Teacher-Principal Collegiality and Instructional Supervision: A Case Study of Relationships in the Context of Walkthrough Observations in Six Rural South Carolina Schools

by

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Abstract

What is the impact of walkthrough observations upon the teacher-administrator relationship? Such relationships can be positive, based on formative instructional leadership, or negative, rooted in distrust, policing, and enforcement of rules. Administrators and teachers may perceive the impact of walkthrough observations on their relationships differently. Downey, Steffey, English, Frase, and Poston (2004) argue that a walkthrough observation is about co-workers working together, Walkthroughs are a supervisory practice used for the purpose of improving pedagogy and student achievement.

Walkthroughs are hypothesized to be more effective when they are collegial. Collegiality creates a positive school culture and generates instructional leader and teacher ownership, concurrently, toward district and school goals. For the theoretical framework of this study, I developed a model of collegiality in walkthrough observations that has seven components. The seven components are: the high level of trust and respect amongst the instructional leader and teachers; the characteristics and attributes of an instructional leader; the high level of collaboration between teachers and administrators, as opposed to a formal, hierarchal relationship; whether receive resources and materials necessary to implement best practices; the duration of time administrators observe, as opposed to a snapshot; the quality of immediate feedback, dialogue, and reflection provided to teachers by administrators; and the continuity of the walkthrough observational process. Six administrator interviews and six teacher focus groups in a rural South Carolina School District were conducted together with observations to identify trends.