was derived from the population of high school educators who have actively participated as recipients in at least two forms of walks: (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), in the last two academic school years. To gain an awareness of possible differences in the utility of the walk based on teaching roles, each site’s sample was derived to approximately represent teachers’ distributed roles among those certified as content experts, as well as process specialists. To seek a sample saturation, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen individuals who have been recipients of a variety of instructional walks (generic). This sample resulted in a minimum of eight to ten participants across each walk format.
Prior to interviewing teachers, a structured interview was conducted with the building principal to gain an understanding of the role of instructional walks (generic) as a continuous improvement process at that location, as well as to gain an awareness of general site demographics and structure. It is the aim of this exploratory study to collect the insights of experiences of teachers participating in each of the three instructional walk (generic) formats. As necessary, key artifacts supporting the phenomenon were also reviewed. School written consent was obtained, as well as participant consent for each individual’s participation.

The data analysis included both individual and aggregate analysis. As noted by van Manen (2014) shades of meaning are constructed individually dependent on how the phenomenon is given, received, and interpreted. Narratives and stories are valuable insights in the overall meaning and value associated with walks. The coding of interview responses into themes and key understandings was also employed. Where they exist common themes were identified by instructional walk (generic) and reported as they emerged from analysis and interpretation of the collected data. “Description awakens, evokes, or shows us reflectively the lived meaning and significance of the prereflective experience, in a fuller or deeper manner” (van Manen, 2014, p. 229). Through a written account of this research, descriptions of the lived experience of study participants examine the reflective meanings with respect to instructional walks (generic) as a particular phenomenon. This qualitative methodology is an appropriate choice given the phenomenological construct and the importance of gaining a sense of the lived experience as it relates to the continual improvement of teachers’ craft.
Definitions of Terminology

Clarifications of terms, as they relate to this study, are intended to align the perceptions of readers. For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined in relevant context to provide an awareness of the scope of the data to be collected, analyzed and interpreted:

**Continuous Improvement** – A term that implies the ongoing effort by an individual or individuals to improve overall (work) quality (Park, et al., 2013). Organizations and individuals that engage in continuous improvement are continually setting goals, analyzing data collected, making improvements and revisions, and monitoring progress. Continuous improvement is often considered in feedback cycles resulting from instructional walks (generic).

**Distributed Leadership** – Sometimes referred to as a form of “shared leadership” (Spillane, 2005), distributed leadership is the intentional distribution of tasks across school personnel. The principal intentionally creates leadership opportunities and tasks that allow capable and willing teachers to work in a more focused leadership capacity often around instructional tasks and teacher professional development. Spillane (2005) proposes that distributed leadership is about the practice of leadership among many rather than the individuals leading.

**Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor)** – A form of instructional walk (generic) that is evaluative in nature. These brief stops in classrooms are conducted by principals or other administrators and result in summative feedback, often used in combination with formal observations. A common function of an evaluative walk-through is to collect ongoing data about teacher behaviors, overall performance, as well
as the use of perceived effective instructional strategies. Ohio Revised Code 3319.112 (Ohio Department of Education, 2016) states that evaluators must perform classroom walk-throughs as part of every instructor’s annual evaluative process.

**Feedback** – Communication provided by those observing, intended to lead teachers to construct their own understandings in response to the circumstance in which they find themselves (Feeney, 2007). It is generally agreed that feedback should be descriptive, objective, and in the case of teaching aligned to characteristics of effective teaching methodologies. In addition, feedback provides opportunities for individuals to reflect and foster plans for improvement. Most feedback is provided in a continuous improvement cycle with the expectation that the individual or organization make improvements based on feedback.

**Formative Observation** – An approach to evidence gathering used in instructional walks (generic) to gain a sense of general teaching behaviors, view student interaction and engagement, or to assess the implementation or effectiveness of a new teaching methods. Formative techniques are ongoing and provide continual feedback. Formative observations tabulate over time to provide a sense of an individual teacher’s use and effectiveness of instruction, the entirety of the building’s use and effectiveness of instruction, as well as the overarching culture of the school (Moss et al., 2015).

**Instructional Leadership** – First coined by Hallinger and Heck, instructional leadership focuses on the leadership of the principal in the educational system. The theory proposes that instructional leadership consists of three goals: (a) defining the school’s mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school learning climate (Caldarella, Shatzer, Hallman & Brown, 2014). Other research
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has broadened the focus of instructional leadership to include strategies such as collaboration among teachers, creating opportunities for professional growth, and the development of professional learning communities (Marks & Printy, 2003).

**Instructional Rounds (colleague)** – An instructional walk (generic) technique used most often by colleagues and fellow teachers, this strategy provides for one or more teachers to observe in another’s classroom specifically focused on teaching behaviors, pedagogy, and strategy. Instructional Rounds by nature are collaborative activities joining professionals in dialogue. Marzano et al. (2004) note that the benefit of Instructional Rounds resides in the discussion that takes place among observing teachers at the end of the observation, as well as the potential change in teaching practices. Feedback is also offered individually and as aggregate dialogues. The process is not evaluative.

**Instructional Walk (generic)** – This general inclusive term is employed in the context of this study to holistically encompass brief classroom observations that include the practice of Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Although varying in format and the person’s role conducting the walk, as well as the feedback mechanism, all walks focus on the collection of data about observed instruction aimed at improving outcomes for students. An instructional walk (generic), in one or more format, is a tool found in continuous improvement efforts.

**Learning Walk (principal)** – An instructional walk (generic) technique where school administrators enter classrooms to look at the behavior of both teachers and students, their interactions and engagement. As a reflection, they use what they learn during the walk to provide feedback about instruction, plan professional development,
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and set school culture (Silver, 2011). The process is not evaluative but rather conducted to guide collective instructional improvements in the building. Feedback is often shared school-wide. Professionals refer to Learning Walks as formative. While they represent an informal appraisal of the teacher, they also provide for avenues of learning and growth.

**Look-fors** – “Look-fors” are the explicit elements of effective instruction or guiding principles of learning identified by the principal and teachers. “Look-fors” are clear statements or descriptors of observable evidence of teaching and learning including specific instructional strategies, learning activities, behavioral outcomes and routines, or practices (Kachur et al., 2013). “Look-fors” include explicit teacher or student behaviors that observers will witness and record throughout their instructional walks (generic). Often “look-fors” are derived from building and district strategic improvement plans, professional development initiatives, teacher competencies, and/or aligned to standards and achievement results.

**Principal Presence** – The intentional action of the building leader to maintain visible presence in and throughout the school, principal presence is a key concept in Instructional Leadership Theory (Hallinger et al., 2010). This high visibility leads to familiarity and trust, knowledge about building culture and dynamics, ongoing observation of both teacher and student learning behaviors, as well as a sense of the overall health of the building (Hattie, 2008).

**Assumptions**

It is assumed that participants were able to discuss their experience of instructional walks (generic) in an unconstrained and non-coercive manner, free of any concerns about potential consequences. Steps were taken to ensure this by protecting
participant’s confidentiality and offering to provide an off-site context in which to meet with the researcher. Within the context of these conversations, it is assumed that participants were capable of differentiating between the two (or three) forms of instructional walks (generic) they have participated in, and limiting their responses to experiences at their current place of employment. It is further assumed that teachers invited to participate in this study were willing to do so without compensation or incentives, and that the purposive approach to recruitment did not skew the sample of participants in any systematic manner with respect to their experience of the central phenomenon. It is further assumed that the stratified approach to recruiting participants was successful in saturating the data pool with representative responses across the variations in type of instructional walks (generic) to be assessed.

**Limitations**

Limitations in this research include the generally imposed narrowing of focus typical of a phenomenological study of lived experiences. Instructional walks (generic) may be an event that only afterwards can be seen for its significance. The reflective thought prompted by phenomenological methods may awaken this experience. While the goal of the study is to capture both individual narratives and extract common themes reflected in these narratives. The focus of analysis in this study is on extracting commonalities among the experiences of individuals’ participating in instructional walks (generic). However, because in phenomenological research, “a genuine encounter can never be reduced to its actualization as a fact” (van Manen, 2014, p.193), the anonymous voices of individual participants are highlighted in documenting the result of this study.
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The high schools targeted by this study are located geographically close to one another, in Southwest Ohio. The State requires Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) by law which may have influenced participants’ perceptions of evaluative walks and their feedback. This may have further influenced the individual meaning associated broadly to all instructional walks (generic). Additionally, the group sampled, although somewhat diverse, does not fully represent the population of high school educators in the region, state, or nationally. Further, the sampling frame, participant recruitment, participation, consent and willingness to provide responses to interview questions all introduce potential sources of systematic bias among participants in this study. Variables unknown to the researcher may have influenced individuals’ responses, therefore caution was employed during data analysis to prevent researcher bias from interfering with complete and valid data analysis. Full transcription and coding of participant interviews, and review of extracted themes by the co-investigator are two such measures implemented.

Only high school educators from public schools were interviewed for this study. The high schools were invited to participate because of their documented use of instructional walks (generic). Only teachers who participated in at least two instructional walk (generic) formats in the past two academic school years were interviewed. Given these limitations, results of this study are necessarily considered preliminary and must be interpreted narrowly. Appropriate caution must be exercised in extrapolating results based on these methodological limitations.

Delimitations

Delimitations exist beyond the known constraints imposed by methodology that unintentionally further restrict this study in terms of scope and the relevance and
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generalizability of results. For instance, this study is focused in one region of one state for whom a policy on walk-throughs as a part of the teacher evaluation system exists. Thus one major delimitation that deserves recognition relates to variations in the local practice of instructional walks (generic), which could restrict the generalizability of results outside the region. Secondarily, the fact that one form of instructional walk (generic), e.g. evaluative walk-throughs (supervisor), is required at the schools studied, may give rise to a culture more or less responsive to this form of continuous improvement that may be atypical of institutions where no such mandate exists. Because this constant exists across all study sites, extrapolation of results to institutions where instructional walks in any form are not mandated may be less relevant.

A final delimitation to be acknowledged is the potential for researcher bias stemming from the fact that the principal investigator is an administrator in a public school system in the same Southwestern region where study participants were recruited. The study sites were known to this researcher, however, all teacher participants were unknown prior to the study. Steps to abate this delimitation were employed, including supervision of data collection, analysis, and collaboration in the interpretation of results with a co-investigator whose perspective is not encumbered by this bias.

**Significance of the Study**

The results of this study may contribute to improving educators’ understanding of teachers as recipients of instructional walks (generic) and their lived experience. The study examines teachers’ differentiated experiences related to three variations of instructional walks (generic): (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). The phenomenon is
recognized by educators as a potential path toward increasing student achievement through accepted continuous improvement strategies, and results contribute a missing element to the current body of knowledge regarding the practice and perceived utility of instructional walks (generic). The value of this contribution to current knowledge is enhanced by the comparative nature of the study design. The absence of exploratory research focused on teachers’ perceptions warrants further investigation in order to understand the “why.” The use of self-assessed perceptions provides insights into teachers’ subjective experience and sense of utility relative to instructional walks (generic) as an acceptable and valued instructional improvement strategy. Being open to the individual accounts of high school educators using phenomenological methods adds perspective to existing knowledge. “Only by stepping back and giving an account of them do they become visible to the interpretative gaze” (van Manen, 2014, p.186).

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. This chapter, Chapter 1, provides an overview of the purpose and design of the study. It is inclusive of the background information, theoretical framework, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to instructional walks (generic) including Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Additionally, Chapter 2 provides the overarching lens on continuous instructional improvement. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology, as well as the design of the study. The chapter also addresses the reliability and validity of the research method. Chapter 4 highlights the data collection and analysis from the semi-structured interviews of high school teachers. The chapter identifies themes, as well as individual and personal
perceptions of instructional walks (generic). Chapter 5 provides interpretations, implications, and limitations to the data collected. This chapter also highlights opportunities for further research around this topic. Throughout the study, specific attention is given to the role of instructional walks (generic) as a perceived influence on the continual improvement of a teachers’ classroom practices through the lens of the lived experience of high school educators.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“One’s perception is one’s reality.” ~Anonymous

In the current era of educational accountability both teachers and principals are charged with positively impacting student achievement. Teachers have been called the single-most important factor in raising student achievement (Marzano, 2007; Hattie, 2008). Teachers create a sense of belonging in the classroom, they encourage learning and discovery. Teachers’ growth and professional learning is directly tied to future students’ achievement. The importance of teachers cannot be stressed enough. Therefore, it reasons that all students should be exposed to the best and brightest teachers each year. Many instructional improvement strategies are employed to achieve this charge. However, one strategy in particular is growing in popularity among continuous improvement efforts – the instructional walk (generic).

A review of literature on instructional walks (generic) reveals what is known and unknown about this topic in the context of continuous instructional improvement efforts. Specifically, this research will focus on what is known about the utility observed teachers place on the walk as an avenue for improved professional growth. Research regarding the meaning and value formed by teachers observed as part of an instructional walk (generic) is lacking. Relevant findings of others reported in journal articles, books, empirical studies, and dissertations will be included. Prior to reviewing the literature on instructional walks (generic) supported through both leadership theories and legislative policy models, continuous school improvement will be explored as it relates to teachers’ overall frame of reference in learning and growing.
Instructional Improvement Cycle

According to Schmoker, “The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel” (2010, p. 1). Continuous school improvement is an ongoing philosophy aimed at improving teachers’ craft not a program or a set of instructional materials. Continuous improvement strategies have also been referred to as continual improvements. The Carnegie Foundation defines continuous improvement as the integration of quality improvements in the daily work of individuals (Park et al., 2013). A healthy organization believes in the continual improvement of itself. “Continuous improvement is designed to instill a positive and collaborative school climate and an enthusiastic, participatory learning environment focusing on being better tomorrow than we have today” (Marino, 2013, p. 1).

While it is beyond the scope of this research study to define and validate any one continuous improvement method, it is important to gain a general understanding of school improvement frames as they relate to instructional walks (generic). School improvement at the core accepts responsibility as a change agent in targeting improved student achievement (Fullan, 2003). Because change is an outcome of any improvement cycle, stakeholders become immersed throughout the cycle. Further, improvement is identified in both processes, as well as outcomes (Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline, 2004). For example, the change in teachers’ instructional techniques (process) lead to the increase in students’ achievement (outcome). Without the effective processes deeply embedded in the improvement cycle, the entirety of the improvement may fall short. Further, asking
why particular improvements (outcome) are exhibited and how teachers’ growth (process) is experienced remains important in the continual improvements and overall positive changes across the education field (Feeney, 2007).

Public school reform has been in existence for over a century. Education is considered a natural laboratory of continuous improvement. Descriptions of continuous improvement loops and cycles of improvement are numerous. However, three consistently emerge among practitioners. Deming is credited with one school improvement cycle, the Plan-Do-Study-Act loop. Boudett, City and Murrane are credited with the Data Wise Improvement Process consisting of three stages Prepare-Inquire-Act. Partners in School Innovation use the ROCI loop. This loop consists of five key features Plan-Act-Assess-Reflect and Adjust-Set Goals. Regardless of format, improvement cycles use planning/preparation, acting, and reflecting/refining mechanisms to inform and direct change (Park, et al., 2013; Loeb, 2008). Because of the access to a natural “lab,” research has focused on overall cycles of planning, acting, and reflecting directly in the school settings.

At the onset, any improvement cycle involves strategic planning and visioning. Within generally agreed definitions of school improvement, initiatives and strategies are considered interrelated (Park et al., 2013). A school cannot embark on an improvement effort without impacting areas of interrelated systems, this includes its stakeholders such as teachers, principals, and students, as well as its structures such as curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Building on systems thinking, organizations engaged in continual improvement utilize structures, processes, and specific goals which leverage
interactions across all aspects of the organization. Zmuda et al. (2004) found that a school’s continuous improvement effort is a profound and deliberate opportunity to focus on the growth of teachers’ craft.

Leaders of continuous improvement organizations bring a learning mindset to the work (Park et al., 2013). These leaders further understand that continuous improvement actively and progressively unfolds without regard to an end point. An essential and necessary outcome of any successful improvement effort is the continued positive growth of the (instructional) climate and culture of the organization (Hattie, 2008). “It is important to build a culture where people share data and feel that it is useful in educational decision-making” (Loeb, 2008, p.6). Trust and collaboration are the skills necessary to sustain this desired transformation in culture. Significant progress occurs when improvement strategies and tools work in concert through an articulated purpose comprised of collective trust open to self-examination, refinement, and self-reflection (Zmuda et al., 2004). There is a commitment among stakeholders to reflect, adapt, and grow. However, problems may arise when a school tries to adopt a continuous improvement process absent a clear understanding and acceptance by those involved (Roberts, 2012; Kachur et al, 2010).

Through a synthesis of research, Redding (2006) noted that the failure of school improvement cycles to deliver anticipated results is often attributed to three causes. The first of these causes is the use of practices that are not prevailing enough to improve student achievement. Secondly, the implementation of the cycle is not set to elicit ongoing feedback paired with adaption at individual levels of meaning, as well as among the system. Finally, the improvement practice is not implemented with the necessary
Differentiated perceptions of instructional walks

fidelity (Reddy, 2006). Other obstacles to successful implementation of school improvement designs are the “presence of too many disconnected, episodic, piecemeal, superficially adorned projects” (Fullan, 2006, p. 109), and a tendency to negotiate down the requirements of the effort in order to make it seem “doable” (Hatch, 2002).

Effective continuous improvement can be far reaching, nevertheless, principals, as the instructional leaders, must also be clear and focused in the effort as to not lose site of the improvement desired (Reddy, 2006). As with any improvement strategy, schools must invest time and energy in training staff in the process while simultaneously creating a culture that supports the process. Learners make meaning of experiences resulting in the ability to determine their own learning needs, formulate personalized learning goals, identify materials and resources for that learning, implement the appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate those learning outcomes (McGrath, 2009; Kearsley, 2010). As schools are called to increase student achievement, there must be a greater understanding of what happens in the continual process of teaching and learning in classrooms, and a deeper understanding of how students engage with their learning to ultimately achieve success (Marzano, 2007; Hattie, 2008). To accomplish this, leaders set and deliver ongoing continuous improvement efforts aimed at understanding and improving the craft of each and every teacher.

Districts and schools help teachers gain expertise in the pedagogical skills of their craft when they provide a structured system of ongoing dialogue and reflection along with planned improvements (Marzano, 2011). One strategy supported in a school’s continuous improvement cycle is the ongoing observation of teachers through instructional walks (generic). Because of its frequency and structure inclusive of
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planning, acting, and reflecting, the instructional walk (generic) has demonstrated the potential to be used as a continuous improvement tool (Marzano, 2011; Hattie, 2008; City et al, 2009). Cervone and Martinez-Miller (2007) describe walkthroughs as an instrument to guide cycles of continuous improvement by focusing on the effects of instruction.

Throughout the walk, educators have an opportunity to engage in ongoing conversation about the instructional tone of the school. These conversations occur during each phase of the continuous improvement cycle – in planning/preparation, while acting/walking, and through reflection/feedback. Instructional leaders and teaching colleagues are more readily involved with teaching and learning while engaging teachers in ongoing focused conversations and professional development activities. Instructional walks (generic), among other strategies, promote the continuous improvement of teachers’ craft.

Additionally, when instructional walks (generic) are employed principals’ knowledge of the school’s instructional happenings increase, professional development initiatives are targeted, and teachers collaborate more often (McGill, 2011).

Fullan (2006) states that effective teachers must be treated as active learners. The goal of the educator is not only to transfer knowledge, but also to search for knowledge (Giannoukos, Besas, Galiropoulos & Hioctour, 2015). Within the action of instructional walks (generic), the overall goal is to continually increase student achievement through the ongoing formative improvement of teachers’ craft. It is believed that through observation and feedback gained from walks, teachers will move toward continual improvement through self-reflection, self-analysis, and self-direction as they teach (Kachur et al., 2013). According to Marzano (2011), expertise does not happen by chance, it requires thoughtful practice.
The Instructional Walk

A variety of school improvement efforts are aimed at increasing student achievement. For example, practitioners report as a continuous improvement tool instructional walks (generic) have increased as a key strategy to observe and gain an awareness of the instructional temperature of a school. Instructional walks (generic) have generally been conveyed as positive continuous improvement strategies in schools and more specifically as a means to gather useful data to plan subsequent teacher professional development. “They [walkers] look at data in the classroom, including observational data around the instructional core” (Meyer-Looze, 2015, p.37). According to Kachur et al. (2013),

Classroom walk-throughs represent embedded professional development and growth of the highest quality because they are:

- Focused on individual and schoolwide improvement.
- Respectful of the intellectual expertise and leadership capacity of teachers.
- Collaborative in nature, with teachers helping one another with professional growth opportunities.
- Ongoing, intensive, and integral to the regular workday of teachers.
- Immediately connected with authentic student learning.
- Relevant and of instant value for direct application of ideas to classroom practices.
- Cost-effective and efficient in terms of the impact on teaching and learning.
- Evaluated directly on the basis of impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning. (p.116)
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Additionally, the instructional walk (generic) has been heralded as one of the most promising improvement strategies for principals, as instructional leaders, because of the ongoing collection of instructional happenings observed while walking (McClain, 2009). There is evidence that principals perceive a benefit from the many forms of instructional walks (generic).

Overall instructional walks (generic) vary in purpose, structure, as well as format. In this study, instructional walks (generic) as a continuous improvement strategy will be placed in three general formats: Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). For example, Learning Walks (principal) and Instructional Rounds (colleague) are formative, whereas Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are summative. However, similarities exist among all walks, they are short in duration allowing them to occur more often leading to the accumulation of data on schools’ instructional tone and climate. Additionally, best-practice and agreement among practitioners state that the structure of any walk should include planning, acting, and reflecting (Marzano, 2011; Hattie, 2008; City et al, 2009).

Instructional walks (generic) provide “data” on classroom instruction and student learning (Black, 2007). The walk itself is a professional development experience for the walkers although little information exists from the perspective of recipients. Further, studies acknowledge that instructional walks (generic) are only a part of a larger ongoing continuous improvement system inclusive of professional learning communities, focus and training on initiatives, and close examination of student achievement data (DuFour, 2004). In today’s climate of accountability and a laser focus on student achievement gains, instructional walks (generic) are one avenue that provides principals ongoing
information about what additional support teachers may need in order to achieve the school’s goals (McClain, 2009). Further, Johnson (2003) states that instructional leaders must spend considerable time in the classrooms collecting data, coaching, and supporting quality classroom instruction in order to continuously make improvements. Principals increase visibility and develop an awareness of the instructional climate in the school while walking. Fullan (2003) notes that organizations must be continual learning organizations. The use of instructional walks (generic) provides a continuous improvement path to plan for, see evidence of, and reflect on the teachers’ learning and growth.

**The Instructional Walk: Historical Investigation**

The instructional walk (generic) has evolved throughout the last several decades. Walkthroughs, a variation of the instructional walk (generic), first appeared in the business world as a means for managers to walk around, observe the working organization, and engage employees. Business leaders were involved with the daily routines while also engaging in the work, listening, and talking with workers. Walks were a way to foster communication. According to Peters and Waterman (1982), emphasis on communication excelled companies into excellence. Peters and Waterman (1982) asserted that leaders of successful companies stayed close to the people doing the work. Hewlett-Packard used a walk style called Management by Wandering Around (MBWA). Other terms like walkthrough, The Learning Walk, drive-bys, and three-minute walks are forms of business walks used early on (Kachur et al., 2010). These walks were informal ways
for managers to interact with employees on a daily basis and to keep a pulse on the company. Leaders were visible in their management practices – creating a presence in their organization.

According to Kachur et al. (2010), MBWA was introduced to educational administrators in New York in the 1980s. Around that same time, Frase (1990) indicated that principals should spend a majority of their time in classrooms, and the walk was one way to ensure that presence. Frase also believed that teachers liked to see the principals in classrooms because their presence validated the teachers’ hard work. The evolution of the instructional walk (generic) came about as a result of these claims. Although little to no causal research on this phenomenon existed at the time, Frase (1990) cited more than 20 research studies that showed how management by wandering around correlated with desirable outcomes in schools, including: higher student achievement, improved school culture, and higher teacher efficacy. Although, classroom walk-throughs fell short of demonstrating a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the tool and school, teacher, and student improvement (Kachur et al., 2010; 2013). Further, the studies referenced by Frase did not provide insight in the observed teachers’ perspective of the walk as a tool to increase growth in the teaching craft.

Historically, an intended purpose of instructional walks was as a primary accountability strategy (Kachur et al., 2010). The first walks only included principals. It was believed the natural act of walking provided principals with the opportunity to actively see and listen to the climate of schools. “Principals observed classroom instruction and environments, arranged professional development opportunities, consulted with teachers and evaluated their classroom practices” (Kachur, et al., 2010, p.
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4). These walks appeared as both summative and formative feedback mechanisms. Additional resources and subsequent models evolved to further customize classroom walk-throughs during the 1990s and early 2000s. One popular walk-through technique was *The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time* created by Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, and Poston. Although the format, purpose of the walks, and those walking varied, each focused on teachers as instructional agents.

When these walks were employed as a continuous improvement strategy, the presence of principals throughout the school increased and teachers positively reported they liked to see principals out and about. Researchers suggested that these new instructional walks (generic) contributed to gains in teachers’ motivation and efficacy (Goddard et al., 2000). However, those observed shared less than positive feelings associated with the act of receiving the walk (Kachur et al., 2010). Historically, little to no insight had been gathered from the teachers observed. Specific and direct feedback about instruction and pedagogy was lacking from classroom teachers’ reflective. Valli and Buese (2007) found district-imposed policies of mandated walk-throughs increased teachers’ anxiety. Further, Cervone and Martinez-Miller (2007) describe teachers’ fears of judgment by their peers as a worry during instructional walks (generic). The claim that walks were an essential and positive instructional improvement component for the teachers being observed was not explored.

Several studies did claim to examine teachers’ perceptions of instructional walks (generic). Frase’s 2001 study of teacher efficacy found that principals benefit in the awareness of the performance of the teachers. Teachers were also more favorable of the
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evaluation process and the choice in professional development activities when principals walk the building. David’s (2008) synthesis of research established that principals found instructional walks (generic) more useful than teachers. Likewise, teachers participating in the walks, directly observing and reflecting on the instruction of peers, found walks more useful than just being observed. Dexter’s 2005 research involved the principals as participant, both Keruskin and Mandell focused on the supervisor, and Merrill (2006) focused on the attitudes of principals and assistant principals (Kachur et al, 2010). In each case, perceptions were gained from principals, and in some cases teachers as observers. Regardless of instructional walk (generic) format employed as a continuous improvement strategy, it was not evident that an effort to gain a general understanding of the utility and value attributed to the instructional walk (generic) from the teachers observed was actively sought.

The Instructional Walk: Planning

A growing research base indicates that learning is most effective when it is shared (Hattie, 2008; City et al., 2009). Teachers’ input at the beginning, specifically during the planning phase, is said to be essential in the successful implementation of the actual instructional walk (generic) (Kachur et al., 2010). Practitioners frequently mention the inclusion of norms, protocols, and expectations for observing among clearly articulated purposes (City et al., 2009). Additionally, specific agreed “look-fors” and ways to obtain feedback are often determined as part of the purpose of the walk. These dictate the walk’s format and those who will be observing. Evidence collected during previous walks combined with teachers’ self-reflections have also been used to refine the purpose of subsequent walks suggesting the presence of a continuous improvement loop. The
variations in ways to articulate walks’ purposes are found to be both formative and collaborative endeavors. However, the overall purpose of an instructional walk (generic), regardless of format, is said to be the continual improvement of teachers’ craft.

Investment in the process occurs when educators acknowledge instructional walks’ (generic) utility and value as vehicles for improving teaching practices (Kachur et al., 2010). Therefore, before teachers will completely buy into the process, they must realize the potential professional value gained. Skretta (2008) found Nebraska high school principals conducted walk-throughs, although several in the study mentioned difficulty conducting those walks with any regularity. Over half of the respondents who found the time to conduct walks further indicated their school had no formal checklist or protocol for the walk (Skretta, 2008). The study delineated that the broad purpose was to establish visibility and create positive relationships among principals and teachers. The study did not mention student achievement as an articulated purpose, although it appears to be inferred. The results indicated principals’ enhanced sense of job satisfaction when walking. However, little specific change was acknowledged in relation to the schools’ instructional initiatives or by teachers.

The instructional walk (generic) is more than the walk itself. The walk as a continuous improvement tool includes preparation before acting. The experience begins as the walk is planned and purpose established. To convey the walk as a continuous improvement strategy, best-practice indicates the purpose must be fully articulated with and valued by stakeholders from the onset (Marzano, 2011; City et al., 2009; Silver et al., 2007).
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The Instructional Walk: Acting

The purpose, variations of use, and outcomes of instructional walks (generic) as a tool for improving teaching and learning have expanded (Kachur, Stout & Edwards, 2010). Generally, instructional walk (generic) formats vary with respect to who acts as the observer and what format the feedback or expected improvements take. Further examination regarding the action of walking found in three forms of instructional walks (generic) will be reviewed as they align to leadership theories and legislative policies, as well as to the nature of the feedback mechanism received. Instructional walks (generic) have provided useful information about teachers’ behaviors, students’ behaviors, and overall classroom and school climate (Silver et al., 2007).

Administrator as Instructional Leader

In order for principals to be effective instructional leaders, they need to ensure quality instruction, model best practices, monitor the implementation of the curriculum, provide resources, and examine assessment data (Marzano et al., 2004; Hattie, 2008). The leadership of principals is known to be a key factor in supporting student achievement, but how that leadership is experienced, accepted, reflected on, and instructionally enacted by teachers is much less clear. School leaders engage deeply in the instructional climate of the building. As such, they develop an understanding of how teachers grow in the craft. Through principals’ presence and frequent observation, the development of teachers’ continuous improvement can be supported.

Principals are often thought of as instructional leaders (Hallinger et al., 2010). They promote and foster a culture focused on gains in student achievement. Principals’ presence is of key importance (Hattie, 2008). Agreement among practitioners in the field
note that the presence of principals results in teachers’ higher value in instruction, as well as increases in the implementation of professional development initiatives (Frase, 2001). Principals who conduct instructional walks (generic) utilize an authentic opportunity to gain a sense of the building instructionally while observing both teachers’ and students’ learning. These walks occur often and by design are non-evaluative. Formative, information gathering walks by principals are often referred to as Learning Walks (Silver et al., 2007). “They gather data regarding building needs and strengths that will aid professional development efforts” (Kachur et al., 2010, p. 6).

Formative walks consist of a style of walk called the Learning Walk (principal). A purposeful and focused walk conducted by principals is planned. A set purpose, an initiative or an agreed on “look-for,” is determined prior to the walk. Principals enters the classroom to observe for five to 10 minutes. These walks commonly provide school-wide feedback to the entire teaching group. Principals may also choose to individually provide feedback to the teacher(s) observed. By design these walks offer data for collective problem-solving and celebration resulting in continuous school improvement efforts. Kachur et al. notes that “the use of frequent, quick, and informal visits to classrooms convey to teachers the high expectations of school leaders for excellent instruction and improved student learning” (2010, p. 63).

In support of principals as lead learners in the building, a focused Learning Walk (principal) provides a sense of importance in the overall school-wide instructional focus. This sense is best supported through Heck and Hallinger’s model of Instructional Leadership. Instructional Leadership came about in the 1980’s in response to the changing dynamics of leadership in schools. The shift from principals as managers to
principals as essential instructional leaders was necessary to bring about educational gains. While not supported in the direct and measurable outcomes of empirical research, correlations between instructional leaders and the promotion of positive change processes, school effectiveness, and improvement instructional practices have been found (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Further, instructional leaders create a sense of “academic press” that fosters high expectations and standards for learning in both students and teachers (Goddard et al., 2000; Hallinger et al., 2010).

Heck and Hallinger’s model of Instructional Leadership entails three core components: managing the instructional program, defining the school’s mission, and promoting a positive learning environment (Hallinger, 2009). At the core of these dimensions exists the necessary and ongoing focus of principals on the healthy climate and culture of schools. They rely on the instructional staff to collectively help define and support instructional decisions. More specifically, principals as instructional leaders are the cornerstone in setting and maintaining the expectations throughout the building. As instructional leaders, principals are charged with protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, as well as maintaining visibility (Hallinger, 2009).

A core facet of this leadership model includes the principals’ presence as necessary to set and lead the organization. Not only must instructional leaders visit classrooms often, they must also guide and inspire teachers while providing them feedback regarding their practice. Principals’ presence as the underpinning of effective schools promotes the value of ongoing collaboration and action by leaders throughout the school environment. Presence allows principals to calibrate and communicate high expectations for student learning based on the observable evidence of quality instruction.
found throughout the buildings (Fink & Markholt, 2011). Ongoing dialogue with teachers promoting professional growth is a major dimension of effective instructional leadership (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). As found in broad research, instructional leadership effects on students’ learning were mediated by the quality of the school’s instructional environment directly cultivated by the principal (Hattie, 2008).

Numerous empirical research studies conclude that principals are the entity charged with shaping the instructional purpose of schools (Hattie, 2008; Marzano, 2011; Hallinger, 2009). Leaders indirectly promote student achievement in classrooms through the alignment of both structures and resources. Further, continued school improvement is the responsibility of instructional leaders. However, a criticism of the true instructional leadership model is one that places principals as the center of expertise, power, and authority (Hallinger, 2009). Educational standards suggest that leaders are called to promote the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Given the role of principals as instructional leaders, they must continue to know, understand, and grow the instructional workings of schools. As part of continuous improvement efforts, the Learning Walk (principal) equips schools’ instructional leaders with the format necessary to gain a sense of the instructional climate. The overarching goal of a Learning Walk (principal) is to regularly get principals in classrooms. Principals can then witness firsthand the instruction found in each and every classroom which in turn provides a vehicle to cultivate schools’ climate and culture.
The Learning Walk (principal) can also be utilized to increase teacher self-efficacy levels. Frase (2001) studied self-efficacy levels and found that increased principals’ visibility and frequent visits to classrooms were associated with the increased self-efficacy levels of staff. Teachers’ increased self-efficacy often leads to an innate desire to improve teaching practices and a desire to connect those changes to an increase in students’ achievement. Further, visibility as a leadership responsibility has been shown to positively correlate with gains in student achievement (Marzano et al., 2008). Hallinger and Murphy note that leaders who place attention on teaching and focus on achievement domains have higher overall effect sizes in student achievement (Hattie, 2008). Effect sizes on student achievement of .91 were found when principals participate in teachers’ learning and development, and effect sizes of .74 were found when principals are involved in regular classroom visits while providing formative feedback (Hattie, 2008). Cotton (2003) notes that principals’ behaviors that positively support students’ achievement are visibility and accessibility, instructional leadership, classroom observations, and feedback which are all components of the instructional leadership framework. Teachers having the authentic ongoing support of principals appears key.

Teacher motivation, self-efficacy, and confidence are enriched when principals are present and visible in the school. These behaviors can be achieved when principals regularly conduct walks (Blasé and Blasé, 2004). Learning Walks (principal) can be an effective strategy to increase principals’ instructional leadership, it also can be employed as a tool to promote teachers’ leadership and build professional learning communities. This evolution naturally extends the reach of principals as instructional leaders, a noted area of concern with Hallinger and Heck’s model. Once teachers are trained in the basic
principles of the instructional walk (generic), it can be used in a variety of ways to extend schools’ overall continuous improvement. A natural extension to principals as instructional leaders is that of the expansion to distributed or collective leadership practices. Fullan (2003) asserts that principals must develop and support the leadership of others.

**Collaborative Leadership While Walking**

Instructional walks (generic) performed by principals often evolve into collaborative walks designed as Instructional Rounds (colleague). Instructional Rounds (colleague) are an outgrowth of the formative Learning Walk (principal) as they include those beyond the principal. These rounds take the form of an instructional walk (generic) conducted by peers including curriculum coaches, department leaders, and fellow teachers. The walks can be performed by individuals or by groups of colleagues. Principals as instructional leaders create a structure whereas teachers can visit and be visited by colleagues. This process disperses the collective instructional knowledge of schools and creates a structure of distributed leadership across schools. The trend continues to shift away from instructional walks (generic) as something to do or for the teacher to a process undertaken with the teacher (Kachur et al., 2013). Little shares that “teachers learn best from teachers in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching” (Kachur et al., 2013, p. 1). The overall goal of the Instructional Round (colleague) is to engage teachers in the reflective development of teaching as a craft.

Distributing or extending the responsibility of leadership in schools is not new. The roles of department chairs and instructional coaches have been used to extend instructional leaders’ influence and visibility. In the past, these individuals carried out the
management or everyday function of the department (City, 2011). For example, counting books and assigning duties. The shift from managerial tasks to that of coaching and collaborating is the intent of an Instructional Round (colleague). Involving teachers in instructional walks (generic) to observe the delivery of instruction in other classrooms can have a significant and formative impact on the continuous improvement of schools’ instructional practices. One benefit is as a means to disperse the responsibility of principals for shaping the climate and leading the instructional charge. By sharing the instructional leadership responsibilities, principals create a sense of collective ownership. Spillane has been credited with the framework of Distributed Leadership (Spillane & Healey, 2010). In Spillane’s model, leadership responsibilities are distributed across schools casting a wider net of awareness, support, and guidance. A natural “leader-plus” structure emerges (Spillane, 2005).

Instructional Rounds (colleague), modeled after the medical idea of Grand Rounds, continue to grow in popularity. They are commonly referred to as “problems of practice” and provide a structure for a schools to develop the shared and distributed continuous improvement practice of observing, discussing, and analyzing teaching found across the entire school (Teitel, 2009; City et al., 2009). Rounds involve the purposeful pre-conversation as a staff to establish areas of concern and to develop “look-fors.” An agreed area of school instructional concern or improvement is targeted. Staff then intentionally look for this concern throughout the walk. During an Instructional Round (colleague), students’ involvement in the lesson, instructional strategies utilized by the teacher, and the climate of the classroom are observed (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, 2004).
Faculty engage in conversation after the walk reflecting on possible improvements. Teachers agree to objectively provide feedback and engage in conversation about observed concerns. Feedback and suggested improvements provided after an Instructional Round (colleague) are formatively crafted from colleague to colleague. Instructional Rounds (colleague) increase the visibility of teaching colleagues in and among classrooms. A level of trust and partnership among all members of the schools’ teaching community emerge. In addition, because colleagues are involved in the walk, the action is non-evaluative.

While principals have the primary role as instructional leaders, distributed leadership through rounds affords an expanded look at classroom instruction. The data collected represents many views of instruction, as well as a variety of evidence of students’ learning and teachers’ implementation of instruction. The outcome results in the triangulation of observational data from the perspectives of multiple onlookers. Members of the teaching staff are engaged in the entire process of the walk – planning, acting, and reflecting. Practicing principals note the use of Instructional Rounds (colleague) and follow-up conversations encourage the open dialogues about school-wide instruction by all teachers participating.

Teacher leaders are often regarded as key to implementing change and growth in buildings. It is through ongoing collaboration and conversation that teachers begin to develop a voice in the design and implementation of the instructional walk (generic) format(s). A growing research base indicates that learning is most effective when it is shared and distributed. Hord and Sommers found “when professionals share their talents and skills, they help the whole school develop a collective wisdom about learning and
teaching” (Kachur et al., 2013, p. 15). The added value of Instructional Rounds (colleague) appears to reside in the deliberate and scheduled conversations that take place before and after the classroom visits. Teachers as receiver are provided feedback, as well as an opportunity to reflect on personal teaching, the teaching of others, and ask questions regarding improvement. Instructional Rounds (colleague) have been found to be “a powerful accelerant of school and district improvement efforts. Its focus on what goes on in classrooms anchors improvement efforts in the instructional core—the complex relationships among teachers, students, and content” (Teitel, 2009, p.2). The entirety of the Instructional Round (colleague) allows teachers to gain an understanding of their current practice and then take action to improve it based on what they see, rather than someone from the outside telling them what they need (Feeney, 2014). A natural community of learners and collegial support is established through this instructional walk (generic) structure.

Instructional Rounds (colleague) foster a level of inquiry and wonder by teachers (City, 2011). The rounds provide an opportunity for teachers to put assumptions aside and be proactive in discovering the truth about student learning across the school. Additionally, Instructional Rounds (colleague) are another way for teachers to become responsible for their own professional growth resulting in gains in self-efficacy and autonomy – naturally making meaning and meaningful choices in their learning. Kachur et al. (2010) note the importance of teachers as observers rather than just being observed. Each member of an Instructional Round (colleague) either observers, is observed, or engages in both. “Rounds are about understanding what’s happening in classrooms, how we as a system produce those effects, and how we can move closer to producing the
learning we want to see” (City, 2011, p.37). The formative nature of both Learning Walks (principal) and Instructional Rounds (colleague) develop a climate and culture focused on continuous instructional improvement, trust in collective problem-solving, and focus on making formative improvements to the overall teaching craft.

**Evaluative Hierarchy Model**

Juxtaposed to the above mentioned walks is that of the summative walk, referred to as Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Summative, as defined, indicates at conclusion or in conclusion. Evaluative aligns with teachers’ appraisals. Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are performed as a duty of principals or supervisors. These walks tend to be formal with an articulated purpose as required assessments of performance. They are often paired with annual observations based on performance rubrics. Although taken from many of the components of a rubric used for formal observations, the walk-through often lacks specifically articulated “look-fors.” At inception, the fundamental goal stated for the inclusion of walks as an evaluative measure was to improve student learning through the ongoing observation of instructional practices (Ohio Department of Education, 2016; Kachur et al., 2013). Although, little outcome data associated with these walks as a form of continuous improvement exists empirically, visits to classrooms by principals to observe teachers and students in the learning process are considered an acceptable method of evaluating teacher effectiveness (McGill, 2011).

The evaluation system found in one Midwest state acknowledges the requirement of principals to conduct periodic Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), as well as a series of observations for new teachers (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). In this
same state, when teachers gain experience and have proficient levels of skill, they may be observed and evaluated less often. However, walk-throughs are mandated for all educators. Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) as regulatory appraisals of these experienced educators recognizes the importance of principals’ familiarity with teachers’ ongoing skills (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). Within both state and federal legislation, teachers’ preparedness and improvement are expected (Ohio Department of Education, 2016; US Department of Education, 2016). Former policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and current federal policies such as ESSA (Every Child Succeeds Act) call principals to ensure the effectiveness of all teachers in the classroom. School accountability legislation raises the bar on achievement expectations for all students. Closing the achievement gap among students of color, students with disabilities, and students from poverty is mandated by law (Ohio Department of Education, 2016; US Department of Education, 2016). Instructional leaders, therefore, need to actively gauge the instructional skills of and design improvement efforts specifically for the professional growth of teachers.

An inherent flaw in the system of using walk-throughs as evaluative measures is the lack of buy-in from teachers (Kachur et al., 2013). Purpose is conveyed as evaluative. Barth (2006) found that compliance as an impetus for change fails to substantiate long-term results. Trust in the purpose and process of walk-throughs are often perceived as lacking. Specifically, trust is absent when teachers do not have a say in the walk’s design. Kachur et al. (2010) found Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are too often treated as discrete activities disconnected from other improvement efforts and organizational practices. The lack of instructional purpose either based on the individual teacher’s
weakness or the buildings instructional initiatives have been said to limit the impact of these walks (Kachur et al., 2013). Teachers don’t connect the action of the evaluative walk to improvements in their craft.

In addition to trust, teachers report a lack in the transparency of Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) (City et al., 2009). It remains unclear to those receiving the walk that the purpose is not to pass judgment on teachers, but to coach them to higher levels of performance (Silver et al., 2007). When evidence from the walks is recorded in an evaluation rubric, practicing teachers often attribute the walks as a compliance mandate without regard to potential improvements in teaching. Few can identify tangible improvements in teaching and learning because of evaluative walks (Kachur et al, 2013). Coupled with little or no timely feedback, the potential improvements in teachers’ instruction are lost.

Within mandated Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), the task of feedback delivery and follow-through is left to local districts to determine resulting in a variance in practice. If feedback is given, often summative, teachers are not necessarily observed at a later time to determine if the expected improvements are actually enacted in the classroom. The process of providing feedback should ultimately guide teachers to construct their own understandings in response to their classroom context (Moss et al., 2015). Unfortunately, because of the evaluative nature of a walk-through teachers often wait to be told what to improve (Feeney, 2007). Likewise, without substantive conversations about classroom practices observed, not much transfer, reflection, or application to the teaching practice occurs. The Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor)
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often falls short of a fully enacted continuous improvement loop because it lacks components that promote ongoing and timely planning for and feedback conversations about (formative) improvements.

Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) have been debated as they effect teachers’ comfort, trust, and engagement. As described by one educator, these visits often left her perplexed because they did not provide her with the opportunity to explore possible solutions to challenges she was facing in her school, nor was she left with a clear idea about what her next steps toward improvement should be or what type of support to expect from the leader. The walk-throughs were “negative experiences with little added value” (Cudeiro & Nelsen, 2007). This multiplied over grade levels, departments, and/or buildings quite possibly diminish their effectiveness as a continuous improvement effort. This may further result in educators questioning the purpose and utility of other formats of instructional walks (generic), specifically formative Learning Walks (principal) and Instructional Rounds (colleague).

While one can assume Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) lack any benefit that is not the case. The presence of principals and the awareness of a school’s climate both have positive correlations to student achievement and teacher satisfaction (Goddard et al., 2000). A perceived benefit found when principals walk, even in summative walk-through, supports the presence or visibility of principals. However, because of their format as evaluative, principals’ presence while engaging in these particular walk formats is reported by teachers as slightly less valuable (Marzano, 2011). This suggests a concern given the value of principals’ presence and collaboration as essential components to students’ academic achievement.
Administrators and teachers working together make sense from everyone’s perspective. In the case of the infusion of a summative walk-through with formative models such as a Learning Walk (principal) or an Instructional Round (colleague), instructional leaders may blend the purposes and employ a hybrid model. This may result in a beneficial continuous improvement tool inclusive of planning, acting, and reflecting. This blending may lead to more frequent opportunities to improve schools’ instructional cultures.

**The Instructional Walk: Reflecting**

Amidst any continuous improvement cycle, feedback and reflection are essential components. If instructional walks (generic) are going to improve teaching and learning, follow-up to teachers is essential (Marzano, 2011). However, teachers continue to report infrequent feedback after the occurrence of an instructional walk (generic). Studies reveal that in reality teachers are provided very little constructive feedback after a walk is received (Kachur et al., 2010). Beyond the use of the observation in a formal evaluation, no individual or collective feedback was noted in one research study (Skretta, 2008). Skretta says “that principals should conduct walk-throughs is one matter; actually conducting the walk-through and providing teachers with the kind of feedback they need and deserve is another” (2008, p. 18). When feedback from principals is provided to teachers, even though formative Learning Walks (principal), unfortunately it is often viewed as evaluative rather than constructive. Lee (2011) further discovered that feedback strategies are likely not going to work unless teachers believe in the strategies, can talk about the strategies, and are ready to actually attempt the strategies.
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What happens after the walk is what improves teaching and learning, therefore, feedback to what is observed is necessary (Marzano, 2011). The majority of research around instructional walks (generic) addressing feedback when it is provided notes that teachers most often receive feedback from individuals other than the principal (City et al., 2009). For example, feedback offered through Instructional Rounds (colleague) is intended as formative and focused on improvements as observed by peers (Kachur et al., 2013). "Teachers want feedback, if it's constructive. They want to be successful. So talking about their practices tied to professional development they have experienced in productive, nonjudgmental ways really develops an appetite for more professional development" (Steiny, 2009, p.34).

Additionally, reflection in continuous improvement cycles promote internalizing and improving reflexively. Teachers recall the purpose of the walk, the experience of being observed, and feedback received to develop ways to improve their craft. Ongoing job-embedded professional learning vital to the continuous improvement of educators is paramount (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Further, Fisher and Frey (2014) note that instructional walks (generic) should become part of the professional development of the entire faculty. Instructional walks (generic), when fully developed within a continuous improvement cycle to include feedback from the observation coupled with teachers’ self-reflection, are an effective way to help teachers transfer and apply new professional development initiatives (City, 2011).

Conclusion

Reeves (2006) affirms that the single greatest influence on the instructional practices of teachers is the direct observation of other teachers. Barth (2006) echoes this
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claim and states that there is no more powerful way of learning and improving on the job than by observing others and having others observe us. The experience of observing has been enacted through several formats of instructional walks (generic) over the last fifty years. Instructional walks (generic) consist of a structure, purpose, observers and those observed, focused “look-fors,” feedback mechanisms, and reflection. Kachur et al. (2010) state that instructional walks (generic), when carefully planned, implemented, and evaluated, will support instructional improvement and student academic growth.

There are several studies highlighting the perceived benefits of instructional walks (generic) as an improvement strategy (Marzano, 2011; City, 2011; Hattie, 2008; Silver et al., 2007). Generally, instructional walk (generic) benefits include the increased presence of leaders, as well as the teachers’ shared knowledge of teaching strategies and initiatives. A study conducted by Frase (2001) examined walks conducted by principals and perceived levels of the overall school success. Frase found that teachers tended to have higher perceived levels of collective school success when principals conducted regular instructional walks (generic). Additionally, perceived teacher benefits include observing others teaching, collective and individual reflection on instructional practices, and targeted assistance from instructional leaders.

As a teacher you benefit from seeing firsthand what works for your peers and what does not. We are more confident and less resistant to implementing a new instructional strategy if we have personally observed successful delivery of that strategy in an unrehearsed classroom setting. (Kachur et al., 2010, p. 47)
However, the utility of instructional walks (generic) as a means to continuous improvement by teachers observed has not been regularly gathered in previous research. Visiting classrooms appears as an ordinary experience when in reality it is often misunderstood. While many educators note the previously stated benefits of walks, others share that visits from administrators appear punitive and lack in the specific and formative feedback necessary to make changes in instructional pedagogy (Kachur et al., 2010). Observations from colleagues are sparse in reality given principals’ tasks and teachers’ duties in their own classrooms. Feedback and subsequent coaching when shared is spotty (David, 2008). Further, when teachers are observed they are left to apply and utilize any guidance, both in the form of feedback or mandated improvement goals (Kachur et al., 2013), without regard to the perceived value of the instructional walk (generic).

The intense academic focus of schools involved in continuous improvement efforts such as instructional walks (generic) is valuable (Keruskin, 2005). However, an extensive review of the literature on instructional walks (generic) demonstrates that an obvious gap in the literature exists regarding the benefits articulated by principals and others engaged in walking, and the overall utility teachers as the target of the instructional walk (generic) observed construct from the experience. Several researchers have suggested that it is beneficial to visit teachers in the classroom and offer feedback (Kachur et al., 2013; Hattie, 2008; Silver et al., 2007). However, literature is lacking that supports the experience of an instructional walk (generic) as a meaningful or valued experience as perceived by teachers as targets observed. The importance of the walk from the eyes of those observed cannot be forgotten if indeed instructional walks (generic) are
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going to remain a frequently utilized continuous improvement strategy. Research specific
to teachers’ overall lived experience of an instructional walk (generic) is limited, thus
revealing the need for further study into the insights of these individuals.
Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

The Greek philosophy of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos gives the sequence for effective communication. Ethos is your personal creditability. Pathos is the empathic side. Logos is the reasoning side. Most people go straight to the logical side without first establishing their character and building the relationship. (Gray, 2016)

As we consider the sequence advocated by Greek philosophy, we must first seek to understand subjective experience before looking for the logic of an event. Phenomenological methodology is a path toward seeking to understand personal ethos and pathos. The subjective experience of teachers participating in a logical continuous improvement technique, the instructional walk (generic), may provide utility for those observed beyond just a factual or logical account. A phenomenological study may contribute to our understanding of the subjective experience of those observed teachers.

This study aims to explore the experiences of high school teachers with instructional walks (generic), including their reflective perceptions, as well as the utility they associate with this form of continuous improvement as a means of enhancing their teaching craft. Further, this study explores the value high school teachers place on the instructional walk (generic) process during planning, while being observed, and in reflection afterwards. Knowing teachers’ experience and perceptions of, and the utility they assign to instructional walks (generic) may contribute to better understanding if teachers find the tool meaningful as a continuous improvement strategy. Additionally, because principals set instructional expectations across the school based on conversations
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with and observations of teachers, knowledge of how and if those observed make
meaning and find value from this improvement strategy is important (Hallinger, 2009).

To gain an understanding of the utility teachers place on the instructional walk
(generic) as an experience, a qualitative design is employed. According to Creswell
(2013), qualitative research takes place in the natural setting and requires researchers to
make interpretations of the data. Specifically, the method of phenomenology is utilized as
it is best suited to investigate the lived experience (van Manen, 2014). “A phenomenon is
an event or a lived through experience as it shows itself or as it gives itself when it makes
an appearance in our awareness” (van Manen, 2014, p.65). In social science fields,
phenomenology has been expanded to describe lived experiences through the lens of
practice (van Manen, 2014). That practice is often found in educational realms as a
continuous improvement cycle offering ongoing support and meaning to given
techniques, policies, and mandates. The phenomenon of experience during an
instructional walk (generic) brings forth meaning from the everyday experience of
teaching.

“Phenomenologists have suggested that the beginning must be sought, not in
some fancy abstract theory, but in the primordially of lived experience” (van Manen,
2014, p.109). This suggestion forms the essential task of understanding desired in this
research. Further, “having an interest in knowing more about one’s practice, and indeed
in improving one’s practice, leads to asking researchable questions, some of which are
best approached through qualitative research design” (Merriam, 2009, p.1). Current
theories, practices, and assumptions about instructional walks (generic) as an
instructional improvement strategy may have minimal relevance if utility by the observed
teachers is not part of their experience among the phenomenon. Phenomenological reflection is not self-analysis but rather a retrospection allowing the individual the opportunity to recall the event and the overall meaning associated with it (van Manen, 2014). This chapter outlines the parameters of the study including: research questions, the use of phenomenology as a method, interview techniques to be employed, the selection of participants and settings, data collection, and data analysis.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions serve to guide this comparative phenomenological study of instructional walks (generic): What is the sense of lived experience reported by high school teachers who have been recipients of instructional walks (generic) during the past two academic school years?

1) What is the overall experience high school teachers as recipients associate with instructional walks (generic) at each stage of the continuous improvement cycle (planning, acting, and reflecting) and is that experience differentiated by the type of walk: (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor)?

   1a. Planning: What is the experience of high school teachers prior to receiving an instructional walk (generic) and is that anticipatory experience differentiated by the type of walk?

   1b. Acting: What is the experience of high school teachers while being observed during an instructional walk (generic) and is that observational experience differentiated by type of walk?
1c. Reflecting: What is the experience of high school teachers following the completion of an instructional walk (generic) including follow-up feedback and self-reflection, and is that outcome experience differentiated by type of walk?

2.) What overall utility do high school teachers as recipients associate with instructional walks (generic) and is that utility differentiated by the type of walk:

(a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor)?

2a. Is the utility high school teachers report connected to the understood purpose(s) of the differentiated walks?

2b. Is the utility high school teachers report connected to the received feedback by those observing?

2c. Is the utility high school teachers associate with instructional walks (generic) connected to their engagement in the continuous improvement of their teaching craft?

**Research Design**

This in-depth qualitative study uses phenomenology as a method to examine the subjective experience and utility constructed by high school educators observed during an instructional walk (generic). One rationale for conducting this research is that various formats of instructional walks (generic) are often used as a method for guiding and improving teachers’ craft. The principal, or other colleague, observes the teacher and provides feedback aimed at instructional improvement. This study is designed to look at the recalled experiences of high school educators observed during such walks, focusing
on the value and utility they derive from the experience as a method of continuous improvement. Data collection and analysis is structured to focus discretely on three phases of the experience: planning (preparation), acting (observation), and reflecting (retrospection). Further, this research study is designed to fill a void in the literature regarding the extent to which teacher’s experiences vary with respect to three differentiated forms of instructional walks (generic): Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor).

This research includes the collection of insights and reflections from high school teachers who have experienced instructional walks (generic) as targets during the last two academic school years. Specific attention throughout this exploratory study is given to the individual’s recall of the event and the overall utility as a continuous improvement strategy associated with the experience. The challenge in the analysis of a phenomenology study is to capture in writing an understanding of participants’ lived experience. “In a phenomenological sense, the research produces knowledge in the form of writings that not only describe and analyze phenomena of the lifeworld, but also evoke immediate understandings that otherwise lie beyond their reach” (van Manen, 2014, p. 367). Analysis highlights distinctions and similarities among teachers’ experiences based on three different types of instructional walks (generic). In addition to capturing unique participant narrative, when evident through coding of responses, general commonalities among the participants are categorized into themes.

**Study Participants**

The particular phenomenon to be studied dictates the most appropriate methods used including the type of participant (Groenewald, 2004). This study involves a
purposive, stratified sample of public high school teachers from four public high school sites located in Southwest Ohio. To be included in the study a school had to employ a minimum of at least four eligible teachers who could be contacted to participate. The participants constitute a sample of the teaching population certified as either content experts or process specialists, selected from the participating sites, who met all study criteria. Participants were deemed eligible based first on the school’s overall participation in Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor).

Study participants include both content experts (CE) and process specialists (PS) currently employed in one of the public high schools in the targeted Southwestern Ohio location. The sample includes only those teachers certified as either content experts or process specialists. Content experts include teachers certified in the traditional taught subjects of English, mathematics, history, and science. Process specialists are inclusive of those charged with teaching and intervening to support the learning needs of diverse students. Intervention specialists such as special educators, reading teachers, and gifted educators represent process specialists. Distinctions made among these teaching roles were expected to potentially elicit differences in the lived experiences and recalled utility of the walk.

Participants were purposively selected from among those teachers meeting the above-stated conditions, based on specific predetermined criteria to ensure prior experience with the central phenomenon, e.g. instructional walks (generic). To be eligible for selection, teachers meeting the stated criteria must have additionally been subject to one or more instructional walk (generic) format during the last two academic school years. Participants in either Learning Walks (principal) and/or Instructional Rounds
(colleague) were eligible for inclusion in the sample. Because Evaluative Walk-throughs
are mandated annually in the state where the study was conducted, all participants would
have also taken part in that format of instructional walk (generic) as well. Lists of
teachers meeting study criteria were solicited from each of the high schools. Teachers
meeting study criteria were invited to participate based on a systematic selection key
which randomly narrowed the schools’ pool of eligible participants or, in the case of one
school, by distributing the request for participation to the entire pool. These procedures
were enacted to guard against bias in the selection process. Interviews were scheduled
and conducted until either the list of eligible instructors was exhausted, or the target
number representing no more than four eligible content experts or four eligible process
specialists at each location had been reached.

The principal of each participating high school was interviewed during the
selection of study sites to determine the goodness of fit in the study context as it relates to
the use of instructional walks (generic) as a continuous improvement strategy. These
principals were not the primary study participants, but their input helped inform the
interviews of teachers selected as participants from their schools. The purpose of
interviewing principals prior to contacting teacher participants was to elicit background
information about the demographics of the school, current instructional initiatives, and
the general parameters of instructional walks (generic) to inform subsequent interviews.

Four high schools volunteered and were found eligible for inclusion in the study.
Additionally, ten regional high schools were sought for inclusion in the study, however,
they were found ineligible because they did not conduct at least two formats of
instructional walks (generic) (five schools), did not meet the required number of pool
participants (one school), or did not respond to requests for inclusion (four schools). The high schools who participated represented rural, suburban and suburban/urban communities. Of those participating high schools, two were small in size having fewer than 1000 students, and two were large in size having over 1000 students. All four of the schools participate in Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Three report also participating in Learning Walks (principal) of varying formats including a range of administrative observers, and three report also participating in Instructional Rounds (colleague). Instructional Rounds (colleague) were reported to be delivered non-evaluatively and by colleagues, these walks varied greatly in implementation. This variation is described in the following summary of each of the study sites.

High School A is considered a small rural school having a student body fewer than 1000 students. The principal has been in the position for less than five years. As reported by the principal, the school and district have made a number of significant improvements and have reported growth academically. During the principal interview two instructional walk (generic) formats were discussed, both as forms of administrative walks. Participants from this school concurred and reported receiving both Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and Learning Walks (principal) in the past two years. Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are reported to be conducted by the principal and assistant principal. Learning Walks were reported as occurring frequently and conducted by administrators from across the entire district including the principal, assistant principal, central office staff, and other schools’ principals. Three content experts from High School A volunteered for participation, and one process specialist volunteered to participate.
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High School B is considered a small suburban school having a student body fewer than 1000 students. The school is considered affluent, high-performing, and receives numerous state and national accolades. The principal has been at the helm for less than five years, however, acted in the role of assistant principal in past years. During the principal interview all three instructional walk (generic) formats were reported. During teacher interviews, participants reported receiving both Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and Learning Walks (principal) in the past two years. Instructional Rounds were thought to be beginning and optional for department chairs to conduct, however, no participants reported receiving Instructional Rounds (colleague). Three content experts from High School B volunteered for participation, no eligible process specialists volunteered to participate and the pool was exhausted in an attempt to elicit process specialist role representation.

High School C is considered a large suburban/urban school having a student body greater than 1000 students. The school is described as diverse having a community represented of high, middle, and low socio-economic status. The school is geographically located near industrial and business areas. The principal has been in the position for less than five years. During the principal interview two instructional walk (generic) formats were reported. Participants also reported receiving these forms of walks, Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and Instructional Rounds (colleague), in the past two years. The principal led walks are reported to be conducted by the principal and/or the assistant principals. Instructional Rounds (colleagues) were conducted by instructional coaches from outside of the building. Two content experts from High School C volunteered for participation, and two process specialists volunteered to participate.
High School D is considered a large suburban school having a student body greater than 1000 students. The school is described as diverse having a community represented of high, middle, and low socio-economic status. The school is geographically located near both suburban and rural areas. The principal has been in the position for less than five years. During the principal interview all three instructional walk (generic) formats were reported. Participants reported receiving all three forms of walks: Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), Learning Walks (principal), and Instructional Rounds (colleague) in the past two years. Both principal led walks are reported to be conducted by the principal and/or the assistant principals. Instructional Rounds (colleagues) were conducted by department chairs. Three content experts from High School D volunteered for participation, and four process specialists volunteered to participate. After meeting the site’ sample pool numbers, two additional process specialists volunteered but were not interviewed to allow for equitable representation across the four sites.

Participant informed consent was obtained both at the school level (see Appendix A), as well as the individual participant level (see Appendix D). Institutional consent included permission to recruit teachers employed at the school who meet study criteria to participate in study related activities during work hours, and access to a private conference or classroom located at a distance from any administrative offices to conduct interviews with study participants. Confidentiality of both the institutions and the individual participants was stressed throughout the research study. While general school demographics were collected to aid in the analysis of collected data, institute anonymity
was preserved through the use of alphabetical identifiers. The use of coding and labeling of both participants and institutions protects the confidentiality of those involved.

Study participants were classified as experiencing one or more walk format(s): Learning Walk (Principal), Instructional Round (colleague), and/or Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor). For the purpose of this study, participants were only identified by certification classification (CE or PS) and walk format (LW, IR, and/or EW). This ensured the confidentiality of data records. Each participant was also assigned a number. The number merely denoted an interview total and aided in data analysis.

Schools and principals were noted designated by a lettering system as well to ensure institutional and administrative confidentiality. However, correlation between teacher and principal was not considered as an outcome in this exploratory study.

Phenomenology reflects on data collected from individual participants to discover what is exemplary and singular about a phenomenon or event (van Manen, 2014, p. 258). The study’s sample of teachers permitted the experience of instructional walks (generic) to be seen across multiple school settings, regardless of the relationship between a participant and the principal and/or other observer.

**Instrumentation and Data Sources**

The instrumentation and data sources in this study took the form of individual, semi-structured interviews of high school teachers meeting study criteria. Initial in-person structured interviews were conducted with the schools’ principals to ensure appropriateness of the study sites, as well as availability of a population meeting the study criteria. Upon determination that the site and population were appropriate contexts for the research, each site’s stratified sample was generated. Interviews were scheduled
with willing participants constituting a purposive sample of up to four eligible content experts and four eligible process specialists from each site. To provide context for interpreting the experience recalled by those interviewed, institutional artifacts in the form of feedback checklists were reviewed.

A phenomenological question explores experience in moments of reflective, predicative, or experience as lived through (van Manen, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the lived experience models found in phenomenology. As a qualitative methodology, phenomenology seeks to delve deeper to explore the lived experiences more concretely, therefore it was imperative that rapport and trust were established between the interviewer and participants. A story or narrative approach within the semi-structured interview protocol was employed to promote the open reflection from the observed teachers’ experiences. To fully reflect on the lived-through experience, questioning and data collection focused on the experience and reflective insight of instructional walks (generic) holistically as an event(s).

**Data Collection**

The way to knowledge requires a “genuine openness in one’s conversational relation with the phenomenon” further resulting in a sense of overall wonder (van Manen, 2014, p. 224). Direct descriptions of an experience are core to a phenomenological method of inquiry. Therefore, participants were encouraged to reflect on the experience of an instructional walk (generic) holistically retelling and relating those experiences and sensory recollections orally. The aim of this study was to get at the heart or center of the individuals’ experiences as recalled during an instructional walk (generic).
A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized to gain a sense of the observed teachers’ experiences. The interview was inclusive of guiding questions that encompassed each research question (see Appendix E). Since all participants had experienced at least two forms of instructional walks (generic), the interview protocol was structured to capture both commonalities and distinctions in participants’ experience of each. In most cases, the teachers interviewed recalled events around one instructional walk (generic) format and then another. Laverty (2003) cautions that specific questions may open and guide the interview, however, the follow-up discussion is generally led by the participant not the interviewer. Therefore, specific questions were referenced during the teachers’ interview process as anchor points and probes to ensure each participant had the opportunity to describe their lived experience as it relates to instructional walks (generic) holistically while also reflecting on the understood purpose, utility gleaned, and continuous improvement aspects of the phenomenon. The participants were then able to present themselves and the experience as the entirety unfolds. Interpretation requires researchers to “read between the lines” to gain an awareness and sense of the experience, probing when necessary, throughout the interview (van Manen, 2014).

Phenomenology further suggests a reflection, as well as the emergence of such an account inclusive of a variety of modalities and senses among the experience. This study specifically seeks to explore the non-cognitive behaviors of those interviewed to gain a sense of the utility of the entire instructional walk (generic) process including the anticipation before, the act of being observed, receipt of feedback, as well as self-reflection. “In this questioning there exists possibilities and potentialities for experiencing
openings, understandings, insights-producing cognitive and non-cognitive or pathetic perceptions of existentialities, giving us glances of the meaning of phenomena and events in their singularity” (van Manen, 2014, p. 29).

During the interview, participants were guided to reflect on the experience rather than on any external review or a particular individual observing. Phenomenology is the act of stepping back to let the phenomenon show itself as rich in depth of human experience (van Manen, 2014). Given the complexity of the phenomenon of instructional walks (generic), eligible participants were provided a summary of the general scope and focus of the interview in advance, but not specific interview questions. The purpose for doing so was to minimize the desire for participants to provide opinions about or judgments of walks, policies, or observers, and rather direct the focus of the interview toward reflective insights on participants’ subjective lived experience. As necessary throughout the interview, participants were redirected to this overarching, phenomenological focus; data was not collected that consisted of specific theoretical views, opinions, or explanations beyond the individual’s own personal experiences. Such focus would have been outside of the study parameters.

Understanding and insight are at the forefront of the phenomenology methodology. The use of phenomenology as a method also requires the researcher to be reflective, sensitive to language, and consistently open to the experience as shared by those interviewed (Laverty, 2003). Therefore, bracketing was employed during interviews so as to not lead the participants to judgments but rather generate reflection. Bracketing as a process means putting in brackets, or set-asides, the various assumptions that might stand in the way of opening up access to the participants sharing of the lived
experience (van Manen, 2014). During data analysis, bracketing was also employed as it further leads to a researcher’s ability to reduce information to essences rather than determinations based on preconceptions, existing theories, or practices. “It is helpful to keep in mind the underlying idea, and purpose of the reduction: to gain access… to the world of prereflective experience as lived in order to mine its meanings” (van Manen, 2014, p. 221).

**Data Analysis**

The qualitative approach to data analysis in this phenomenological study focuses on the lived experiences of teachers from high schools participating in the three instructional walk (generic) formats. Anecdotes, narratives, stories, and other recalled accounts that bring participants’ experience vividly into presence are highlighted in analysis. Within data analysis, both the singularity of the individuals’ accounts, as well as the interpretation of generalities are employed.

Phenomenological research characteristically starts with the concrete descriptions of the lived situations, often first-person accounts, set down in everyday language and avoiding abstract intellectual generalizations. The researcher proceeded by reflectively analyzing these descriptions, perhaps, ideographically at first, then by offering a synthesized account, for example, identifying themes about the essence of the phenomenon. (Friesen et al., 2012, p. 21)

Merriam (2009) cautions that data analysis is most difficult in qualitative research. Given the vast difference anticipated in the accounts of the participants’ experiences, it was essential to seek the individual, as well as the shared reflections. Idiographic analysis was present through the individual narratives while also looking at
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define the phenomenon as a whole eidetically (Friesen et al., 2012). Multiple levels of data analysis occurred to preserve the individual account and to determine if generalizations among the recollections appear. Each interview was electronically recorded and field notes were taken. These interviews were transcribed, then interview responses were coded. Both coding and integration of responses occurred by all three walk formats, as well as by the stage of continuous improvement cycle: planning, acting, and reflecting. Walk formats were also compared including similarities and differences recalled across and among participants. After reviewing each interview, general categories and themes were identified and labeled as they appeared.

Descriptive data was collected to ascertain the perceptions and experiences of the teachers. The analysis focused first on capturing the experiences of participants through open coding while being careful to honor the individual nature of participants’ experiences. Using selective coding to derive general themes, the next phase of analysis looked for commonalities among experiences. Selective coding is the development of themes to demonstrate recurring patterns in the data (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, individual accounts in the form of anecdotes and narratives were utilized to depict the possible overall meaning conveyed by those interviewed among and between the themes. Key words and phrases were quoted within analysis in order to allow the voices of the participants to be heard. School and teacher demographics were used at the point of analysis to depict the general representation among categories and themes. As appropriate, member checking was employed to ensure accuracy in capturing participants’ experiences.
At the essence of this study sits the reflective nature of a lived experience in its entirety not as a generalized listing of facts or statements. The everydayness of life experiences is much less simple than we tend to think. The experience of the instructional walk (generic) affords opportunities to reflect on and analyze the complexity of the subjective experience of those interviewed. From a phenomenological point of view, no experience is ever the same. So we must seek to understand both the singularity of individual experience and the plurality within the group of educational practitioners interviewed. “Phenomenology does not only describe what something is, it also explores what this phenomenon can mean by offering possible interpretations” (van Manen, 2014, p. 390). Therefore, the goal of this study was to focus on understanding the reflection and description of the human experience through those interpretations.

While essential to honor the singularity of the lived experience, the ability to explore plausible interpretations is of great value in discovering the utility attributed to instructional walks (generic) as a continuous improvement strategy. Guided by the research questions, insights were derived from the interview data that capture the essence of participants’ individual and collective experiences with the central phenomena. While not attempting to provide a universal or comprehensive answer to the research questions, such insights may form the basis for more systematic, controlled empirical studies of the practice and utility of alternative forms of instructional walks (generic) as a tool for continuous instructional improvement. This study took into account the perspectives of the teachers targeted by these techniques.
Assumptions and Researcher Bias

The principal investigator in this study is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). Therefore, steps were taken to deliberately set aside known theories, claims, and personal views and experiences (Friesen et al., 2012). One essential strategy employed throughout this study is bracketing of learned behavior or presumptions to more fully gather the reflections of the individual participants and their lived experience of the central phenomenon. Bracketing involves the process where one simply refrains from presupposition based on bias or acknowledged beliefs (Chan, et al., 2013).

Conversely, assumptions of openness and flexibility must be intentionally employed while conducting phenomenology resulting in the value of interpretations among and across the collective experience. The understanding of wonder and its relation to the experience must be embraced within data collection and analysis. Rather than look for answers, the data gathered aims to explore and illustrate the insights of teachers observed. “Pedagogical encounters are always personal, particular, concrete, tentative, and open toward an uncertain future” (van Manen, 2014, p. 208). The research aims to explore and recognize reflectively what the experience may be like for those recounting the experience itself. Phenomenological reflection only begins in earnest when it tries to grasp reflectively the lived meanings of the prereflective experience – this is an essential and subjective component of this research.

In an effort to minimize bias, data were gathered from more than one site and from teachers who have a variety of experience with instructional walk (generic) formats and teaching expertise. Additionally, results were reviewed by the study’s co-investigator.
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for potential signs of bias or oversight in extracting themes and interpreting research questions. Because the administrative personnel varied across the sites, any direct linear reflection of the individuals’ perceived qualities of a leader or peer observer within the instructional walks (generic) process was minimized. These steps were taken to limit the systematic effects of any particular leadership theories and policy models due to the frame of reference adopted by administers or colleagues conducting the walk or researcher bias. Focus on the teachers’ subjective experiences and their reflective recall was maintained throughout the study.

Summary

Phenomenology inquiry can play a contributing role to other studies that are driven by different methodological means and expectations (van Manen, 2014). This methodology uses exploration, interpretation, and reflective principles rather than a set of absolute rules to guide the research process. Phenomenology is thought of as an open form of research – bringing to light the things themselves. This is of great value when determining the utility associated with an experience so closely aligned to teachers’ continuous improvement. Van Manen (2014) further clarifies that phenomenology speaks so that meaning is made from experience. That meaning suggests a demand on the reader to interpret and explore the potential of the phenomenon.

Ultimately, the goal of phenomenological inquiry is to construct a qualitative text that makes the experience recognizable to the reader(s). In this recognition lies the possibility of becoming more pedagogically sensitive to the experience of individuals engaged in ongoing continuous improvement efforts. This research design allows the researcher to hear first-hand the reflective experience of an instructional walk (generic)
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from the perspective of high school teachers as the target of those walks. Further, it fosters the kind of thoughtful conditions necessary for appreciating the degree of utility teachers attribute to instructional walks (generic) as a chosen instructional improvement strategy. As Findlay notes, the descriptive nature of phenomenology is the intentional relationship between persons and situations (Friesen et al., 2012). As an outcome, this study aims to provide insight into the differential experiences and utility teachers give different forms of instructional walks (generic) as a continuous improvement activity.
Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS

*Stories are the single most powerful weapon in a leader’s arsenal.* —Howard Gardner

**Introduction**

A cornerstone of educational practice is the assumption that teachers are the most important factor impacting student achievement (Marzano, 2007). Educational research has identified effective teacher instruction to be one factor that contributes to greater student learning (Hattie, 2008). Understanding the continuous improvement mechanisms that are effective in improving teachers’ craft is therefore essential to increasing educational quality. The processes principals employ, as instructional school leaders, to continually hire, induct, calibrate, and retain high quality teaching staff are vitally important in ensuring quality instruction across every classroom (Colvin & Johnson, 2007). One of these processes, the instructional walk (generic), is the subject of this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine high school teachers’ perceptions and lived experiences related to instructional walks (generic) including: Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). The aim is to capture holistically the reflective experience and interpretation of teachers who are the target and intended beneficiaries of instructional walks (general). While the principles underlying each format of these instructional walks (generic) vary, those principles are based on the assumption that when teachers improve their craft they effectively increase student learning.

This study constitutes a comparative phenomenology focused on high school teachers’ experience of different types of instructional walks (generic), revealing the consciousness of educators as the targets of these continuous improvement processes.
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Specifically, this research seeks to determine if the experience high school teachers associate with instructional walks (generic) differ based on: (a) the articulated purpose of the walk (whether formative or summative), and (b) who conducts the walk (supervising principals or teaching colleagues). Of particular interest is assessing the perceived utility of the instructional walk (generic) system, from the perspective the observed teachers, as part of the continuous improvement efforts aimed at enhancing their professional teaching practice.

The research questions guiding this study center on the sense of lived experience reported by high school teachers who have been the targets of instructional walks (generic) during the past two academic school years. More specifically, the study seeks to investigate the overall experience high school teachers, as targets, associate with instructional walks (generic) at each stage of the continuous improvement cycle (planning, acting, and reflecting) and if that experience is differentiated by the type of walk: (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). The study also explores the utility these teachers attribute to the instructional walks (generic) differentiated by the purpose of the walk and the observer conducting it. Study participants were asked to reflect on their holistic experience across differing instructional walk (generic) formats and the perceived impact of each on their individual continuous improvement as teachers.

Summary of Participants

The results off this phenomenological study are comprised of data collected during semi-structured interviews with 18 high school educators. The semi-structured interviews promoted a conversation between each participant and the principal
investigator. Teachers from four Southwest Ohio high schools were selected to participate in individual face-to-face interviews lasting approximately one hour each. All participating teachers had been the target of at least two of the three formats of instructional walks (generic) during the past two years: Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). A total of 18 interviews were conducted with 11 content experts and seven process specialists across the four high schools.

The participating high schools represented both small (under 1000 students) and large (over 1000 students) schools, as well as rural (one), suburban (two), and urban/suburban (one) schools. The years of experience of the teachers interviewed, both in their current high school and in total, ranged from two to over thirty years of service, whereas the principal tenure at each school was less than five years. Only those high schools and participants who fully met study criteria were included in the data collected.

Though not themselves participants in the study, prior to interviewing teachers, principals from the four participating high schools were interviewed to determine site appropriateness. A majority of the principal interview questions centered on the description of the general school demographics and current school initiatives. Additional questions were asked that allowed the principals to describe the different instructional walk (generic) formats that were present in their respective schools, including the walks’ purpose, structure, and feedback mechanisms. All schools reported utilizing an Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) format, as required by State law. Three school
 principals also reported using a Learning Walk (principal) format and three school principals reported employing walks by colleagues (Instructional Rounds). However, only participants from two schools reported receiving colleague walks.

The three instructional walk (generic) formats present across the four high schools were first described by each principal and then individually by participants who recalled experiencing that format of walk(s) within the previous two years. Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) varied the least across principal description. These walks were reported to occur as part of a teacher’s summative annual evaluation, and to last between five and fifteen minutes. Feedback was provided as an individual email or delivered during evaluation meetings. Principals reported that a specific number of this type of walk was required to be performed for each teacher based on where the individual teacher fell in the evaluation cycle. All teacher participants recalled this walk format.

Learning Walks (principal) were reported with greater variance. These walks were reported to last five to ten minutes in duration and be conducted as formative visits. At two schools, only principals and assistant principals conduct Learning Walks (principal). At the other school, a variety of administrators perform Learning Walks (principal). It was reported that data collected from this school’s Learning Walks (principals) are shared individually, as well as in aggregate. The other two schools report sharing data collection informally and only in aggregate. Two of the schools reported an expected number of Learning Walks (principal) to be completed annually, whereas the other principal reported walks occurring as time permits. Learning Walks (principal) were reported to occur more frequently than Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and
serve to increase the principal’s presence throughout the school. An additional stated purpose of the Learning Walk (principal) was to facilitate a principal’s observation of both targeted teaching behaviors and student learning behaviors.

Colleague walks were reported with the most variance by principals, as well as by individual teachers. Three principals reported Instructional Rounds (colleague), however, none reported walks that were reciprocated among teaching colleagues or conducted by groups of individuals which are characteristics associated with Instructional Rounds (colleagues) in some schools. The principals did share that instructional coaches (one school) and department chairs (two schools) conduct instructional walks (generic) periodically, but acknowledged time constraints and the infrequency of this format of instructional walk (generic). One school indicated the walks were beginning to be implemented in their schools, therefore, occurring infrequently. In fact, no participants from that school reported receiving this type of walk, nevertheless, one participant mentioned receiving such a walk in years past and mentioned they were going to begin again. All principals agreed that these walks were non-evaluative and provided by colleagues. Principals communicated the purpose of this instructional walk (generic) as a way to coach and support the individual teacher visited. Colleague walks’ alignment to school and district initiatives was mentioned. Feedback varied and was not expected to be provided when colleagues were the reported observer.

The collection of insights and reflections from the high school teachers during their interviews was informed by the information first gleaned from each building’s principal. Descriptions from the high school teachers who had participated in instructional walks (generic) during the last two academic school years resulted in an
DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

assortment of reflective experiences. The sample represented the diverse perceptions of high school educators experiencing varied forms of instructional walks (generic). For purposes of the study, and to protect the confidentiality of those who participated, identifiers were assigned to the participants. Each participant was assigned an identifier consisting of the participant type and corresponding interview number by role. A summary of the 18 high school teacher participants’ profiles is provided in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant Type</th>
<th>Participant Experience (ranges in school/overall in education)</th>
<th>PLW</th>
<th>CIR</th>
<th>EWT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 CET1</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>16-20 yrs/ 21-25 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CET2</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>16-20 yrs/ 21-25 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 CET3</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>16-20 yrs/ 21-25 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CET4</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>26+ yrs/ 26+yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 CET5</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>11-15 yrs/ 20-24 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 CET6</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>6-10 yrs/ 6-10 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CET7</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>1-5 yrs/ 6-10 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 CET8</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>1-5 yrs/ 11-15 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 CET9</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>11-15 yrs/ 16-20 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 CET10</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>16-20 yrs/ 16-20 yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 CET11</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>11-15 yrs/16-20 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 PST1</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>11-15 yrs/ 21-25 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 PST2</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>1-5 yrs/ 1-5 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 PST3</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>1-5 yrs/1-5 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 PST4</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>1-5 yrs/ 11-15 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 PST5</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>6-10 yrs/ 6-10 yrs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 PST6</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>16-20 yrs/ 21-25 yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 PST7</td>
<td>Process Specialist</td>
<td>11-15 yrs/ 11-15 yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Breakdown of Teacher Participants by Types of Walks Experienced in the Past 2 Years
All eighteen teacher participants reported experiencing Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). All of the schools selected for participation in this study reported using a modified feedback or suggestion form for the Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) which aligned with the State’s formal evaluation rubric. Teachers interviewed unanimously reported having seen the feedback checklists prior to having experienced a walk. One school had vetted its Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) feedback checklist with the collective bargaining unit.

Learning Walks (principal) were experienced by participants in three schools representing 14 teachers (nine content experts and five process specialists). Two of the three schools participating in Learning Walks (principal) used a district-wide form when conducting walks. However, only one of the schools shared the Learning Walk (principal) data individually with the teachers observed as well as collectively, the others reported only sharing the aggregate data in a public forum such as a faculty meeting. Most of the teachers reported they were unsure of the use of the data collected.

Instructional Rounds (colleague) were experienced by 11 participants in two schools (five content experts and six process specialists). During Instructional Rounds (colleague) written feedback was provided by one school. In the case of the other school, feedback was not provided to the individual or in a written format but was often shared as a public comment during department meetings.

Narrative Overview

Creswell (2013) states that qualitative research involves inquiring into the meaning individuals ascribe to a social experience. A qualitative research model was used for this study to examine the experience of instructional walks (generic) from the
DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

perspective of the individual targets. A phenomenological method was used to inquire into the reflective perceptions of high school teachers’ experience among and across instructional walks (generic). The collection of data resulted from semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring individuals’ personal narratives and experiences while participating as the targets of instructional walks (generic).

The rational for the inclusion of a variety of instructional walks (generic) that vary across observer role and purpose was employed to inquire into the walk as a documented strategy school leaders use to support the continuous improvement of teachers’ craft. In the continuous improvement cycle, planning, acting, and reflecting occur (Park et al., 2013). The cycle of an instructional walk (generic) includes planning or preparing for the walk, acting or engaging as a recipient of the walk, as well as reflecting on the feedback gained after the walk concludes. Therefore, the process of an instructional walk (generic) includes those same continuous improvement components. Teachers experiencing an instructional walk (generic) cycle engage in these three stages at varying depth during the experience: what occurs before the walk (planning), what occurs during the walk (acting), and what occurs after the walk (reflecting). The overall experience of an instructional walk (generic) lends itself to be described using these continuous improvement components and to be further investigated in an effort to understand the utility teachers take from the experience when improving their teaching craft. However, prior to looking at each stage of the instructional walk (generic) the specific themes found across the entirety of the walks will be explored.
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Themes

Three overarching themes emerged from a systemic review of the data collected. Anticipation and apprehension throughout the instructional walk (generic) cycle appears evident in a majority of the individuals interviewed. Anticipation is recalled as cognitive components of the instructional walk (generic), whereas apprehension is recalled emotionally. For example, cognitive memories of walks are evoked when teachers recall specific instructional behaviors or classroom dynamics that occur during the walk while the apprehension expressed is more often depicted in emotional phrases. The role of the instructor observed resulted in slight distinctions between content experts’ and process specialists’ holistic perceptions of instructional walks (generic). Teachers reported being equally concerned about perceptions of control afforded recipients throughout the entirety of the instructional walk (generic) process. Additionally, an overall lack of utility of the instructional walk (generic) was recalled by these teachers as it relates to a perceived change resulting in the continuous improvement of one’s teaching.

Anticipation and Apprehension. Data collected during the interviews reveal that the overall experience of an instructional walk (generic) by high school teachers included varying feelings of anticipation and apprehension at every level of the cycle: planning, acting, and reflecting. Anticipation and apprehension emerge collectively and jointly impact the perceptions of the teachers. Within this overarching theme, a variety of sub-themes emerged as presented in Table 3 and discussed in the following narrative.
DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Walk Format</th>
<th>Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor)</th>
<th>Learning Walk (principal)</th>
<th>Instructional Round (colleague)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Summative</td>
<td>• Perceived as summative</td>
<td>• Unsure of the use of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unsure of the use of data</td>
<td>• Unsure of the use of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal written “Me” feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Walk Stage</th>
<th>(Planning) Before</th>
<th>Acting (During)</th>
<th>Reflecting (After)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feelings of “being on”</td>
<td>• Student behaviors and classroom dynamics</td>
<td>• Feedback received as a sense of approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Worry about observer role and walk’s purpose</td>
<td>• A sense of conformity (e.g., “Playing the Game”)</td>
<td>• Formality in the receipt of principal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationship to the observer results in a sense of formality</td>
<td>• Employment of a mental checklist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Formality in reactions to visitors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Elements of Anticipation & Apprehension with Appearance in Subthemes

In anticipation of the instructional walk (generic), teachers reported a sense of apprehension as described as a feeling of always “being on.” Generally, in anticipation of the instructional walk (generic), the teachers reported varying levels of worry. This worry appears dependent on both the individual who conducts the walk, as well as the understood purpose of the instructional walk (generic). However, a greater sense of comfort was reported when the individual walking was known to the teacher, the purpose was non-evaluative, and/or there was a sense of observer trust or understanding felt by the recipient which result in a reduction of feelings of anticipation. These feelings are evident across all three formats of instructional walks (generic): Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor).

The role of the instructor him/herself appeared to differ slightly in the overall reflective perceptions of instructional walks (generic). Content experts tended to be
neutral and consistent in their view of instructional walk (generic) formats by both
principals and colleagues noting a general feeling of “being on.” Conversely, process
specialists all noted feelings of greater apprehension regarding an observer’s
understanding of a specialists’ classroom and/or students being observed (classroom
dynamics). There was a feeling or sense of greater comfort reported by process specialists
when colleagues observed, followed by a few principals for whom the process specialist
“had a relationship.” Several process specialists indicated concern and anticipation with
instructional walks (generic) by observers with little knowledge of “their students” and
instructor roles. However, these specialists commented on their desire to invite principals
to visit the classroom more often than content experts.

A sense of apprehension continued during the act of walking. As the individual
walking enters the classroom, teachers report varying levels of anticipation mainly
attributed to the relationship with, the role of, as well as the observer’s perceived
understanding of the classroom dynamics. In addition to the anticipation of being
observed, the teachers interviewed reported a sense of apprehension resulting in worry
regarding student behaviors. It was reported that students, as well as the adults, know
how to “play the game.” This is interpreted to mean that the students have power and
control over a walk’s success. One teacher reported that students comment that they
“have her back” (CET7) when she is being observed. Another teacher suggested that
student behavior is a factor contributing to the anxiety experienced while an observer is
in his room. Another teacher mentioned that some (other) teachers prep their students in
anticipation of instructional walks (generic).
Those interviewed remarked on a “mental checklist” they reference for reassurance when an individual, most often the principal, walks in the classroom. One remarked that she scans the room to see if students are engaged, several remarked that they immediately jump up as one of the observer’s “look-fors” is whether or not a teacher is actively moving about the classroom, and another noted that he repeats or references “I can” and success statements (reported “look-fors”) regardless of where he is in the lesson’s flow. This mental checklist has many meanings as reported by those interviewed and is used as a touchstone to center the individual being observed. General agreement is noted around a heightened level of apprehension in the first few seconds when an individual enters the room.

A sense of conformity is evident in teachers’ statements. The teachers, regardless of the role of the individual observing, made mention of a change in behavior to do what is “expected” when an individual walks in the room. These statements are portrayed in some as apprehension in not meeting the perceived expectations. A sense of formality across instructional walks (generic) is felt as individual teachers are unsure how to react when a visitor enters the classroom. Although teachers reported less formality when a colleague (Instructional Round) entered the room, the sense of formality is noted across both principal walk formats (Evaluative Walk-throughs and Learning Walks), with several commenting that an aspect of fuzziness exists between the purpose of or difference between these two walk formats. Generally, teachers reported wanting to please their observer.

After the walk concludes, teachers report a sense of anticipation around the receipt of feedback and desire for approval by the individual observing. Interviewees
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reported waiting in anticipation of an emailed form. Others reported seeking out the individual in the hallway or during a department meeting to gain feedback. Positive reviews were reported in generalities whereas negative or constructive accounts were recalled using more specific explanations. Many recall reflecting internally on the walk after it concludes. Few report no anticipation and no reflection when feedback is anticipated and again when it is received.

Levels of individual teacher anticipation varies, as well as the variation in teachers’ reactions to feedback which results in apprehension. Some teachers noted that feedback was something they waited anxiously for and often refreshed their computers until receiving it. Whereas others responded that they view the feedback (from the principal) as it comes in with some but not remarkable anticipation. Overall the level of anticipation and acknowledgement to the feedback was based on the desire to please the observer. In retrospection, after the instructional walk (generic) occurs several of the teachers interviewed reflect using the feedback, inferred feedback, and/or lack of feedback as a benchmark of success. The lack of feedback, especially from the principal, was inferred more often as a negative rather than a neutral or positive appraisal even though one of the perceived purposes (by the receiving teachers) of a principal Learning Walk was to increase principal presence regardless of feedback on a teacher’s performance or the observed “look-fors.”

The feedback, when it is received, was mentioned as one-way written feedback. Teachers interviewed unanimously mentioned that principal feedback, in either or both Learning Walks (principal) and Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), was provided or given to them. As noted in varying comments, they would have appreciated a
conversation or even a written dialogue to allow for two-way conversations and clarifications. Many commented that principals did not have the time to provide each individual a meeting after every principal conducted instructional walk (generic) further reducing the value of the feedback they recall receiving. Suggestions and solutions to this concern included email correspondence to and from the observer and teacher receiver, a summary log based on one’s self-reflection, and personal notes to document a rationale or disagreement with the feedback. Additionally, teachers at one school mentioned a newly added teacher comment box in regard to their Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) checklist. This was seen as a positive addition, however, two of the teachers were unsure where their comment went and if it would be added to their annual summative evaluation. Overall, teachers reported that they employ caution when reviewing, reflecting on, and employing feedback from instructional walks (generic).

A sense of formality is also noted in the reflecting stage. Formal written feedback is viewed differently often with a sense of seriousness. Feedback is reflected on as appraisals of performance resulting in agreement or disagreement. Further, recollections tended to have a stronger association with a feeling of “Me” or my performance, whereas, a less formal feeling was associated with conversational feedback or feedback delivered publically. This was noted as “Us” feedback and most often attributed to both colleague walks (Instructional Rounds) and Learning Walks (principal). Written checklists and written feedback were mentioned as contributing to a sense of both anticipation and apprehension by teachers receiving instructional walks (generic). The overall sense of anticipation and apprehension leads to the collective reporting of a feeling of lack of personal control associated with instructional walks (generic) in general.
Control. The lack of control associated across instructional walks (generic) is reportedly felt during each stage of the walk process. A range of subthemes emerged related to this overarching theme as well, as detailed in Table 4 and discussed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Walk Format</th>
<th>Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor)</th>
<th>Learning Walk (principal)</th>
<th>Instructional Round (colleague)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Checklist criteria imparted</td>
<td>• “Look-fors” imparted</td>
<td>• No criteria or “look-fors” utilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One-way written feedback</td>
<td>• If feedback, one-way written feedback</td>
<td>• Lacking specific “Me” feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Walk Stage</td>
<td>Before (Planning)</td>
<td>During (Acting)</td>
<td>After (Reflecting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Random and unannounced</td>
<td>• Intentionally include a “look-for” (self-promote)</td>
<td>• Unclear expectations to make changes in teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Infrequent</td>
<td>• Rationalize not being able to “hit all of the marks”</td>
<td>• Changes are made in response to compliance and to please the visitor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Elements of Control and Appearance of Subthemes

The general feeling that criteria or “look-fors” are being imparted on the teaching staff was relayed. While most acknowledge the connection between the “look-fors” and educational research, none report having individually contributed to the listing of “look-fors” or written feedback checklists used during the instructional walks (generic) they have experienced. Although during recollections researchers, such as Marzano and Hattie, were mentioned by name and “look-fors” were often attributed to these experts’ educational research and meta-analysis.

In all cases regardless of instructional walk (generic) format, the teachers acknowledge that walks were random and unannounced resulting in a sense of anticipation in receiving the next walk, as well as an overall sense of lack of control in the receipt of a walk. Instructional walks (generic), although reported as infrequent, were
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anticipated by teachers and thought of as “out of our control.” One teacher mentioned walks as “the future of teaching” (PST5). The collective lack of feeling of control and influence resulted in a sense of overall anticipation of and apprehension by teachers.

In addition to the overall feeling of anticipation, teachers tended to rationalize their walk(s) experience in an effort to control their reactions. For example, teachers indicated beliefs that they cannot get top marks and receiving all of the checks appears impossible. More teachers recounted memorable instructional walks (generic) as concerning rather than non-concerning. Teachers commented on times when walkers entered and then left without understanding the lesson’s purpose resulting in the teacher’s concern for an unfair appraisal. There was also a sense of concern at the perceived lack of an individual’s ability to control the situation and excel given these expectations.

Teachers reported worrying that if a principal entered while a teacher was giving a test that they [the teacher] would not hit “all of the checklist marks.” Equally concerning was the feeling that the brief stay in the classroom would not allow the principal the opportunity to witness and therefore document all of the checklist components. However, teachers rationalized and indicated they understood that “hitting all of these checkmarks” was an “impossible feat” not an expectation placed on them by their principal when he/she was walking. Almost all teachers refer to the walk as a “snapshot.” As mentioned earlier, the mental checklist completed by the observed teacher when an individual enters does not necessarily fit with the real-time instruction occurring in the classroom. However, teachers reported “playing the game.” For example, several teachers mentioned “hitting” one of the checklist marks when an observer enters (e.g., standing up in front of the classroom), restating an expectation to the entire class for the
benefit of the observer, and/or following-up with an email or in-person conversation to justify the classroom activity observed during the instructional walk (generic).

Conversely, teachers mentioned a lessened sense of anticipation but an equal sense of lack of control during colleague walks (Instructional Rounds). The infrequency and snapshot style of the walks conducted by colleagues was noted along with the lack of individual conversational feedback. Feedback, if offered, was provided as solely positives during department meetings. In the school where the colleague walks were not completed by the department chairs but rather instructional coaches, the teachers noted written feedback related to district initiatives not necessarily in response to observed techniques or a teacher’s professional goals. In two schools, teachers interviewed noted a sense of support or an apparent “go-between” amongst the colleagues observing and the principal.

In general, the receipt of a walk by a colleague was reported as feeling supportive and aimed at understanding the individual teacher’s classroom. One teacher mentioned she felt the colleague walks (Instructional Rounds) were an effort to maintain “another set of eyes” (PST4) in the classroom should concerns arise. Instructional Rounds (colleague) were not reported to be reciprocated visits to classrooms but rather one way observations from a department chair or instructional coach. Additionally, some instructional walks (generic) conducted by colleagues (Instructional Rounds) were reported to include follow-up activities such as instructional suggestions and dialogue, as well as sharing of materials. Colleague walks were only reported in the two large schools, however, the two small schools mentioned beginning varied forms of colleague walks in the future.
While being observed during an instructional walk (generic) teachers note a time burden for those conducting the walks, both administrators and colleagues. This was also inferred by those interviewed to be a reason for the minimal feedback, as well as the infrequency in classroom visits. It was reported that the infrequency in walks and the minimal feedback collectively left the receiver confused about the expectation for continued improvement resulting in an overall lack of control in the process. One teacher noted that he was provided a written suggestion for improvement but no one followed-up to see if he indeed implemented the suggestion.

While both of the instructional walks (generic) conducted by the principal appear to have a similar feel associated including, anticipation/apprehension and sense of lack of control, teachers did mention feeling a sense of pride when a principal appears in the classroom to “see what we are doing.” A suggestion of having the principal come when invited to see an exceptional activity or lesson was made by several teachers. The notion of principal presence was conveyed as positive across the four schools. Teachers acknowledge a sense of control over the situation when they invite the observer to visit. However, when (in the case of two schools) a specific number of walks is expected administratively the relevance and authenticity reportedly felt by those teachers observed is reduced. “If the purpose is for the principal to hit a number, I don’t know how that helps me” (CET9).

As reported during the interviews, when colleagues walk (Instructional Round), teachers tend to include the individual in the happenings of the classroom. This was also reported as a sense of control felt by the teacher observed. The colleagues tended to interact during the walks and interactions among the “walker” and students were seen as
commonplace. Teachers indicated it was preferred to not interacting with the students. One teacher recalled that he felt “ok” when the students interact with his teaching peer then he gets them back on track after his colleague leaves. That same educator indicated apprehension when students wanted to interact with the principal, regardless of walk, and felt he would not get the highest marks if that occurred. Characteristically reported by receivers of colleague walks, the colleague observer did not have a set of “look-fors” nor did he/she record information while in the classroom. This was also conveyed as reducing apprehension around the visit.

Control was also recalled as lacking when feedback was anticipated and then received. The individual teacher, depending on the visitor, may receive feedback immediately, at a later time, or may not receive any feedback. The feedback was noted by a majority of the teachers as non-specific. Additionally, teachers were unsure of the expectation to implement the suggestions received in feedback. Most recalled implementing suggestions to reduce “dings” on subsequent walks, as a general act of compliance, and to please the visitor.

**Lack of Utility.** The lack of utility associated across instructional walks (generic) is reportedly felt during each stage of the walk process. A range of subthemes emerged related to this overarching theme as well, as detailed in Table 5 and discussed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Walk Format</th>
<th>Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor)</th>
<th>Learning Walk (principal)</th>
<th>Instructional Round (colleague)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inconsistency between visitors and expectations</td>
<td>• Inconsistency between visitors and expectations</td>
<td>• Used as corrective measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Walk Stage</td>
<td>Before (Planning)</td>
<td>During (Acting)</td>
<td>After (Reflecting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes to self-promote and please the visitor</td>
<td>• Self-promotion • “Play the game”</td>
<td>• Compliance and projection to benefit others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Elements of Utility and Appearance in Subthemes
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The overall utility teachers associated with instructional walks (generic) appears mediated by expectations to please the observer, therefore a sense of compliance appears. These feelings result in self-promotion and recollections of attempts to “play the game.” Self-promotion includes intentionally complying with a set of expectations and/or “look-fors” to gain a more favorable outcome (in feedback). Interviewees reported that they were either imparted with a set of expectations outside of their own desire for specific improvements in their teaching craft or unsure of the purpose of the walk format itself. However, these teachers report self-promoting their own teaching skills by including “look-fors” during subsequent instructional walks (generic).

Several teachers also reported inconsistencies in the receipt of instructional walks (generic). Most notably, teachers receiving both principal led formats recall examples of visits that resulted in differing suggestions. Additionally, teachers reported comparing their feedback to a colleague’s feedback. One teacher recalled differences in expectations to incorporate a “look-for” in instruction. He received feedback indicating minimal infusion, and a colleague (with a different visitor) was provided more positive feedback. The teacher recalled that both were instructing the same lesson. Additionally, process specialists recall less frequent walks than content experts.

In a majority of interviews, the individuals also recounted an experience second hand. For example, “I know some teachers get wigged out about the walk” (CET2), “we talk and there is a feeling by others that we are being watched” (PST2), and the walks “provide more evidence to get rid of poor teachers” (CET9). Additionally, most teachers interviewed indicated that “other” teachers may benefit more from the instructional walks (generic) than they do personally. It was inferred through teacher suggestions that those
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Teachers struggling with instruction and/or classroom management may benefit more than the individual being interviewed. It was also suggested that colleagues sent to observe and support those struggling teachers could be helpful. Desires for control and self-promotion support these recollections as teachers did not believe they made deep and lasting changes in their teaching behaviors because of walks received. Recollections of these kind indicate apprehension in the instructional walk (generic) system and in its overall utility.

The overall experience of the instructional walk (generic) and its reported sense of inconsistency in calibration of both the observation of “look-fors” and feedback delivered from observer to observer result in a decrease in perceived utility. This is evident in the teachers’ reflective view of the instructional walk (generic) process in its entirety, but more often with the act of walking and the feedback. These feelings reportedly precipitate further anticipation of and apprehension around walks when those inconsistencies are perceived to be associated with summative Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), and even to some extent the principals conducting non-evaluative formative Learning Walks. The individual observing appears to influence the experiences of those being observed. Further evidence and analysis of these emerging themes is presented in the following section as they align to the stages of the instructional walk (generic).

Integration of Emerging Themes

The following section will provide further analysis of the three overarching themes that emerged from the examination of interview data: anticipation/apprehension, control/lack of control, and the overall perceived lack of utility of instructional walks (generic) by targeted teachers. While interviews were conducting using a semi-structured
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interview protocol (see Appendix E) the questions were not asked verbatim nor were identical interview questions asked of every participant (see Appendix E); rather each interviewee was permitted to recount his/her experience of the instructional walks (generic) holistically. This method of interviewing is in keeping with the phenomenological research methodology employed (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, when appropriate in the following narrative, interview protocol questions and/or stages of the continuous improvement cycle will be referenced.

Overall Insights

A collective sense of anticipation and/or apprehension was found throughout the study and across all study participants. A perceived lack of control or influence across the system was recalled in response to all three instructional walk (generic) formats. Some teachers reported that their anticipation/apprehension and feeling of lack of control is evident before, during, and after a walk. Others recount specific times of worry and varying levels of that reported worry. More anticipation and apprehension is reportedly associated with principal conducted walks including both the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) and the Learning Walks (principal) than colleagues walking (Instructional Rounds) and more often by the instructors’ role as a process specialist (86%) than content expert (42%). Additionally, those interviewed recount more anticipation and feelings of the unknown (purpose) during the initial entry of the observer into the classroom (acting), followed by the receipt of feedback (reflection), and finally in anticipation of a subsequent walk (planning). Both anticipation and apprehension were reported as feeling a sense of worry.
**Memorable Accounts.** When asked to recount the overall insights and perceptions of the instructional walks (generic) which generally correspond to interview questions two, three, and four, 89% of interviewees (15) generally recounted times of memorable walks (interview question three) conducted by administrators. However, those were not recalled with remarkable specificity but rather with general recollections of details and felt emotions. Two teachers, one content expert and one process specialist, recounted no memorable instructional walk (generic) experiences across any of the walks they received.

Four teachers recounted memorable Instructional Rounds (colleague). One recalled positive details including a compliment about a classroom activity, two indicated the individual observer provided materials as a follow-up, and the other noted that the visit lasted “as long as an observation” (CET10) inferring the individual remained for approximately 30 minutes. In general, Instructional Rounds (colleague) were reported by 91% of teachers who have experienced these walks as infrequent. One process specialist recalled frequent walks, almost weekly, the prior school year but with less frequency to date this school year.

Six teachers recounted principal walks, inclusive of both Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and Learning Walks (principal), happening while students were taking tests and quizzes. Twenty-two percent (four) of teachers, all content experts, also noted walks occurring when they were showing video clips. Process specialists (five of seven) who co-teach with content experts recall principal led instructional walks (generic) occurring in the general education classroom. They noted that they were not provided feedback regarding those walks and commented that they assume the content
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expert receives the feedback. While noted as frustrating, all of these recollections were not deemed unfair during individuals’ accounts but rather lacking “effectiveness” and recounted in a generally neutral, matter-of-fact format. The lack of effectiveness is reported as a sense of missed opportunity for the principal to see “me” teaching. While teachers (four), all from one school, report frequent Learning Walks (principal) they also note the same concerns around the missed opportunities to see the teacher actually teaching especially if the individual walks in during a test or video.

One teacher reported walks “always occurring during his elective classes” (CET5). A process specialists teaching in a self-contained classroom feels she “doesn’t get the same number of walks as others” (PST1). Two teachers specifically recalled the observer entering and “just standing there” (CET4 and PST2). Adding to the account, 78% of teachers remarked that the principal(s) has limited time for instructional walks (generic) and therefore, “they (walks) have to occur when they occur.”

Five comments specific to principal led instructional walks (generic) were made by teachers and perceived as representing generally defensive views. Those views encompass displeasure with observer remarks about student behaviors, reference to “dings” on the feedback form, and one teacher recalled that she emailed the principal to justify an instructional decision she made in the classroom. However, four teachers recall generally positive experiences. Individuals’ report of feedback that consisted of predominantly complimentary phrases was also recalled. Recollections such as “I hit the jackpot” (CET7) were also reported. Several (89%) recounted stories told to them from other teachers and/or personal recollections occurring more than two years ago. The majority of teachers recall a sense of apprehension or worry conveyed as wanting to
make sure they are seen by other educators as “doing a good job.” One teacher reflected that teaching is a personal job. These views result in a collective feeling of an overall lack of influence around the system of instructional walks (generic) by these teachers.

When asked to describe the first instructional walk experience they personally recall (interview question two), teachers were generally unable to pinpoint exactly when “all of these walks began” which is inferred to represent a feeling of perceived lack of control. One teacher (CET2) indicates she “puts each one out of her mind” as soon as they are over. Others (89%) indicate that they began maybe two, three, or four years ago with varying purposes and expectations for frequency and implementation.

**Individuals Walking.** Of much discussion during the interviews was the occurrence of a variety of administrative (principal) walks happening with numerous different principals. The school principals representing the sample have fewer than five years as the head principal at each of the buildings while the teachers’ range in longevity at the corresponding buildings is between two and over thirty years respectively. The individual teachers interviewed commented on the turnover in administration including head principals, as well as their assistant principals. Process specialists (86%) tend to recall principal turnover more often than content experts (54%). These same process specialists share apprehension more often when the observer is unfamiliar with him/herself as a teacher and his/her students. One content expert commented on his “young administrative staff” (CET11). A general sense of lack of control in regard to an evaluator’s (principal’s) presence in the class is felt.

A comparison between past and present evaluators and principals was also mentioned during many of the interviews, however, will not be commented upon except
to say that apprehension and anticipation appeared heightened and a sense of the unknown is conveyed when teachers recall a new or different principal evaluator (72%) with all process specialists (seven) and six of the 11 (54%) content experts representing this view. Further comment on individual principal connection and comparison remains outside of the scope of the study.

During interviews teachers who have experienced both formats of principal led instructional walks (generic) vacillated between the formats recalling formative walk (Learning Walk) and summative walk (Evaluative Walk-throughs) details interchangeably. The recollections were found to include a general recall of the walk through narratives regardless of the specific principal led walk format. Instructional Rounds (colleagues) were generally recalled separate from principal visits. In general, instructional walk (generic) formats are found to be recalled as differentiated based on an observer’s role as administrative (principal) or collegial not using formative or summative purposes. This results in a lack of clarity between principal walk formats and their intended purposes in meeting the continuous improvement of teachers.

In general, a combined sense of perceived worry and lack of control are conveyed as a sense of “having to be on.” Individuals also recall the apprehension felt around instructional walks (generic) through aspects of wonder. Teachers responded with feelings of “not knowing when the next one (walk) will occur” and/or wondered if they will be actively teaching when the individual (principal) enters. These feelings are reported more often both in anticipation of an instructional walk (generic) and during the act of walking and will, therefore, be discussed in the following sections. Additionally, when describing subsequent instructional walks (generic) (interview question four)
individuals recall experiences across the continuous improvement cycles of planning (in anticipation of the walk), acting (during the walk), and reflecting (after the walk) and will also be addressed below.

**Planning/Before the Walk**

*Sources of Apprehension.* Specifically, when asked to recall overall perceptions in anticipation of/before the walk occurred (interview question five) teachers reported several areas of apprehension with associated feelings of worry, the unknown, a comparison to others, and observer expectations. Specific feelings of worry were reported as a sense of fear in not “being genuine” or changing when the individual enters (61%). Genuine is recalled as not self-promoting (engaging in one of the checklist items) or changing the lesson to demonstrate a “look-for.” This was recalled as a worry expressed across both content experts (82%) and process specialists (57%).

*Classroom Dynamic.* In addition to feelings of worry, teachers report levels of concern around not knowing what he/she will (or will not) be instructing when the visitor enters (61%). Wondering how and when to give an assessment was mentioned as something that goes through one teacher’s mind as a result of instructional walks (generic) by principals. These feelings are reported more often by content experts (64%) than process specialists (57%). Another teacher mentioned not wanting a walk to occur “on a Friday, before a big game, before a holiday, or during a full moon” (CET10). Student behavior and not knowing how the students will respond to the visitor are reported as worrisome (89%). Process specialist recall more concerns around anticipating student behaviors (78%) and not knowing how the visitor might reflect on the teacher’s response to the behaviors (86%). A limited number of content experts recalled some
Differentially Perceived Worry

Concerns surround general levels of engagement by individual students but in a more neutral manner. For example, content experts individually recalled a student eating, a student working independently on the computer, and a student on his phone during a large group lesson. These were affirmed as accurate comments on feedback received, however, they were also not reported with high levels of apprehension during recollections. These content experts would have liked to respond to the comment by the observer, but agreed it was accurate.

Comparison. Teachers also report apprehension because they worry the individual, specifically reported as the principal(s), may not understand the class makeup, class focus, or instructor role. Content experts report apprehension they will be compared to fellow subject matter teachers (27%) or the period visited will be the “most challenging” resulting in more low level questions or students not meeting success criteria when asked by the visitor (both recalled as Learning Walk “look-fors”). One content expert recalled a skill based lesson inclusive of low level (knowledge and comprehension) questions observed by a principal during a walk. As reported by this individual, the class was also a challenging class behaviorally. She recalled her feedback was accurate, however, she felt the observer “did not understand the class focus for the day” (CET8) which she felt would have explained the use of low level questions. This was recalled with apprehension and a statement of wonder in anticipation of what she might be teaching when the visitor enters the next time.

Likewise, process specialist (43%) expressed concern that they will be compared to other (general) educators. One teacher specifically mentioned apprehension that the principal may have “just come from an Advanced Placement class to mine” (PST2). Two
other process specialists (28%) mentioned fear the principal does not understand the difference between my class and a regular education class. All process specialists recalled feeling that the principal, none of which are certified as process specialists, would not understand the specialist’s role: in the general education classroom, in a small group setting, nor in a self-contained classroom. One specialist remarked that a former principal indicated on the feedback form “I did nothing except sit beside one student” (PST5). She explained during her interview that the student exhibited significant behavioral challenges and would become disruptive during the class if she did not maintain proximity. She felt this was not understood by the principal.

**Preparation.** Prior to receiving walks or at least annually, teachers report a meeting or email outlining the school’s instructional walk (generic) processes. Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) processes are explained during an annual meeting and in conjunction with an explanation of the annual (summative) evaluation. Learning Walks (principal) and Instructional Rounds (colleague) are reported to be explained in meetings, in email correspondence, relayed by department chairs, or shared as an outcome of Building Level Leadership Teams (BLTs). All teachers interviewed report having seen the checklist of “look-fors” or a feedback form prior to experiencing their first principal led walk, and when the checklist or feedback forms are updated. Further in-person discussions are reported to occur between those participating in colleague walks (Instructional Rounds). All of these actions are reported to increase perceived levels of transparency and decrease levels of apprehension.

**Notification.** The sixth interview question asked “how you found out you would be observed.” Individuals had varying levels of recall. In general, a sense of not knowing
exactly when a walk would occur is a perceived reality by all teachers interviewed. This held true for all instructional walk (generic) formats. Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are reported to be unannounced, Learning Walks (principal) may at times be announced but are generally unannounced and happen “when time permits,” and Instructional Rounds (colleague) may at times be announced and are reported as anticipated. Varying levels of both anticipation and apprehension are recalled and mediated individually based on the number of walks received previously, relationship with the walker, and/or nature of feedback received during the last walk(s).

As stated above, Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) experienced by all of the study participants are recalled as unannounced. However, three individuals did recall specific times when this format of instructional walk (generic) was announced. One teacher (PST6) noted “after missing me numerous times, my evaluator asked for a schedule of upcoming times when we (the teacher and her students) would be in the room.” The teacher noted appreciation and further acknowledged that the (assistant) “principal understands the diverse nature of my classroom” and the partnerships this teacher has in the community requiring her to be off campus frequently. Teachers interviewed from the same building did not report announced Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Another teacher noted that “in the beginning” we were told approximately what week(s) the evaluative walks would occur (CET10), however, that is no longer occurring. Another teacher noted that generally the walks occur right before or after a formal observation (CET3).

Learning Walks (principal) are also reported as generally unannounced. Across all four schools, those interviewed reported not really knowing when these will occur,
however, a general feeling was expressed in all schools “if one receives a walk it is likely that others will also receive a walk.” A number of teachers mentioned that word-of-mouth also broadcasts when these walks are occurring throughout the building. In two schools, there is an expectation or suggestion for a certain number of Learning Walks (principal) to be completed. This was confirmed by both of the principals. In the case of these schools, this requirement has been suggested by the District. Overall, teachers CET2 and CTE8 report their preference in not knowing when walks will occur.

In the case of Instructional Rounds (colleague) the department chair announces generally when he/she may be “in.” This may occur at a department meeting, in passing, or by email, and is perceived as informal. However, it is noted that department chair walks (seven) occur infrequently and often only when the department chair has a planning period. One process specialist mentioned the department chair visiting weekly in the previous year but only occasionally this school year. Instructional Rounds (colleague) conducted by instructional coaches (four) are reported to be infrequent, two to four occurrences per year, but can occur across a variety of instructional periods. The notification of these walks are individualized and are generally reported with a sense of awareness. Regardless of instructional walk (generic) format receivers are not asked when they would like the observer to visit resulting in a perceived lack of control regarding when they will receive an instructional walk (generic).

**Purpose.** General feelings of anticipation of and apprehension about the perceived purpose of instructional walks (generic) and how the “data” collected will be used (see Table 6) is conveyed across all three instructional walk (generic) formats: Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and Evaluative Walk-
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throughs (supervisor). Individuals recall a variety of understood purposes for instructional walks resulting in a sense of apprehension and confusion regarding the overall purpose of walks. Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are known and understood by all (18 out of 18) to have an evaluative purpose and be coupled with annual observations to complete a summative appraisal.

In the case of the 14 teachers interviewed receiving both Evaluative Walk-throughs and Learning Walks (principal) a majority (93%) report wondering when a principal enters “what format of walk he/she is conducting.” These individuals report “figuring it out” if the visitor hits buttons on his/her IPad, depending on how long he/she stays, or only after the walk concludes and they receive feedback in a certain format. This results in a sense of wonder around the intended purpose of the principal’s walk as either an evaluative (summative) measure or merely as a formative visit. Most (79%) are unsure of the difference in purpose between the two principal led instructional walks (generic).

Conversely, the Instructional Round (colleague) is recalled with fewer feelings of anticipation and worry. Generally, the purpose (see Table 6) is understood to be non-evaluative, based on an initiative, or merely to visit the classroom. Several (64%) of the teachers experiencing colleague walks do wonder if the visit is conveyed to their principal in any way, whether to be used in evaluations (summative) or as a conversation around progress on school initiatives (formative). Overall, teachers report feelings of unknown regarding the purposes of the variety of instructional walks (generic).
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Round</td>
<td>Individual or Group</td>
<td>Formative</td>
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Table 6. Instructional Walk Formats and Feedback Conveyed vs. Perceived

The purpose (interview question seven) of the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) is conveyed unanimously as evaluative and part of the formal (State mandated) process, although recalled with variation in accompanying rationale and levels of acceptance. For example, six teachers (five content experts and one process specialist) prefer this walk format, comment that they welcome the feedback formally through the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor), and view the walk as a way to improve. These teachers also reference their preference to alignment with the State evaluation rubric rather than Learning Walk (principal) “look-fors.” Others attribute the requirement for the Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) as merely a compliance mandate, one that is required to be “checked off” a principal’s list of “to dos.”

The understood purpose of the Learning Walks (principal) varied among and between those interviewed. Of the 14 teachers recalling this walk format, a majority (72%) note principal presence as a purpose. Additionally, 78% note that principals were looking for specific teaching behaviors while they walked. Individual teachers indicate the use of “look-fors” including: “I can” statements (94%), success criteria (89%), active engagement of students (83%), a classroom environment of safety (28%), and teacher mobility throughout the classroom (22%). It should be noted these individuals remarked that any principal conducted instructional walk (generic) appears to have purposes of
evaluation including looking for specific teaching behaviors (either summative evaluation rubric alignment or formative “look-fors”). Several (79%) remark that the purpose between (and act of) the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) and the Learning Walk (principal) are unclear with seven of nine (78%) content experts and four of five (80%) process specialists noting “fuzziness” between the formats. Although teachers reported varied understanding of the actual use of a principal observation during walks in their annual evaluation. Approximately 79% note they were told Learning Walks (principal) are non-evaluative and the (formative) data collected during such walks would be inclusive of an aggregate across the entire school (or district).

The intent of Instructional Rounds (colleague) are conveyed by those receiving such a walk to be non-evaluative. The inferred purpose was one of instructional improvement. Internalized purposes of those walks range from “to stop by and see what I am doing” (54%) to “providing me instructional guidance and resources” (64%). The second purpose to be offered more often when instructional coaches walk (four) than when department chairs walk (seven), and more often recalled by process specialists (four) than content experts (three). Two process specialists remarked that colleague walks (Instructional Rounds) felt more like visits and did not have a purpose beyond that visit. One content expert reports he was unsure of the purpose and value of the colleague walk (Instructional Round). At one school, department chairs are seen as a “go between” among principals and teachers, as well as the role of a colleague to support and speak to “my classroom teaching style.”

**Expectation.** Recollections around the expectations of the individual teacher receiving the instructional walk (generic) vary by individual, instructor role, as well as
instructional walk (generic) format. These recollections align with interview question eight (expectations). Across walk formats, individuals report little control in what the observer is looking for during an instructional walk (generic). Checklists and “look-fors” are recalled as provided to teachers. Although one teacher remarked, in conjunction with the District’s set initiative the instructional coach (Instructional Rounds) will provide feedback on particular strategies I am trying out in addition to commenting on my implementation of the District initiative. In the case of a Learning Walk (principal), teachers report that the checklist of “look-fors” is too long (86%), not specific to the instructor’s role (100% of the process specialists) or class content being covered at the time of the visit (nine of the 11 content experts), and/or aligned to individual professional continuous improvement goals (79%). Evaluative Walk-throughs are recalled as aligned with components of the overall summative evaluation rubric, although these walks are recalled with caution (apprehension) given the “snapshot” of the lesson that is observed during a short instructional walk (generic).

Expectations conveyed in anticipation of the walk included a general notion of respect and understanding desired by those receiving any format of instructional walk (generic). Relationship and trust appear in recollections when individuals recall a sense of comfort with those, both principal and colleague, entering the classroom. Individuals did not affirm a need for formal enacted or communicated expectations by observers but rather a general sense of understanding and trust, shared as a feeling of what another educator would expect when someone walks into his/her space. At one school, three teachers worried of “too many walks in one day.” This was communicated to the principal and District office administration who, as reported by all three teachers,
immediately put in place general expectations around the number of instructional walks (generic) permitted daily in any given classroom. As reported by two of these teachers, this clarification was met with appreciation.

Individuals receiving either of the formats of principal conducted walks note the sense of having to be “on all the time” (50%) in anticipation of the possibility that the principal may enter at any time. This is an expectation they acknowledged that they place on themselves in response to wanting to demonstrate the “look-fors” and/or meet the criteria on the (evaluation) rubric rather than an expectation placed by the observer. These teachers expressed an overall desire to please their principal which in turn causes reported feelings of apprehension and worry. Additionally, three (17%) also remarked that they have a personal expectation to be prepared and “on” regardless of the possibility a principal may enter. These teachers remarked feeling a sense of obligation to their students and themselves. Others (33%), after having reported experiencing many walks and having rationalized their inabilities to receive all “top marks” responded that they don’t have expectations for themselves or the individual walking but just do “what they do.” These individuals remarked that they know it (walks) will happen and conveyed that they feel confident they are doing a good job overall no matter the lesson or day.

Teachers anticipating instructional walks (generic) report feeling they could not suggest to their principal rescheduling a walk for a more conductive instructional time. In general, a feeling of lack of control is conveyed in anticipation of either of the principal conducted instructional walk (generic) formats.

Expectations for colleagues during an Instructional Round are conveyed as less formal and less worrisome. An overall sense of collective understanding about the
classroom, the group of students, and/or the content is expressed by those interviewed. Sixty-four percent (seven) of the teachers interviewed have experienced department chair walks and thirty-six percent (four) report experiencing instructional coaches walking. In both cases a general sense of understanding, trust, and professionalism are inferred as the expectations of the individual teacher with no accounts of worry about these expectations occurring naturally. Feelings of support (84%), understanding (82%), respect (54%), and trust (36%) are conveyed. Content experts recall these feelings at a lesser level than process specialists. All seven process specialists recall feelings of support, 83% recall both feelings of trust and respect, and 67% indicate feelings of trust. Process specialists (67%) specify that the department chair “knows my students by name” (PST1) and engages in classroom activities when she walks. Ninety-one percent of teachers interviewed indicate that they value the input of their colleague. Teachers did report feeling less apprehensive and more in control when anticipating an Instructional Round (colleague) noting they feel they could reschedule a visit if a department chair stopped by during a time deemed nonconductive for a visit. This was stated more often by process specialists.

Summary. Findings pertaining to the sources of apprehension in anticipation of Instructional Walks (generic) and factors ameliorating these feelings are summarized in Table 7. Overall feelings of apprehension and decreased feelings of control are experienced across principal led instructional walks (generic) by those interviewed. These feelings are reported as occurring across classroom dynamics, conveyed purpose, and notification of walks. The anticipation of Instructional Rounds (colleague) are associated with lower levels of feelings of worry and lack of control. Specifically,
teachers report awareness of the walk’s structure and how feedback will be shared, along with the visitor’s role as factors decreasing apprehension.

**Acting/During the Walk**

Both the sense of anticipation/apprehension and feeling of lack of control are reported to continue during the instructional walk (generic) itself. Interview question nine (perceptions of the walk), interview question 10 (interactions), and interview question 11 (observer exiting) address individuals’ perceptions during the act of the instructional walk (generic). Again, as reported by those individuals interviewed, a sense of apprehension and anticipation, as well as a sense of lack of overall control are more apparent in instructional walks (generic) conducted by principals (Evaluative Walk-throughs or Learning Walks). Instructional Rounds (colleague) were not recalled with the same level of anticipation or apprehension although degrees of a feeling of lack of control specifically when the individual first arrives does exist across all formats of instructional walks (generic).
### Table 7. Frequency of Apprehension & Factors that Ameliorate Apprehension in Anticipation of an Instructional Walk

**Expectations.** During interviews, the act of the instructional walk (generic) is recalled holistically (interview question nine) with perceptions in anticipation of, around expectations and interactions, as well as when the visitor leaves being recalled as intertwined and interrelated to the experience. Several references were made to the uncertainty about how to react to the observer and/or how to introduce the observer upon entry. This is reported across all three instructional walk (generic) formats. Five teachers
(28%) indicate they feel compelled to “set the stage” or bring the observer up to speed when he/she enters, especially mid-lesson and when a principal enters. Another recalls “always” wondering if and how she should address the individual. Yet another indicates he introduces and invites the observer in as recalled during both principal and colleague led walks. However, one teacher stated she does not feel obligated to acknowledge the observer regardless of the instructional walk (generic) format, or role of the observer. The majority of respondents report a need to frame the lesson or classroom activity. This is aligned to the perception of walks as evaluative and the reported desire to “please one’s principal” by demonstrating valued “look-fors” (self-promotion).

Across respondents a sense of professional courtesy is conveyed as an informal expectation of any visitor. One teacher indicated that it was ok to interact but being aware of the content or purpose of the classroom lesson is important citing that during one instance “the observer invalidated a timed test because of his entry and dialogue with students” (PST5). Teachers also comment on the quick rationale they give to their students when an individual enters with comments such as “they are here to see me” (CET 3, CET4, and CET7), “____ is here to see what we are doing” (CET1 and PST2), etc. Another mentioned the sense of curiosity the students exhibit when an individual enters the classroom. One teacher mentioned always introducing the observer(s).

Across instructional walk (generic) formats and individuals walking, non-verbal are recalled as means for reducing apprehension and worry when the observer enters. Teachers mention receiving smiles, thumbs up, and nods as ways to reassure them, as the receiver, that he/she should continue with the lesson. The lack of an instrument to record evidence of a teacher’s performance during an Instructional Round (colleague) is also
noted as a means for reducing both anticipation and apprehension. Principals are reported to use iPads or smartphones whereas colleagues do not record evidence of observations during instructional walks (generic).

Relationship as inferred by the receiving teacher is evident in 16 of the 18 (88%) interviews. All of the process specialists indicated relationship as important and nine of the 11 (82%) content experts mentioned relationship. Relationship is further explained to mean the level of comfort with the individual observing. This is recalled as a sense of understanding of classroom dynamics by the principal or colleague, a feeling of “another person in my same shoes” (PST3) in reference to colleagues walking, and an understanding that another set of eyes “lets me know what I might be missing” (CET7). One teacher further explained that a sense of trust is evident when the individual “does not call me out while they were in the room” (CET2). Across recollections, a sense of formality exists when the principal or other administrator enters the classroom whereas a less formal feeling is shared when a colleague enters.

**Mental Checklist.** All teachers interviewed made mention of a mental checklist or scan of the classroom when an administrator enters. This mental checklist differs from the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) rubric checklist and/or Learning Walk (principal) list of “look-fors” because it includes the personal list of teaching actions and student behaviors recalled as important to the individual teacher being visited. Four (22%) teachers recall scanning the room to see if students are on task. In addition to the immediate reaction when the individual enters, teachers note self-talk such as “hope all is well” (PST2), “fingers crossed kids are ok” (CET4), “Oh my God” (CET8). Others report a sense of uncertainty (PST3) and a feeling of reflection “I hope they don’t see something
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that I should have addressed” (PST3 and CET4) in reference specifically to student behaviors. Several (46%) of the teachers also recall repeating a checklist mentally when the (principal) observer leaves. In general, this reality indicates a sense of conformity to the external expectations (self-promotion) and lack of control felt by the receiver rather than an internal continuous improvement desire of the individual teacher to improve his/her craft.

Control. The perception of lack of control is found to hold true unless an individual recalled inviting the visitor (principal) into the class to conduct a Learning Walk (principal). In six of the 18 (33%) interviews individuals offer aspects of personal control as expressed in wanting to invite the individual in (or back) to the classroom to: (a) witness a “special” activity or lesson, (b) participate in a class activity, (c) because the current activity was not engaging (such as a test or video), or (d) to have students specifically demonstrate mastery of a concept. This is also recalled as a means to reduce apprehension around the individual entering at an inopportune time.

When asked about the sense of feelings associated with the actual instructional walk (generic), all of the teachers acknowledged that walks are snapshots in time and indicate their principals also communicated that reality. However, 11 of the 18 (61%) teachers responded that they feel pressure to hit all of the checkmarks even though they also indicated it is impossible in such a short window of time. All but one of the content experts (91%) reflected on this whereas three of the seven (43%) process specialists expressed this concern. Overall, these teachers rationalize not being able to “hit all of the checks.” This feeling is not verbalized during individuals’ recall of Instructional Rounds (colleagues).
During principal walks, 11 (61%) of the 18 teachers note “playing the game” which is explained to mean that when an administrative observer enters the room the teacher begins implementing practices associated with an evaluative rubric statement and/or a “look-for.” For example, two teachers mentioned standing when an observer enters. Another questioned whether or not he should “go to the computer” (CET3) so that the checkmark gets credited on his feedback form. Content experts comment more often on checklist marks and “look-fors” associated with instructional strategies and process specialists mention checklist marks and “look-fors” associated with student behaviors.

In response to subsequent walks, a majority of the teachers (67%) note that they make changes in their teaching behaviors based on feedback. For example, teachers CET8 and CET9 say they fix the “ding” right away. Teachers also mention developing efficiencies and systems related to the classroom environment to ensure they receive checklist marks (e.g., electronically posting the “I can” and success statements) rather than risk receiving the “ding” again. However, when asked about the overall utility of the instructional walks (generic) fewer respond to that question (interview question 13) directly with the affirmative to indicate a perceived sense of change in their overall instructional practice.

**Purpose.** The idea of principal presence (78%) is conveyed as a purpose for administrators to enter the classroom and perform instructional walks (generic). Although during recalls of the 14 individuals receiving both summative (Evaluative Walk-throughs) and formative (Learning Walks) principal led instructional walks (generic) teachers report feeling whenever a principal visits aspects of evaluation (summative) are present. A content expert (CET5) indicated that he believed the classroom should be an
“open place.” The teacher further went on to say that administrators should be more visible, however, he recognized there are many other duties and time constraints preventing their visibility on a more regular basis. Eighty-nine percent of teachers mentioned the infrequency of instructional walks (generic). Three teachers (17%) remarked that the walk acts as a model and helps them reflect on the day’s lesson. Overall process specialists value informal (formative) visits by principals and colleagues over content experts however they report receiving fewer principal led walks than the content experts. One process specialist (PST4) does not see instructional walks (generic) of any format as punitive, but rather a means for overall reflection and growth. Seventy-eight percent (14) of the teachers mention the importance of the principal visiting to see “what’s going on.”

**Interactions.** Interactions (interview question 10) among individuals during the instructional walk (generic) is met with varying degrees of comfort. Seventeen out of 18 teachers (94%) interviewed specifically address interactions among and between the observer, students, and/or teacher. Two strongly suggested the individual interact with the students and one strongly suggested the individual (an administrator) not interact. The 15 (83%) others indicated feeling comfortable with interactions but also feeling “ok” if the individual remained an observer. In general, individuals receiving instructional walks (generic) report a sense of being interrupted in their lesson flow. Approximately one half of the teachers indicate concern and report feeling “walked in and upon,” whereas the other half just note the feeling without a sense of emotional value. General feelings of classroom disruption are noted as both a concern, as well as with apprehension more often by process specialists citing student behavior and distractibility as reasons. Content
experts tend to relate apprehension to the lesson’s content. But are also reported with varying levels of concern based on both the lesson activity, as well as the role of the observer.

Reference to active inclusion of a department chair (64%) into the classroom lesson or activity is made more often than inclusion of the principal with process specialists noting the inclusion of colleagues more often (67%). One reason for recalled levels of comfort with Instructional Rounds (colleague) is mentioned in relation to the array of other reasons a colleague may enter the classroom. These reasons result in students’ increased level of familiarity with that visitor. Perceived reasons for principals to visit classrooms is recalled most often to include student disciplinary reasons or because of a need related to a teacher’s performance.

Closing. As the instructional walk (generic) is concluding, teachers report varying feelings of relief (interview question 11). These feelings varied based on the individual conducting the walk (principal or colleague), as well as the perceived purpose of the walk (formative or summative). During a recollection of a colleague walk (Instructional Rounds), one teacher recounted the disruption to the class lesson when his colleague entered but felt confident there would be no penalty for the students’ off task behavior. Another recounted that his students want to “show off” when the department chair enters sharing what they are working on. He notes that he rearranges the current lesson so students can do so. On the contrary, content experts did not report changing or stopping the lesson but rather applying tweaks when the individual enters and then again when he/she exits. Eight teachers (46%) mention feelings of relief such as a sigh or the “return of normalcy” when the principal exits. Four (22%) note feeling “ok” and recall briefly
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reflecting on the lesson and class activity that occurred during the walk. Five (28%) did not recall a specific feeling when the principal left and two (11%) state that there have been times when the individual leaves and they were unaware of the individual’s exit.

**Summary.** The frequency of feelings teachers reported experiencing during different types of instructional walks (generic) are summarized in Table. 8. Overall, teachers report feelings of apprehension when principals visit the classroom. Table 8 also highlights factors such as invitations to visit, a clear purpose, and the visitor exiting the classroom, as factors that teachers recall as contributing to feelings of control.
Sources of Apprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Setting the Stage (Expectations)</th>
<th>Introductions (Expectations)</th>
<th>Scan of the Room (Checklist)</th>
<th>Visitor Engagement (Interactions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Walk-through</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through (supervisor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Walk</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk (principal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Round</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(colleague)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors Ameliorating Apprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Invitation to Visit (Control)</th>
<th>Role of Visitor (Purpose)</th>
<th>Visitor Exiting the Classroom (Closing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Walk-through</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through (supervisor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Walk</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk (principal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(colleague)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Frequency of Apprehension & Factors that Ameliorate Apprehension During an Instructional Walk

In addition, a variety and range of emotions occur during the action of the instructional walk (generic), as summarized in Table 9. These emotions are recalled in response to the recipients’ internalized perceptions, action from the teacher given to the visitor, as well as action received by the teacher from the visitor. Further these feelings are associated with the themes found across the expanse of the instructional walk (generic), including anticipation/apprehension, control, and overall lack of utility while being mediated by instructor roles.
DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Internalized by the Teacher</th>
<th>Action Given by the Teacher</th>
<th>Action Received by the Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mental Checklist upon entry and exit of the visitor (Apprehension)</td>
<td>• Introduction of the visitor and stage set for the lesson (Control)</td>
<td>• Non-verbals communicated to the teacher (e.g., thumbs up, smile) (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of relief when the visitor leaves (Apprehension)</td>
<td>• Interactions with the visitor (Control)</td>
<td>• Interactions by the visitor with teacher and/or students (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship to the visitor (Apprehension)</td>
<td>• Relationship to the visitor (Apprehension)</td>
<td>• Relationship to the visitor (Apprehension)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Attributed Source of Emotions Experienced During Instructional Walks

Reflecting/After the Walk

Interview question 12 asks teachers to recall their experience in receiving feedback including the value they place on the information, as well as reflection that may occur. In all cases where teachers recall their perceptions of Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), they acknowledge receiving feedback although reported it as minimal, inclusive of checkmarks, and not always timely. Additionally, during Learning Walks (principal), teachers report feedback again with minimal specificity. This is recalled to have been received individually (electronically through a form) or collectively during a faculty meeting. Feedback from Instructional Rounds (colleague) is not expected, however, it is received in the case where instructional coaches visit.

Receipt of Feedback. Teachers report that principal feedback is minimal, nonspecific to the lesson/activity observed, and if delivered to the individual arrives in a one-directional format (94%). Although two teachers (11%) from a single school mentioned a new addition to their feedback form to include response comments from the observed teacher about the feedback received. Another teacher noted that “a critique should be based on more than a 5-minute visit” (CTE3) discounting the value of the
feedback he receives. Eight teachers (46%) indicate anticipation in receiving principal feedback. This anticipation ranged from refreshing the computer to receive the email to reviewing the document on another day. Five (28%) teachers indicated they did not anticipate the feedback and five (28%) did not recall their specific feelings when receiving feedback. The perception of feedback provided absent a conversation is reported to heighten apprehension.

Principal feedback is reported in both summative (Evaluative Walk-throughs) and formative (Learning Walk) formats. A majority of the respondents (94%) reported that they review the feedback. The feedback from principal-led walks includes the principal’s observation related to either the Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) rubric checklist components and/or Learning Walk (principal) list of “look-fors.” Many (89%) indicate they comply with the suggestions or respond with a change in teaching behavior to reduce the number of “dings.” Although this is rationalized by those interviewed to “play the game” (self-promotion) or in an effort to please the principal. This effort to comply was found to be independent of a principal’s walk format and/or conveyed instructional purpose. In general, individuals (89%) remarked that they want to “please” the principal, “do what is expected of them,” and/or become better teachers. Of those 16, fifty percent also share a sense of reflection and analysis beyond compliance. Four (22%) teachers recall reviewing the feedback and immediately “picking out the nos.” Four (22%) others review the feedback to ensure they believed it to be accurate and they “had no room to argue.”

When asked, teachers indicate if they disagree with the feedback they would initiate a conversation, send an email, or document their disagreement. One teacher
remarked that she did not like the feedback but believed it to be an accurate account of
the visit. The majority of teachers engage in at least a minimal reflection of the feedback,
however, only three (17%) indicate perceptions that the school expects a formal change
in their teaching behaviors (interview question 12). Process specialists (78%) note
reflection more often than content experts (46%) with all content experts indicating levels
of compliance in response to the feedback. The change reported by the others interviewed
is recalled as a personal choice to reduce the number of “dings” to comply with the
current expectations rather than as internalized changes to one’s overall teaching. This
results in a feeling of apprehension around an individual’s expectation to comply after
receiving a walk.

Instructional Round (colleague) feedback is received informally. Teachers (54%)
report feedback from the department chair being a thumbs up, smile, or mouthed “good
job” when the individual exits. Others (46%) recall receiving feedback publically among
groups of colleagues. Instructional coaches (36%) tend to provide both formats of
feedback, written and verbal. Teachers (86%) also report not having an expectation for
feedback from a department chair, but feel when it is received it is specific to what is
observed during the visit. A process specialist wondered if she should begin asking the
department chair to look for specific teaching behaviors when she visits and a content
expert indicated he currently asks the instructional coach to look for specific strategies he
is implementing during the visit. Two teachers remarked that the department chair may
have specific “look-fors” when visiting another colleague on an improvement plan.
Feedback is also reported by these teachers as conversational and made as suggestions
not mandates. A sense of invitation around colleague feedback is conveyed. Levels of
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anticipation and apprehension are noted to decrease and feelings of control increase in relation to feedback from Instructional Rounds (colleagues).

Views. Feedback is generally categorized in two views by teachers, “Me” and “Us” feedback. “Me” feedback is delivered individually, and often privately, to the individual teacher, whereas “Us” feedback is collective feedback delivered publically. “Me” feedback is generally related to summative Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and initially to formative Learning Walks (principal). Evaluative Walk-through (supervisor) feedback is provided to the individual using an electronic (State) form or a school checklist intended to be received by a single teacher. When individual feedback is provided in response to Learning Walks (principal), teachers report feelings of “Me” performance and also view that feedback as evaluative (summative).

Generally, “Us” feedback is related to viewing aggregate Learning Walk (principal) data shared at faculty meetings or when sharing occurs at department meetings (colleague walks). Learning Walk (principal) data is said to be shared at faculty meetings by two schools. In both instances, teachers reflected on the feedback holistically with feelings of “Us” data although several made remarks about their “Me” data contributing to that collective. Two content experts recalled thinking “wow we are doing pretty good with ‘I can’ statements” (CET8 and PST5). A process specialist recalled a sense of pride when she reflected on the collective data. Another felt the Learning Walk (principal) “has so much more potential to be a learning tool” (CET7).

Five individuals (46%) indicate appreciation toward the Instructional Round (colleague) feedback shared during department meetings. The feedback is reported as positive and encouraging. One content expert indicated he will replicate a lesson more
often when receiving positive feedback from the department chair. Another content expert described it like a “shout out” or compliment among his peers. Four individuals report that they share their feedback collaboratively with their individual teaching partners, three are process specialists (27%) and one a content expert. Two content experts (18%) remark that the information received is very constructive. Only one teacher indicates that Instructional Rounds (colleague) are not helpful. This individual reported no feedback from Instructional Rounds (colleagues).

When colleague feedback is reported it is said to be delivered in a positive manner during department meetings or informally upon exiting the classroom (e.g., thumbs up). Feedback is recalled with an overall sense of value through individual statements and expressed appreciation. In the case of instructional coaches (36%), the feedback is also shared in department meetings, in smaller group meetings, or individually. In addition, instructional coaches provide a written narrative to the individual based on an instructional topic/initiative.

The findings pertaining to internalized feedback received by teachers following Instructional Walks (generic) is summarized in Table 10. Feedback is experienced as either feedback directed toward the teacher (“Me” feedback) or directed toward the school as a whole (“Us” feedback). “Me” feedback tends to be summative, evaluative feedback, consisting of one-way communication directed toward the individual teacher who was observed, and results most often from Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). If individual feedback occurs following Learning Walks (Principal), that too tends to be “Me” feedback. “Us” feedback typically follows Instructional Rounds (colleague), and
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tends to be formative, non-evaluative, and occurs during conversational interactions. If aggregate feedback is provided following Learning Walks (principal), this feedback tends to be viewed as “Us” feedback as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Me” Feedback</th>
<th>“Us” Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Summative Data Collection</td>
<td>• Formative Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluative</td>
<td>• Non-evaluative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One-way Interaction</td>
<td>• Conversational Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual</td>
<td>• Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluative Walk-through format</td>
<td>• Instructional Round format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning Walk format if individual feedback is provided</td>
<td>• Learning Walk format if aggregate feedback is provided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Internalized Feedback

**Consistency.** Consistency is thought to be an area of concern for four (22%) individuals across three schools, two content experts and two process specialists, when receiving principal feedback. These individuals remark that the feedback is not consistent nor calibrated between and among observers. In these accounts there is a recalled sense that the observer does not understand the role of the process specialists nor the class being taught by the content expert. Individual negative remarks or justifications were made by each teacher to describe these feelings. Feelings of inconsistency regarding feedback are also reported through feelings of anticipation and worry. In addition, one individual also remarked that instructional walk (generic) process(es) lack a sense of transparency.

In general, feedback when it is delivered is often received as a suggestion, however, several (64%) wondered aloud if the feedback, from any of the instructional walk (generic) formats received, would end up begin used in their evaluation. One process specialist noted he receives many “NAs” (not applicable) on the feedback form.
He noted appreciation with “NAs” and not receiving “Nos,” but he felt the “look-fors” are inconsistent and not applicable across all classes. While it is acknowledged Instructional Rounds (colleague) are believed to be non-evaluative, individuals (82%) receiving these walks reflect on experiences where the department chair or instructional coach “talks to my principal about what they see during their visit” (PST4). Many believe all feedback is evaluative and chose to comply with suggestions and improve the percentage of checkmarks received. Although this is not thought of by those interviewed as a change in one’s personal teaching behavior or an acknowledged as part of a formal continuous improvement effort.

As part of the continuous improvement cycle, the final stage consisting of feedback is inferred by the teachers to lead directly back to the first stage of the cycle, planning. While many report they did not plan for an instructional walk (generic), most noting they were unannounced, many made changes in teaching behaviors to meet expectations found on the previous feedback forms or conversations in anticipation of the next walk. This was found regardless of instructor role. The continuous improvement cycle or loop continues in recollections of anticipation for the next sequence of walks the individual teacher will receive. This change in teachers’ behaviors is reported to decrease anticipation and apprehension and increase feelings of personal control over instructional walks (generic) received.

**Summary.** The evidence pertaining to the sources of apprehension teachers experience after instructional walks (generic) and the factors ameliorating these feelings, is summarized in Table 11. Apprehension is experienced as a result of the teachers’ recall of formal, “Me” feedback and unknown expectations for compliance with the
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suggestions, as well as perceived inconsistencies between (principal) visitors. The factors serving to ameliorate this apprehension include the use of “Us” feedback, as well as changes in teaching behaviors in anticipation of subsequent walks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Apprehension</th>
<th>Compliance (Feedback)</th>
<th>Written (Feedback)</th>
<th>Viewed as “Me” (Feedback)</th>
<th>Visitor Reviews (Consistency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Walk-through (supervisor)</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Walk (principal)</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Round (colleague)</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Seldom (if provided)</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors Ameliorating Apprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Viewed as “Us” (Feedback)</th>
<th>Subsequent Walks (Continuous Improvement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Walk-through (supervisor)</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Walk (principal)</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Round (colleague)</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Sources and Reported Frequency of Apprehension & Factors that Ameliorate Apprehension After an Instructional Walk

Lack of Utility of Instructional Walks

In this study, particular focus was given to the overall perceived sense of utility instructional walks (generic) contribute to improving teachers’ craft through a continuous improvement cycle. Interview questions 13 (change), 14 (affect), and 15 (sense of
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impact) holistically relate to the perceived changes in teaching behaviors made after an individual teacher receives an instructional walk (generic), as well as the perceived overall impact to one’s teaching practice. Change is defined as the act of refining or revising a teaching behavior in response to feedback from an instructional walk (generic). Affect is defined as the emotional value one places on the act of the instructional walk (generic) coupled with the sense of impact defined as the importance one derives from the instructional walk (generic). Teachers report the perceived lack of overall utility of an instructional walk (generic) as a continuous improvement strategy.

Compliance. At first glance, teachers overwhelmingly report little to no changes in teaching behaviors (questions 14 and 15) regardless of walk format. These teachers cite infrequent visits, limited feedback, and inconsistencies across instructional walk (generic) formats and observers as reasons for lack of perceived changes. However, 94% of these teachers receiving instructional walks (generic) report either choosing to comply to modify their personal teaching behaviors because they perceive it’s easier to do so (e.g., stand when teaching) or they reflect individually on the feedback and consider changes (e.g., employ a check of success criteria mid-way through a lesson). Additionally, these teachers report changes more often when encouraged by the visitor or it is valued as an appropriate adjustment. This is specifically noted when teachers recall principal led walks (Evaluative Walk-throughs and Learning Walks).

Teachers vary in their overall perceptions of the effect of instructional walks (generic) on their teaching craft. One teacher indicates “we have to trust not all walks are evaluative” (CET3) but rather are formative measures. Another content expert feels as if “someone is looking over my shoulder” (CET4) when they come into my classroom. One
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process specialist offers that administrative “support does not require a walkthrough” (PST1) discounting instructional walks (generic) as an effective continuous improvement effort. These views support individual notions that instructional walks (generic) do not affect their teaching craft and demonstrate the current apprehension in this strategy as an accepted effective continuous improvement effort.

Teachers (89%) report a sense of compliance for a variety of reasons. These reasons are recalled outside of a continuous improvement cycle and not aligned to perceived improvements in an individuals’ teaching craft but rather to perceptions of lack of control resulting in feeling the need to comply and self-promote. Comments are most often associated with written feedback and feedback received by a principal. Sixteen recollections include a noted change in behavior with 61% specifically commenting that they began “playing the game.” The game played is inferred as a change in teaching behaviors to align with the formative “look-fors” in Learning Walks (principal) or to criteria based on the summative State teacher evaluation rubric (Evaluative Walk-throughs). The teaching behaviors found on these checklists are ultimately based on educational research in pedagogy and instruction. Teachers (a majority of the content experts) recall making changes to their classroom environment or in teaching behaviors as a sense of self-promotion. Individuals responded that they “want to please their principal” or want to avoid further dings.

Accountability. A sense of accountability appears as an underlining theme involving the overall utility of the instructional walk (generic) system. Teachers (28%) recalled levels of accountability to the State and their district as aspects of compliance over desired or necessary changes in their own teaching behaviors. This is specifically
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related to Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), and perceived in formats of the Learning Walk (principal). However, one teacher shared that she feels accountable to herself and should be accountable to her evaluator. She further reported she would “do the right thing” regardless of instructional walks (generic) being implemented (CET7). Another teacher reported that he feels accountable (everyday) to the learning of his students. He fears students may know if he is not up to par and internalizes those expectations. Teachers have most often recalled aspects of accountability and compliance, including questioning and wondering what others expect of them (the teacher) and in the case of aggregate Learning Walk (principal) data, “did my ‘ding’ cause a drop in the percent recorded?” (CET8, CET9, and PST5).

**Reflection.** Teachers (39%) also recall ways in which the instructional walks (generic) provide a sense of reflection on their own personal teaching craft. Four (22%) teachers, two content experts and two process specialists, recall specific instances where they have used the feedback from their principal(s) to make an intentional (and permanent) change in their instruction. Process specialists report reflection more often than the content experts interviewed. In these cases, the individuals often report a follow-up conversation with their principal. Unfortunately, these recalled instructional walks (generic) and the data collected are not reported to guide the overall design of subsequent professional development opportunities reported by some as a “missed opportunity.”

Equally concerning is recalled in the unclear expectation to act on the feedback and make changes in teaching behaviors.

Instructional Rounds (colleague) are thought to be useful and teachers reflected that they consider and employ these strategies more often. They cite feedback that is
more specific and provided by an expert in their same field. This is noted across instructor roles. One content expert indicated he will replicate a lesson more often when receiving positive feedback from the department chair. Two process specialist remarked that they believe their department chair can provide useful strategies for working with their diverse student population. These views remain individual and singular as one content expert did not find value in colleague walks (Instructional Rounds).

**Rationalizing.** Overall, an additional underlining sub-theme of rationalizing emerges when discussing teachers’ perceptions of the impact of instructional walks (generic). The direct impact of the instructional walks (generic) conducted by principals is rationalized citing snapshots of performance and the inability to “hit (all) of the (top) marks.” Individuals also question the effectiveness and value of any the instructional walks (generic) for both themselves and the individual walking. Eight (89%) content experts and five (78%) process specialist made mention that principals and colleagues are too busy to make instructional walks (generic) meaningful. Others noted that they don’t feel a sense of influence regarding their role in the walks. No teachers reported having designed the “look-fors” used in the Learning Walks (principals). A few (17%) teachers reported being involved in conversations around Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) and one collective bargaining unit reviewed the feedback form prior to its use. The lack of influence and control result in a general lack of perceived effectiveness by teachers interviewed.

One teacher expressed that he believes “the effectiveness is very questionable in my opinion” (CET3). This content expert also shares that he “would not put a whole lot of authority in a three to five-minute observation” (CET3). Another teacher indicates that
“this is not effective” (CET4). Yet another says “it is a joke” (CET11) referring to the requirement for Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Several others rationalize their perceived inability to receive top marks in such a short timeframe and therefore rationalize that instructional walks (generic) are mandated and/or a means to increase a principal’s presence rather than shape and support their growth as teachers. However, 94% indicate changes made in anticipation of subsequent instructional walks (generic).

**Summary**

An examination of high school teachers’ responses to instructional walks (generic) revealed a considerable amount of data. In general, three themes appeared: anticipation/apprehension, control, and lack of utility. These themes are found across all phases of the continuous improvement cycle: before the walk, during the walk, and reflecting after the walk. Teachers recalled varying levels of anticipation and apprehension with more feelings associated with principal led walks than colleague walks, and the moments when a visitor first enters the classroom. Teachers reported that a sense of the unknown is felt when principals enter their classroom, and wondered if their visits were summative (Evaluative Walk-throughs) or formative (Learning Walks) concluding that all walks are indeed evaluative.

In addition to feelings of anticipation and apprehension, teachers report feelings of varying levels of control with more control reported during colleague walks than principal led walks. However, lack of control was reported more often and explained as a feeling of not having influence across any of the walk phases. This theme was reported by both content experts and process specialists.
Lack of utility was reported as the feeling of the overall impact and effect of an instructional walk (generic) on an individuals’ continuous improvement. Teachers reported lower levels of perceived changes in teaching behaviors, however, in describing subsequent walks reported almost unanimously changes in teaching behaviors that were made. This was true in both principal led walks and generally, although less formally, during Instructional Rounds (colleague). In the next chapter, data associated with high school teachers’ perceptions of instructional walks (generic): Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor), Learning Walks (principal), and Instructional Rounds (colleague) will be discussed and interpreted in terms of limitations of findings and implications for educational practice.
Chapter 5: INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS

Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning. - Benjamin Franklin

Introduction

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the perceptions of high school teachers and their views on the overall utility of differentiated instructional walks (generic): Learning Walks (principal), Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). The aim of this study was to capture holistically the reflective experience and interpretation of teachers who are the target and intended beneficiaries of these walks as part of continuous improvement efforts waged by principals. Teachers who participated in this study recalled a range of experiences under the three overarching themes of feelings of anticipation/apprehension and varying feelings of control, while also reflecting on a variety of experiences relating to the lack of utility of the instructional walk (generic) as a continuous improvement strategy employed in an effort to improve their teaching craft. Data revealed that the eighteen teachers interviewed would like to have choice across the walk formats including control over the scheduling of instructional walks (generic), selection of the visitor observing, the purpose for the walk, the “look-fors” during the walk, as well as the feedback mechanism after the walk. Results are discussed relative to the research questions guiding this study, as well as existing literature on the subject of instructional walks (generic), the implications for educators and policy makers, and recommendations for further study.

This qualitative study was conducted in four high schools located in the Southwest region of Ohio. A phenomenological approach was used to reflectively
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Examine the perceptions of high school teachers experiencing instructional walks (generic). Both teachers and principals were interviewed, however, teachers were the primary research participants, while principals provided contextual information to inform teacher interviews at each research site. Data obtained from eighteen teachers’ interview responses were analyzed for evidence of major themes which will inform the discussion of stated research questions in the next section of this chapter.

Interpretation of Study Findings

The following overarching research question guided this comparative phenomenological study of instructional walks (generic): *What is the sense of lived experience reported by high school teachers who have been recipients of instructional walks (generic) during the past two academic school years?*. Specifically, the principal investigator sought to understand the overall experience of high school teachers before, during, and after the instructional walks (generic), as well as their perceived utility across walk formats. Analyzing the data yielded three interconnected themes relevant to this overarching question. The themes of anticipation/apprehension, control, and lack of utility were recalled individually by participants with commonalities evident across teachers. Exploring these themes below in relation to each of the study’s specific research questions provides a path to examining the perceptions of value teachers place on instructional walks (generic) as part of their continuous improvement strategies.

Research Question One

The first research question addresses the overall experience of high school teachers as recipients of instructional walks (generic) at each stage of the continuous improvement cycle (planning, acting, and reflecting) and whether the experience is
differentiated by type of walk. Sub-questions relating to this first research question concern the experience of high school teachers prior to receiving an instructional walk (generic), while being observed, following the completion of the walk (including follow-up feedback, reflection and outcomes), and whether any of these experiences are differentiated by the type of walk. Perceptions of teachers were explored throughout each stage of the instructional walk (generic) cycle, identifying similarities and differences based on the walk format. Results reveal variations related to teachers’ feelings of anticipation/apprehension and control, and support the conclusion that the majority of high school teacher experience general feelings of apprehension and lack of control during the entirety of the walk and across walk formats.

In planning for the walk, the majority of teachers experience feelings of anticipation. These feelings are likened to a sense of lack of control and influence. Recollections of not knowing when an instructional walk (generic) will occur leave teachers feeling “on” and apprehensive about when to incorporate non-active teaching behaviors such as the administration of assessments. Teachers prefer to seek out the visitor and invite him/her into the classroom at peak instructional times rather than receive random visits. Additionally, teachers feel unsure when and how to introduce visitors to the class when they enter. The manner in which teachers address this apprehension varies from not introducing the visitor to fully incorporating the visitor into the classroom activity. Fully including a colleague into the classroom is more common than including the principal.

Feelings of apprehension were partnered with feelings of confusion regarding the purpose and use of data collected during a walk(s), across all walk formats (formative or
summative) and visitor roles (principal or colleague). Teacher’s experiences were not vastly different based on their role as a content expert or process specialist, however, process specialists are generally more apprehensive when visitors beyond colleagues or known administrators stop by the classroom.

During an instructional walk (generic), teachers employ a variety of strategies to ameliorate the feelings of apprehension and lack of control. A range of behaviors are employed when the visitor enters the classroom. These are generally captured in three actions: internalizing, engaging, and assisting. Many teachers internalize the class dynamics when a visitor enters to ensure students are on task. Others engage the visitor by welcoming him/her or encouraging a dialogue. Lastly, some teachers assist the visitor by setting the stage. Some teachers also seek out the individual who visited their classroom after a walk to engage in a dialogue about teaching behaviors witnessed. Not all of these behaviors are employed by every teacher but when employed, these actions are reported to reduce the apprehension felt by many educators during the visit.

Teachers experience varying levels of apprehension in anticipation of receiving feedback, with the highest level of specific anxiety being associated with principal led walks, as these are thought of as evaluative in nature irrespective of the walk format (formative Learning Walk or summative Evaluative Walk-through). Teachers generally remain unsure of other purposes of instructional walks (generic) by principals except as an avenue for collecting evaluative snapshots. Feedback from principals take the form of written appraisals given to the teacher, whereas feedback, if provided, by department chairs is often non-verbal or delivered in an informal verbal manner, often as a
compliment. Individual feedback is not generally expected after colleague walks, nor do most teachers experience apprehension about feedback given by their colleagues.

Principal feedback, when received, is reviewed for agreement, acceptance, and/or evaluated with respect to later compliance. If a teacher disagrees with the feedback, follow-up activities such as emailing the principal, seeking the principal out to have a conversation, and/or recording the rational for disagreement in personal notes may follow. Acceptance of feedback results in a tendency to repeat the action or lesson, and a desire to please the visitor by complying with suggestions or shifting practice to reduce the “dings” received in subsequent walks. These responses characterize both teachers who viewed aggregate school data, as well as those who received individual feedback. Despite the responses to feedback when it occurs, a lack of clarity surrounds the actual expectations for compliance or change based on the feedback provided after an instructional walk (generic).

*Conclusion 1: Anticipation and apprehension are frequently experienced by high school teachers in relation to all aspects of the instructional walk (generic). More feelings are associated with walks conducted by principals (e.g. Evaluative Walk-throughs and Learning Walks) than with walks conducted by others such as department chairs and instructional coaches (e.g. Instructional Rounds).*
Conclusion 2: Individual feelings of control vary and are impacted by the walk format, purpose of the walk, as well as a teacher’s relationship and interactions with the visitor. Teachers attempt to ameliorate these feelings by employing actions through internalizing, engaging, and/or assisting behaviors.

Conclusion 3: Feelings of anticipation/apprehension decrease and feelings of control increase when individuals receiving instructional walks (generic) have the ability to invite individuals into their classrooms, participate in defining “look-fors,” and have input into the timing of walks.

Conclusion 4: Teachers desire the individual visiting to have an awareness of the classroom dynamics including instructional topics (content experts) and student behaviors (process specialists).

Conclusion 5: Instructional walks (generic) are largely successful in gaining conformity with feedback (repeating or adopting endorsed behaviors and decreasing non-endorsed behaviors) despite the lack of clarity about the expectations for compliance.

Research Question Two

The second research question addresses the overall utility high school teachers as recipients associate with instructional walks (generic) and whether that experienced utility is differentiated by the type of walk: (a) Learning Walks (principal), (b) Instructional Rounds (colleague), and/or (c) Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor). Sub-questions related to this second research question
concern the utility high school teachers associate with the purpose(s) of the differentiated walks, the feedback they receive from those observing, and the continuous improvements to their teaching that may result. Results of this study support the conclusion that the majority of high school teachers experience a small direct impact from instructional walks (generic) on their teaching behaviors, resulting primarily from a sense of compliance.

As teachers reflect on the entirety of an instructional walk, they experience feelings of apprehension and lack of control similar to those experienced in anticipation of the walks. In general, these feelings include a lack of influence and transparency which result in a perceived lack of control and apprehension around the instructional walk (generic) system. Specifically, teachers acknowledge an awareness that instructional walks (generic) are mandated and, therefore, must be performed. Teachers report that having no choice in whether or not they desire to participate in instructional walks (generic) as part of their continuous improvement is one factor to which they attribute individual feelings of lack of control around how they receive the walk. While recalled with lesser concern, colleague walks are also mentioned with a feeling of “out of the control” of the individual teacher.

Teachers offered solutions and changes to the way walks are conducted that could help to alleviate these feelings and increase their perceptions of utility overall, including: (a) more direct involvement with the process of instructional walks (generic), regardless of the walk format, in an effort to increase their feelings of control, (b) collaboration in developing the “look fors,” and (c) inclusion of enhancements to the feedback mechanism. These were all offered as areas for potential improvements. Additionally,
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teachers recall a sense of missed opportunity when the individual visiting did not have an understanding of the classroom dynamics including the lesson and/or students, as well as how those dynamics impact what the visitor provides in the form of feedback. The sense of lack of understanding about the teachers’ classroom dynamics contributes to the perception of diminished impact of the walk on improvements to one’s teaching craft. Teachers feel individuals visiting are not able to fully understand and reflect on the visit to offer specific feedback. Colleague walks are met with less emotion. However, aspects of a colleague’s walk are recalled as opportunities to provide their principal a way to learn more about an individual teacher’s classroom and teaching behaviors. Teachers also recognize the importance of principal presence in the classroom and offer avenues for principals to visit more often and with less formality. The suggestion of visiting fellow teachers’ classrooms and not just receiving walks was also made.

Teachers experiencing instructional walks (generic) are not quite sure what the data collected will be used for and if there is an expectation that they change teaching behaviors based on the feedback. The collective sense is that principal conducted walks could not be rescheduled for a more opportune instructional time given the duties of a principal. It was also thought that colleague walks are difficult to reschedule because of the colleague’s own teaching duties, although it was generally felt that colleagues would reschedule if it were possible. Data collected during inopportune, non-active teaching times is felt to result in less valuable results and outcomes. In addition, the infrequency of walks and the feeling of non-specific feedback (reported as one-way feedback) are also experienced as missed opportunities. However, teachers acknowledge the difficulty in visitors conducting more planned instructional walks (generic) and offering specific
feedback on what is observed given their other duties. Nonetheless, the multiple factors interfering with conducting more strategically timed and informative instructional walks (generic) is a concern regardless of the individual conducting the walk.

When provided feedback, most often by the principal, many teachers make changes in their teaching behaviors to comply with the suggestions offered. Fewer teachers engage in reflection followed by improvements in long-term classroom dynamics, such as student engagement in the lesson and students’ knowledge of success criteria, as a result of instructional walks (generic). Most changes teachers do make are primarily aimed at reducing “dings” in subsequent walks, not necessarily because they believed the feedback to be valuable. Teachers did not always perceive the changes to be in line with improving their teaching craft, but rather to conform to an external expectation or fulfill a desire to please a fellow educator. However, teachers do acknowledge a general sense of alignment between “look-fors” and corresponding educational research. Nevertheless, teachers tend to rationalize the feedback and conclude that they are not able to “hit all of the marks” on a feedback form.

Conclusion 6: The overall utility of instructional walks (generic) from the perspective of teachers experiencing them is affected by a variety of factors including: timing, lack of input to the process, and unclear purposes and expected outcomes of walks employed.

Conclusion 7: From the perspective of the teachers experiencing them, the utility of instructional walks (generic) could be improved by: jointly scheduling walks, and intentionally including teachers in the development of “look-fors” and feedback mechanisms.
Conclusion 8: In response to feedback, teachers make changes in their teaching behaviors primarily in an effort to reduce the number of “dings” received on subsequent walks.

Conclusion 9: Compliance is accomplished as an outcome of instructional walks (generic), however, teachers report the quality of their own teaching is not necessarily improved through this action.

Conclusion 10: Even when they comply with feedback from instructional walks (generic), teachers do not perceive the changes they make to their teaching as contributing to an improvement in their overall teaching craft.

Discussion and Applications of Study Findings

Findings Related to the Study

Findings from this study suggest that teachers experience variation in feelings of anticipation/apprehension and control regarding instructional walks (generic). The overall sense of an instructional walk’s utility is consistent with actions of compliance. However, data analyzed indicate teachers do not attribute changes in the quality of their teaching to their personal experience as the target of an instructional walk (generic). A sense of varying value attributed to and utility of instructional walks (generic) as part of a teacher’s continuous improvement is evident in the research findings. Motivation to make suggested changes in teaching behaviors appears a result of compliance and/or as an effort to please one’s observer. This evidence is gleaned from data collected during the interviews regarding recollections of feedback and recalled changes in teaching behaviors.
Findings also indicate that teachers seek personal control and influence over the instructional walk (generic) system as a part of a continuous improvement cycle. While this may appear in an effort to reduce or eliminate the walks, that was not found to be true. Teachers expressed pride and desire in having individuals visit their classrooms. They also acknowledge the time constraints of those visiting and subsequently providing specific feedback to an individual teacher, as well as the feeling of visitors not visiting at the best times for themselves as the teacher, the students, nor the visitor. While not a specific aim of this study, teachers offered suggestions aimed at improving the walks to receive more desired outcomes.

All teachers report stronger feelings associated with principal led walks than when colleagues visit their classrooms. These are reported in relation to classroom dynamics. Data collected for this study did suggest a slight difference in teachers who were content experts and those labeled as process specialists as it relates to classroom dynamics. Content experts (11) recall more missed opportunities centered around classroom instructional happenings, whereas process specialists (seven) recall uneasy feelings associated with student behaviors during classroom visits. The collective preference by teachers is to have control and influence over when, who, and for what purpose the instructional walks (generic) will occur. These desires stem from teacher’s perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the walk(s) experienced and ways to further increase the overall utility of walks as a continuous improvement strategy.

Findings of this study revealed the desire for the instructional walks (generic) system to be more interactive and collaborative. For example, teachers wish to provide suggestions for the list of “look-fors,” as well as explanations to or conversations with
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principals when feedback is given. When colleagues visit, providing feedback or looking for specific teaching behaviors as an expert in the same field is suggested. Additionally, teachers hope that instructional walks (generic) could be scheduled collaboratively, include an opportunity for discussion, and if desired reciprocated with visits to fellow colleagues’ classes.

Data collected for this study did not reveal an overall sense that instructional walks (generic) currently improve teachers’ craft beyond levels of compliance, although teachers did remark that they repeat lessons or strategies if they receive positive feedback from the visitor. Teachers specifically recalled subsequent instructional walks (generic), of all formats, that included changes in teaching behaviors related to previous feedback suggestions. Specifically, the use of visible “look-fors” are included with greater frequency after teachers receive feedback from walks conducted by principals, or receive general aggregate feedback about what “look-fors” are evident in classrooms.

Findings Related to the Literature

Other educational researchers have asserted that the single most important factor impacting student achievement is the classroom teacher (Hattie, 2008; Marzano, 2007). Several studies have highlighted the benefits of instructional walks (generic) as a teacher improvement strategy (Marzano, 2011; City, 2011; Hattie, 2008; Silver et al., 2007). Previous studies indicate that instructional walk (generic) benefits include principal presence, the observation of colleagues implementing teaching strategies, as well as collaboration with colleagues regarding teaching strategies (Kachur et al., 2010; City et al., 2009). Data collected and analyzed for this study support principal presence as a perceived benefit of an instructional walk (generic).
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Data also revealed, although with varying levels of value, building collective school knowledge and increasing collaboration on instructional practices using instructional walks (generic) feedback are perceived benefits. Several teachers reported conversations with colleagues about their individual feedback. Principals from two schools also reported conversations about Learning Walk (principal) outcomes at faculty meetings. Teachers from these schools mentioned whole staff discussions, as well as follow-up conversations with smaller colleague groups. However, infrequency, non-specific feedback, and individual (evaluative) feedback were perceived by participants in this study to be negatives that lessen the impact of walks on teachers’ continuous improvement. In most cases teachers report receiving walks infrequently, with the exception of four teachers reporting from one school. Non-specific feedback in the format of checkboxes and general suggestions/observations are recalled with little utility by teachers interviewed. Additionally, the receipt of individual (evaluative) feedback rather than aggregate data, reported as infrequent at three schools, is felt to result in a sense of missed opportunity for school-wide collaboration and targeted professional development activities.

Best-practice supports the inclusion of teachers in the establishment of an instructional walk system including the development of the “look-fors” and/or checklist components based on their evaluative rubric (Bradley, L., personal communication, March 30, 2017). Further, Kachur et al., (2013) indicate that involving teacher in the process of designing instructional walks is essential. Having input from teachers in defining the purpose for the walks, ensuring transparency of the data collection protocol,
developing norms to govern walks, and intentionally discussing the data without it becoming evaluative or judgmental of teachers is considered by researchers as best practice (Kachur et al. 2013; Marzano, 2011).

At its core, school improvement acts as a change agent in targeting improved student achievement (Fullan, 2003). The instructional walk (generic) system mirrors a school improvement cycle in planning, acting, and reflecting. This notion of change is supported as individual teachers reflect on the general phases or stages of the walk(s) they have experienced. Additionally, research indicates when teachers are actively involved in the development of walks they buy-in to the system more readily (Kachur et al., 2010). A sense of action during the walk is felt to be more apparent than the actions before or after the walk. Teachers recall not knowing when walks would occur so actions in preparation are recalled in response to feedback from previous walks, which is also recalled with a lack of specificity. Teachers express a sense of compliance, acknowledged as the addition of research-based “look-fors” in their next walk, rather than intentional changes targeting personal growth in their overall teaching craft. Some but not all teachers reported reflection after the receipt of feedback from an instructional walk (generic). How teachers’ grow remains important in the continual improvements and overall positive changes across a school ultimately resulting in improved student achievement (Feeney, 2007). Data gleaned from this study indicate that while teachers do not directly indicate intentional improvements in their teaching craft, subtle changes are made in the behaviors and strategies they employ as they consider the feedback received as part of an instructional walk (generic).
Cervone and Martinez-Miller (2007) describe walkthroughs as an instrument to guide cycles of continuous improvement by focusing on the effects of instruction. The use of “look-fors” in formative walks or checklist components aligned with the summative teacher evaluation system provide feedback to teachers. This feedback, received individually and/or collectively, may be useful to impact changes in the classroom. Additionally, the literature highlighted in chapter two indicates that through observation and feedback gained from walks, teachers will move toward continual improvement through self-reflection, self-analysis, and self-direction as they teach (Kachur et al., 2013). However, at the time of this study, high school teachers interviewed report that the use of feedback is not fully articulated nor are there expectations beyond utilizing the feedback as mere suggestions. The use and subsequent implementation of feedback is thought to remain the personal decision of the teacher.

Lacking in the literature was evidence of teachers’ perspectives on the utility of instructional walks (generic) as a component of their own continuous improvement. This study was designed to capture the perspectives of high school teachers regarding three types of instructional walks (generic) and compare their experiences of each. Findings indicate that “look-fors” and feedback checklists, the requirement for evaluative walkthroughs per State law, as well as the uncertain expectation for teaching changes left teachers unsure of the actual impact of instructional walks (generic) on their teaching behaviors beyond compliance. Findings suggest a lack of an understood purpose, the underutilization of dialogue between the visitor and teacher about observed behaviors, an
absence of specific feedback, and a lack of clear expectations to make changes in subsequent teaching activities may represent missed opportunities to more directly engage teachers in self-improvement.

The data collected and analyzed in this study indicate infrequent feedback after the occurrence of an instructional walk (generic) and little opportunity for follow-up conversations. Moreover, previous studies reveal that in reality teachers are provided very little constructive feedback after a walk is received (Kachur et al., 2010). Reflections of one’s own professional practice can be a powerful influence on teachers and leaders should provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching (Feeney, 2007). Additionally, the infrequency or lack of colleagues walks (Instructional Rounds) also represents a missed opportunity to provide content experts and process specialists opportunities for collaborative expertise in and engagement around specific teaching behaviors. The importance of reflection, dialogue, and action around observed behaviors appears to also be individually interpreted and valued. This was affirmed in the conclusions of this study and supported in current literature.

Several researchers concluded that observations of teachers were beneficial (Marshall & Young 2009; McGill, 2011; Routman, 2012; Skretta, 2008). Participants of this study also reported that observations of teachers by principals and colleagues have benefit across a variety of instructional walk (generic) formats. Principal presence was cited both in literature, as well as by a majority of the teachers interviewed as a beneficial purpose of an instructional walk (generic). Teacher motivation, self-efficacy, and confidence are enriched when principals are present and visible in the school. Teachers interviewed corroborate this benefit and report feeling appreciation when their principal
can speak to their teaching. Colleague walks (Instructional Rounds) are also reported as beneficial, although limited, in providing opportunities for teachers with similar instructional roles to visit the classroom, and as ways to engage in follow-up dialogue regarding strategies.

**Conclusions**

The results of this study are consistent with findings from other researchers that suggest instructional walks (generic) can have benefits in a continuous improvement cycle, but suggest that not all the potential benefits may be currently realized. Asking directly the beneficiary of an instructional walk, as in this study, his/her perceptions could be valuable in contributing to an overall understanding of the walk as a continuous improvement strategy in education. Participants in this study offered suggestions they thought could potentially improve the current instructional walk (generic) format from teachers’ perspectives regarding the overall utility and value of the walks.

Results of this study indicate that high school teachers vary in their perceptions of value that instructional walks (generic) have on their personal teaching craft. Teaching, as evidenced in the variety of recollections, is experienced as a personal endeavor. Specifically, feelings of both anticipation of and apprehension around the individual observing, the purpose for, and the use of the data collected during instructional walks were recalled by teachers who participated in this study. Additionally, feelings of compliance were recalled as a perceived outcome that was linked to the lack of control felt by individuals in the creation of the walk format(s). As noted in previous research (Kachur et al., 2010), and reiterated by teachers in this study, input and active collaboration in the creation of such a system of instructional walks (generic) may result
in greater acceptance and buy in of those being observed.

These findings suggest that involving teachers in ongoing collaboration and conversation about the design and implementation of instructional walks (generic), educational leaders may improve the overall experience and perceived utility of these continuous improvement strategies for those targeted. Results of this study point to a variety of implications for further research, and suggest opportunities for school leaders, teachers, and policy makers to explore potentially beneficial modifications to current practice that take into account teachers’ experience of instructional walks (generic). These will be expanded upon in the following section.

Implications and Applications

Throughout the collection of data, the three themes of anticipation/apprehension, control, and utility continued to emerge resulting in ten conclusions. These conclusions relate to the ways participants in this study perceive instructional walks (generic), as well as to the suggestions they offered for improvement. These themes collectively and individually may have implication and application for educators and policy makers, as well as general relevance for further research. Feeney (2007) asserts, the goal of any educational initiative should be to improve student achievement. This idea may be applied to instructional walks (generic). Teachers acknowledge compliance as an outcome of instructional walks (generic). While these results cannot serve as a definitive guide for improving educational practice without further study, if educators and policy makers want instructional walks (generic) to be perceived as less disruptive and more beneficial as a continuous improvement strategy by the teachers receiving those walks, this study suggests they may wish to consider the experiences of those targeted in how
they implement these practices. Below are some of the areas where considering teacher’s experiences of instructional walks (generic) might provide opportunities for educational experimentation.

For School Leaders

An accepted method of identifying and growing good teachers is for educational leaders to visit classrooms and observe what happens when teachers teach and students learn (McGill, 2011). Numerous empirical research studies conclude that principals are the entity charged with shaping the instructional purpose of schools (Hattie, 2008; Marzano, 2011; Hallinger, 2009). Leaders indirectly promote student achievement in classrooms through the alignment of both structures and resources. School leaders set the culture and tone of the building, to do so they must have a working knowledge of the happenings across the entire school. Instructional walks (generic) are recognized as one avenue for obtaining this knowledge.

High school teachers interviewed as part of this study have varying perceptions about the overall system of instructional walks (generic), as well as the individual stages of the walk. These eighteen teachers offered suggestions and solutions that support recommendations found in current research and literature, as well as expand on their personal perceptions and feelings associated with walks. These data suggest some teachers desire to take a more active role in the planning, action of, and reflection in instructional walks (generic) received. While the implications of making changes to current practice are beyond the scope of this study, school leaders may wish to consider ways to accommodate teacher’s wishes that they be more involved in the entirety of the instructional walk (generic) process including planning, acting, and reflecting.
Participants in this study also noted concern with instructional walks (generic) regardless of the format or person visiting because of the unknown factors including when the walk will occur, what teaching behaviors will be observed during the walk, the intended purpose of the walk, and the walk’s relationship to one’s evaluation. These factors weighed heavily on their recall of events with a majority of recollections being associated with anticipation and apprehension specifically related to principal led walks. Teachers remarked that the lack of influence and control felt throughout the process results in their feeling that walks are imparted, the “look-fors” predetermined, the visits unannounced, and feedback inconsistent. While further research is needed to formulate normative solutions to these issues, striving for local remedies to address these factors, where they are found to exist, may contribute positively to the overall experience of the teachers targeted by these continuous improvement strategies.

At the onset of the instructional walk (generic) teachers may experience a benefit from having an active role in selecting the “look-fors,” as well as the general norms or structure of the walks. Specifically, data collected from this study indicate teachers wonder about the specific purpose of the walk(s) and how the data is going to be used. Most perceive walks conducted by principals to be evaluative even though Learning Walks (principal) are conveyed and recalled as a school-wide formative improvement strategy. Colleague walks (Instructional Rounds) were not perceived to be evaluative, however, individuals wondered about the purpose citing that they are not involved in the planning of a walk nor did they feel they provide their visiting colleague with areas in which they desire feedback. Results further suggest that a walk’s purpose as an improvement strategy is not necessarily internalized by the teachers targeted, and in most
cases is experienced as outside of one’s own growth as a teacher. While more systematic research is needed to confirm these results, they suggest that if educational leaders were to take steps to clarify the purpose of instructional walks (generic) and consider including teachers in their design, the overall experience and impact on teacher continuous improvement might be positively impacted.

Teachers who participated in this study would prefer the opportunity to select a time for the walk’s occurrence and believe this would ultimately increase its effectiveness. Recollections of times when the visitor witnessed non-active teaching behaviors is recalled as a missed opportunity. Teachers reflect on the limited time of principals and fellow colleagues to conduct walks and feel the scheduling of walks may alleviate missed opportunities to see the teacher “in action.” They also note both anticipation and apprehension regarding the lesson or classroom activity they will be engaging in when the visitor enters. Teachers’ recollections were consumed with how they would meet the expectations on the feedback forms and in making sure students were behaving. Recollections also involved the magnitude of the list of “look-fors.” This suggests potential benefits might be realized by principals offering an opportunity for scheduled walks, as well considering a few agreed on “look -fors” so that teachers can be prepared to demonstrate specific teaching behaviors that support the targeted expectations being evaluated at the time walks are scheduled to take place.

Findings in this study indicate that teachers desire meaningful feedback. They want feedback to be conversational while also providing the opportunity to ask questions and reflect on ways to be better at what they do. Additionally, the teachers interviewed in this study felt that principals engaging in instructional walks (generic) can begin to
develop teacher leaders and determine instructionally what teachers do well. Instructional walks (generic) modeled this way would no longer be a “once a year” summative appraisal but rather an ongoing formative collection of insights in the best practices across the building. Participants also noted that the feedback might guide or be aligned to professional learning either individually or collectively. The assumption underlying these perceptions that deserves further investigation is that school leaders who have a working understanding of classroom instruction and instructional behaviors may be better equipped to provide support for teachers and ultimately support for students.

The teacher perceptions reflected in this phenomenological study argue for the continued presence of principals in classrooms and around the school. Overwhelmingly, the high school teachers interviewed in this study expressed appreciation for principals who visit classrooms, know students’ names, and know “what kind of teacher I am.” The literature supports teachers’ desire for instructional leadership and guidance (Hallinger, 2009) and promotes the idea that instructional leaders who visit classrooms gain a working understanding of the school, its culture, and ways to make overall improvements. Teachers interviewed indicated agreement with principals’ presence in classrooms as one effective way for the school leader to have an understanding of the instructional tone of the school resulting in a finger on the “pulse on the school.” These findings support that idea that under the right conditions, teachers may welcome enhancing principal involvement in teachers’ continuous improvement processes. Further research to clarify these conditions would be a suitable follow-up to this study.
For Teachers

School leaders help teachers gain expertise in effective teaching behaviors when they provide ongoing dialogue and reflection coupled with planned improvements (Marzano, 2011). Results of this study indicate that under the right conditions teachers appreciate and value informal non-evaluative visits by fellow educators is supported by the existing literature (Frase, 2001). Research also indicates that teachers learn from each other when they teach one another the art of teaching (Kachur et al., 2013). However, data analyzed from this study reveals that the current practice of instructional walk (generic) systems can result in more outcomes of compliance than in active dialogue and reflection on classroom practices and visitor feedback. Addressing this discrepancy may result in the increase in the continuous improvement of teachers’ craft.

Findings of this study reveal the extent to which teacher’s experience with instructional walks (generic) reflect a desire to participate in the processes designed to improve their teaching craft. While it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether greater involvement by teachers in these processes would actually result in their improvement, the findings do offer ideas for further study to inform this question. These suggestions include increased opportunities for dialogue and visits to one another’s classrooms by teachers, opportunities to try out teaching strategies, to have fellow educators provide meaningful, non-evaluative feedback, and to actively engage in setting the “look-fors” and participate in the dialogue both before and after an instructional walk (generic). The untested assumptions underlying all of these ideas are that teachers visiting and being visited by fellow educators encourages collaborative problem-solving, and greater involvement and control over their continuous improvement systems may result
in positive changes (improvements) to teaching behaviors. This study offers no evidence to suggest teachers who desire these changes may actually seek out and engage in active collaboration with principals and fellow teachers in designing, participating in, and reflecting on instructional walks (generic) in a variety of formats, and the predicting the effects of such collaborations is beyond the scope of this research. But the ground has been laid for research that would inform such initiatives.

**For Policy Makers**

Current educational policy promotes the idea that continual growth and improvement of a teacher is essential. Yet current policy makers have yet to recognize and fully apply the idea of instructional walks (generic) as both formative and summative strategies for improvement. Results of the current study are insufficient grounds for basing policy revisions, however, the findings suggest opportunities to consider the perceived benefits and limitations of existing policy from the perspective of those targeted by the practices. A review of current legislative mandates from the perspective of those targeted might reveal potential benefits of more fully engaging teachers in planning, acting, and reflecting on the continuous improvement cycle of the instructional walk (generic) framework, and promoting more internalized change in teachers’ craft beyond compliance.

Barth (2006) found that compliance as an impetus for change fails to substantiate long-term results. This was expressed as a concern by the majority participants interviewed as part of this study. Kachur et al. (2010) found Evaluative Walk-throughs (supervisor) are too often treated as discrete activities disconnected from other improvement efforts and organizational practices. Policy makers may find it beneficial to
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follow up on these insights to explore whether increased collaboration with educators in the field, especially teachers receiving instructional walks (generic), may provide valuable perspectives for improving the overall craft of teachers through the use of instructional walks (generic).

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this phenomenological study of teachers’ experiences with instructional walks (generic) identifies a range of perspectives that lays the ground for further study to determine what implications these subjective experiences may have for educational theory and practice (Latta, G. F., personal communication, March 13, 2017). One interesting extension to this study would be to combine the responses of teachers with a one-to-one correspondence to responses from their principals. This study did not seek to investigate the relationship between a teacher and his/her principal during a walk but rather the recalled experiences felt as the receiving teacher of a variety of walks. However, teachers in this study recalled more emotion from walks conducted by their principals (Evaluative Walk-throughs and Learning Walks). Longitudinally, tracking and interviewing school leaders and their teaching staff participating in instructional walks (generic) may result in a deeper awareness of cultural norms and expectations found in the individual schools as they relate to a fully enacted continuous improvement cycle (planning, acting, and reflecting). Further, a study focused on differentiating principal led walks between summative and formative purposes may result in a conscious awareness of teachers’ choice for compliance over internalized continuous improvement. The
generalized feelings gleaned from this study across schools may contribute to teachers’ compliance and reported implementation of feedback suggestions. Further investigation into such explanations for changes in teaching behaviors would be justified.

The eighteen teachers interviewed in this study did not report instances where they were also the teacher conducting an instructional walk (generic). Teachers only recalled their perceptions and feelings associated with being the target of walks. Investigating the interactions and perceptions among teachers experiencing both the receipt of the instructional walks (generic), as well as the delivery of the walk would provide insights into the dynamic of a fully articulated Instructional Round (colleague) system. This investigation may also provide insights into both teacher visits with “like” colleagues as content or process teachers, as well as across different contents and expertise.

A more focused investigation in the feedback principals provide to teachers could potentially expand the knowledge and understanding of the actual changes made in teaching behaviors resulting in the overall change in a teacher’s craft. It is thought that one reason for the perceptions of compliance in this study is the impact instructional walks (generic) have on a teacher’s appraisal as a mandated evaluative component. This may have prompted individuals to make changes in teaching behaviors in an effort to receive a higher ranking on their annual evaluation. Additionally, the types of compliance changes recalled by teachers is not thoroughly explored and future research could provide useful information in the rationale teachers had for changing some but not all teaching behaviors. This may provide more insight in how and why teachers respond in the
manner they do to principal feedback. These are just some of the opportunities for future research that might extend the insights of this study by exploring the implications of teachers’ phenomenology of instructional walks (generic).

**Limitations**

Limitations in this research included the narrow focus of instructional walks (generic) as a form of continuous improvement in education, the restricted scope of the population studied (high school teacher), the small number of participants, the tenure of the principal, and the constrains of phenomenological methods. The high schools invited to participate in this study because of their documented use of instructional walks (generic) were located geographically close to one another, in Southwest Ohio. The small group of teachers was interviewed was diverse in relation to their instructor roles, and exposure to multiple types of instructional walk (generic) formats, but was not fully representative of the population of high school educators in the region, state, or nationally. Only teachers who participated in at least two formats of instructional walks (generic) in the past two academic school years were interviewed. Additionally, the principals of each of the four high schools had less than five years of tenure as the leader at their respective high schools. Given these limitations, results of this study are to be considered preliminary and narrow. While caution should be exercised in extrapolating results based on these methodological limitations, the potential to inform subsequent research could be beneficial. Other forms of improving the teaching craft should be studied as a comparison to instructional walks (generic). More objective methods of assessing the dynamics and outcomes of instructional walks (generic) should be employed, targeting broader populations and involving more participants.
Concluding Thoughts

Results of this study suggest the manner in which teachers perceive instructional walks (generic) matters. Findings indicate the utility of current instructional walk (generic) systems may not be fully internalized as a continuous improvement activity by recipients. Teachers express a desire to be more actively involved in the design and implementation of instructional walks (generic), but it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether this could have a positive impact on the collective and individual growth of the teaching staff. Data suggests that teachers lack of participation in developing a comprehensive instructional walk (generic) system including planning, acting, and reflecting, may have implications for their apprehension/anticipation, sense of control, and perceptions of the lack of utility of these walks. The teachers interviewed who were all relatively uninvolved in the process of designing such a continuous improvement strategies express limited value in the process, questioned the value of the activity, and attributed changes in teaching behaviors to compliance rather than a personal choice to improve. If it is true that the largest determining factor in student achievement is the quality of the instructor, then taking into account teachers’ perspectives could be valuable in future studies of instructional walks (generic) as a means of continuous teacher improvement.
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DISTRIBUTED PERSPECTIVES OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS


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APPENDIX A:

Organization/Principal Informed Consent Form

Dear Principal,

This form is to discuss your individual and your school’s participation in an exploratory qualitative doctoral study, which will take place from August to November 2016. This form details the purpose of this study, study procedures, and your rights as a participant.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to capture the experience of high school teachers who have participated in one or more instructional walks conducted as a form of continuous improvement during the past two academic years. As the principal, you will be asked to describe the school’s demographics, share a description of the walk(s) performed at your school, and provide artifacts relevant to the study (such as walk planning documents, walk protocols or checklists, feedback sheets, data collection forms).

**Procedures:** Your participation in this study, as the school’s principal, will consist of being interviewed using questions from a structured interview protocol. You will be asked to describe the school’s demographics, share a description of the walk(s) performed at your school, and provide artifacts relevant to the study. You will also be asked to provide a personnel listing of teachers to determine an appropriate sample.

Teacher’s participation in this will study will consist of being interviewed using questions from a semi-structured protocol. They will be asked to describe their experiences as a teacher before, during, and after being observed in the context of one or more instructional walk(s).

All interviews will last approximately one hour in length, with the potential for follow-up interviews. You nor your teachers are required to answer the questions, and anyone may pass on any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. At any time, you or a member of your staff may notify the researcher that you/they would like to stop the interview and your/their participation in the study. No penalty exists for discontinuing participation. In the event you/they choose to withdraw from the study, all information you/they provide (including recordings) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

**Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria:** Your organization is being invited to participate in this study because your public high school participates in a variety of instructional walks. Teachers are eligible to participate in the study if they have experienced at least two different types of instructional walks during the past two academic years, and are certified in either a core content discipline or as an interventionist/specialist.

**Confidentiality:** All conversations and data collected, including field notes and recordings, will be limited to the scope of this study. With your consent, interviews will be recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your insights and reflections. The following procedures will be used to keep your personal information confidential in this study:
CONSENT FORM - DIFFERENTIATED PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL WALKS

- Consent forms and data collected will be retained in a secure location for two (2) years and then destroyed.
- Confidentiality of study participants will be maintained at all times during data analysis and report of results.
- Transcripts of interview and field notes will be coded during analysis to conceal the identity of participants.
- Only I and my dissertation advisor will have access to these raw data files during analysis.
- Group and thematic data only will be reported in the final paper, however, illustrative narratives and quotes may be anonymously incorporated to enhance interpretation of findings.
- The organization, your name, teacher names, and any identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written or oral presentations of this research.
- The final product will be a written narrative—a qualitative research dissertation—which will be read by the researcher’s professor and dissertation committee.

**Risks/Benefits:** There are no direct benefits or known risks to participating in this study. However, you may find the opportunity for teachers to reflect upon their experience with instructional walks, and to contribute to educational research, to be enjoyable and personally satisfying. In addition, both you and teacher participants will be offered an opportunity to obtain a copy of the final research report when it becomes available.

**Participant Rights:**
- You, your schools, and teachers’ participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on you, the organization, or teachers.
- You and the teachers have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.
- You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Questions about the Study:**
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Tracy Quattrone at (513) 476-0075 or by email at quattronet@xavier.edu or the co-investigator and research supervisor, Dr. Gail F. Latta, Xavier University at (513) 745-2986 or by email at lattag@xavier.edu.

This research has been approved by Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB at (513) 745-2870.

If you sign below, it means that you have read the information given in this consent form, and you consent to participate.

_________________________  ___________________  ______________
Participant’s Name           Signature                  Date
APPENDIX B:
Organization/Principal Interview Questions

School Demographics:
Describe the general demographics of the school (e.g.: grades served, population including general student and staff demographics, continuous improvement activities, current initiatives)

Instructional Walk Format(s):
Describe the instructional walk format(s) employed in this school during the past two academic years:

- How long have the walk format(s) been a part of the school?
- Planning: What is the purpose of the walk(s)? Are there initiatives or “look fors” aligned to the walk(s)?
- Acting: Who conducts the walk(s) and who is observed? How are teachers selected for observation and what is the process and timing for notifying them and scheduling a pending walk? How frequent are the walks? For how long do visitors remain in the room? How are observations recorded?
- Reflecting: Is Ho feedback provided to the observed instructor(s) and if so, when and how is that feedback provided?
- Artifacts: Are there artifacts aligned to the walk(s) (e.g.: walk planning documents, walk protocols or checklists, feedback sheets, data collection forms)

Instruction Walk Format #1:
- Learning Walk
- Instruction Round
- Evaluative Walk-through
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Instruction Walk Format #2:
- Learning Walk
- Instruction Round
- Evaluative Walk-through

Instruction Walk Format #3:
- Learning Walk
- Instruction Round
- Evaluative Walk-through

General Comments:

School Code _____
- Teaching personnel list
  - Criteria reviewed and population verified #___________
    - content #___________ and specialist #___________
  - Random Sample generated: content #___________ and specialist #___________
APPENDIX C:

Sample Teacher Participant Introduction Correspondence
(via email or phone communication)

Dear (Teacher Participant),

My name is Tracy Quattrone and I was provided your name and contact information by your principal, (name). I am currently recruiting volunteers to participate in an exploratory qualitative study of classroom teachers in Southwestern Ohio to be conducted August to November 2016. This study is being conducted under the supervision of my doctoral dissertation advisor, Dr. Gail F. Latta, Associate Professor and Director of Leadership Studies at Xavier University.

The purpose of this study is to capture your experience as a high school teacher participating in a variety of instructional walks as a form of continuous improvement. If you choose to participate, your involvement will consist of a one-time interview with me. During the interview, you will be asked to recall your subjective experiences and perceptions before the walk occurred and while being observed. Lastly, you will be asked to describe any follow-up that occurred including your perceptions of any feedback you may have been provided. I am interested in your experiences and your perceptions of that experience only. You will not be asked about the content of feedback provided or your opinions or judgments about policies, your administrators, or other observers.

Your participation, as well as any perspectives shared with me as part of this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. A more detailed informed consent will be provided prior to your interview. It is my hope that through yours and others confidential descriptions, we can collectively add to the body of knowledge regarding the practice of instructional walks as a means to improving our craft.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in volunteering for this study. If you would like to participate or have questions about what participation will involve, please contact me at 476-0075 or by email at quattronet@xavier.edu.

Sincerely,

Tracy
Dear Teacher Participant,

This form describes your participation in an exploratory qualitative doctoral study being conducted August to November 2016. It details the purpose of the study, procedures you will experience as a participant in the study, and your rights as a participant. Your name and contact information as well as permission to contact you was granted by your school’s principal.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to capture the experience of high school teachers who have participated in one or more instructional walks conducted as a form of continuous improvement during the past two academic years. If you consent to participate, you will be asked to recall perceptions of your experience before the walk occurred and while being observed. Lastly, you will be asked to describe whether feedback was provided after the walk, and any dimensions that feedback may have added to the experience.

**Procedures:** Your participation in this study will consist of being interviewed using questions from a semi-structured protocol. The interview will last approximately one hour, with the potential for follow-up interviews to clarify your perspectives. You will be asked to describe your experiences as a teacher before, during, and after being observed in the context of one or more instructional walk(s). You are not required to answer the questions, and you may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and withdraw from participation in the study. No penalty exists for discontinuing participation. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide (including recordings) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

**Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria:** You are being invited to participate in this study because you are currently employed at a public high school that participates in at least two forms of instructional walks. You are eligible to participate in the study if you have experienced at least two different types of instructional walks during the past two academic years, and are certified in either a core content discipline or as an interventionist/specialist.

**Confidentiality:** All conversations and data collected, including field notes and recordings, will be limited to the scope of this study. With your consent, interviews will be recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your insights and reflections. The following procedures will be used to keep your personal information confidential in this study:
- Consent forms and data collected will be retained in a secure location for two (2) years and then destroyed.
- Confidentiality of study participants will be maintained at all times during data analysis and report of results.
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- Transcripts of interview and field notes will be coded during analysis to conceal the identity of participants.
- Only I and my dissertation advisor will have access to these raw data files during analysis.
- Group and thematic data only will be reported in the final paper, however, illustrative narratives and quotes may be anonymously incorporated to enhance interpretation of findings.
- Your name and any identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written or oral presentations of this research.
- The final product will be a written narrative—a qualitative research dissertation—which will be read by the researcher’s professor and dissertation committee.

Risks/Benefits: There are no direct benefits or known risks to participating in this study. However, you may find the opportunity to reflect upon your experience with instructional walks, and to contribute to educational research, to be enjoyable and personally satisfying. In addition, you will be offered an opportunity to obtain a copy of the final research report when it becomes available.

Participant Rights:
- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on you.
- You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.
- You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Questions about the Study:
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Tracy Quattrone at (513) 476-0075 or by email at quattronet@xavier.edu or the co-investigator and research supervisor, Dr. Gail F. Latta, Xavier University at (513) 745-2986 or by email at lattag@xavier.edu.

This research has been approved by Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB at (513) 745-2870.

If you sign below, it means that you have read the information given in this consent form, and you consent to participate.

_________________________________  ___________________________  ____________
Participant’s Name                     Signature                           Date
APPENDIX E:

Semi-Structured Teacher Interview Questions

Overall Insights:
1. Have you experienced one or more instructional walk (Learning Walk, Instructional Round, and Evaluative Walk-through) format in the last two academic years?
   a. What format(s)? Roughly how many (of each)? How many of these occurred in the past academic year.
   b. Who conducted these walks?
   c. What did you understand to be the purpose (of each) of the walk(s)?
   d. How many of these would you say that you can recall in detail? What made these walks particularly meaningful?

2. In the last two academic years, recall and describe the first time that you remember experiencing the walk. What was that particular experience like?
   a. What is your initial memory? When and how did the walk occur?
   b. Describe for me everything you can about the experience.
   c. How did this experience make you feel? In anticipation of the walk? In the moment? Feedback received after the walk? Your own reflective thoughts?

3. In the last two academic years, do any specific instructional walks stand out for you as a significant experience?
   a. Describe for me everything you can recall about the experience.
   b. What was the format?
   c. Do you recall the purpose?
   d. Who observed you?
   e. What occurred during the observation (length, interactions, behaviors of students/self)?
   f. Was feedback provided? If so, describe the feedback.
   g. Do you believe the walk influenced your growth as an educator? In what ways? Was there a particular part of the entire walk process that felt more or less relevant to you? Why?

4. After the initial experience (or significant experience) describe your subsequent experiences with instructional walks in the last academic year.
   a. Describe for me everything you can recall about the experience
   b. Did the walks vary? If so, how. Describe the differences.
   c. Did similarities exist? Describe.
   d. Was there a change in your feelings as you experienced additional walks? If so, can you share what you attribute that change to? If not, can you share why?
   e. Did you experience differences in planning (purpose), acting (being observed), and/or reflecting (feedback and internalization)?
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Focusing on that walk (or a walk format or a vivid experience)….

Planning/Before the Walk:
5. Recall your feelings in anticipation of the walk.

6. Describe the way you found out you would be observed.
   a. Who was observing? How many?
   b. Did you know when the observer(s) was coming?
   c. Did you plan for the arrival? Describe that process.

7. What did you understand the purpose of the walk to be? Why was the individual(s) coming to observe you?
   a. Did you accept that purpose, modify it, or create a parallel purpose for the walk?
   b. Was this a shared or individual meaning (was it imparted on you as in a school initiative, conveyed in your evaluation/improvement area, or derived from an alternate source/your beliefs)?

8. What expectations did you have for the walk?
   a. Had those expectations been articulated or communicated to (or from) your observer(s)? Did the expectations include being observed? Receiving feedback?
   b. Did the expectations relate to your goals for improvement? Your evaluation? School Initiatives? Other?
   c. Did you perceive the expectations had an impact on the learning experiences you planned for your students?

Acting/During the Walk:
9. Recall your perceptions of the walk itself.
   a. Did you prepare (anything) differently for the visit? If so, was that preparation in relation to the purpose conveyed? Those observing?
      Were there levels of value (influence) assigned based on the purpose or observer(s)? (initiative, relationship to self, discipline, evaluative role, combination of these)
   b. Were you aware of any differences in your teaching practice during a walk? If so, describe.

10. Describe any (formal and informal) interactions with those observing?
    a. Did the observer interact with you? Describe.
    b. Did the observer interact with the students? Describe.
       Did you notice a change in student behaviors? If so, describe.
       Do you recall if you had a reaction when the observer interacted with students? Describe.
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Reflecting/After the Walk:
11. Recall the feelings you experienced when the observer left your classroom.
   a. Did you wonder about the impressions?
   b. Did you anticipate feedback? Why? When and in what form did you expect to receive feedback?
   c. Did you reflect internally about the walk? The feedback? Describe.

12. If you received feedback, describe the experience you had when receiving feedback?
   a. How did the feedback occur?
   b. What did you do with the feedback given?
   c. Did the value you placed on the feedback vary? Describe.
   d. Did you believe there was there a level of expectation by the observer that you receive and act on the feedback given? Describe.

Overall Insights (continued):
13. Reflect for a moment again on the walk process as a whole (holistically). What comes to mind?
   a. In general, do you attribute any particular changes in your teaching behaviors to the walk? What and why?
   b. Has the value (importance) you have personally placed on the walk(s) changed over time and experience?
   c. Is there a particular aspect of the walk that appears more or less valuable in your growth as an educator?
   d. Did you speak with others about your experience? Describe.

14. What perceived affect does the overall experience have on you as an educator? Describe the perceived benefits or negatives of any (or all) form of an instructional walk on your professional growth and development as an educator.
   a. What value if any did you place on receiving an instructional walk?
   b. What value if any did you place on the feedback you received?
   c. Did you prepare for a subsequent walk(s) differently because of the experience?

15. Describe the sense of impact/lack of impact to your overall teaching practice given your experience?
   a. Was there a change from your first experience to your most recent? How do you account for the change?
   b. Is your sense of change based on the conveyed purpose? Individual conducting the walk? The format of the walk? The feedback received?