Classroom Walkthroughs at Two Suburban High Schools:
Gathering Data to Improve Instructional Practice

by

Alexa Renee Cunningham

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Educational Administration and Supervision

Approved November 2012 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Arnold Danzig, Chair
Connie Harris
Beverly Hurley

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2012
ABSTRACT

With changes in federal legislation and the proposed reauthorization of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, school administrators are held to high standards in an attempt to improve achievement for all students. They no longer just manage their schools but must now be instructional leaders charged with observing and conferencing with teachers, leading professional development aligned to data, and measuring results. Classroom walkthroughs have become a way of assisting with these tasks while supporting the mission of each school.

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administration, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. Interviews illustrated that experiences were varied using the classroom walkthrough protocol. Continued professional development needed to occur with administrators and teachers. Participants shared their thoughts on implementation and usage, as well as made recommendations to schools and/or districts considering implementing classroom walkthroughs. Results also indicated a great deal of attention paid to the collection of data within the schools but there was less consensus on the analysis and use of the collected data. There was also confusion with teachers as to the vision, purpose, and goals of using classroom walkthroughs. Changes in leadership during the five years since implementation and young administrators, who were relatively new in their positions, helped shape school experiences. Recommendations to schools and/or districts considering implementation focused on support from the district office, a need for help with data collection and
analysis, and a clear vision for the use of the protocol. Interviewees mentioned it would benefit districts and schools to develop a shared vocabulary for instructional engagement, alignment, and rigor, as well as a focus for professional development. They also shared the view that calibration conferences and conversations, centered on instruction, provided a focus for teaching and learning within a school and/or district.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great deal of gratitude to a number of people who have supported and encouraged me throughout this process. This dissertation would not have been possible without them.

First, my committee chair, Dr. Arnold Danzig, for his guidance, understanding, kindness, words of encouragement, and patience with my work. I appreciated the lively dialogue throughout the process and your belief in my work. I would also like to thank my committee Dr. Connie Harris and Dr. Beverly Hurley. You took time out of your busy schedules to help and offered your expertise, and years of professional experience. It was appreciated.

Next, I would like to thank my colleagues who engaged in the walkthrough process knowing that it would improve teaching and learning, and ultimately help students. Thank you for always putting students first and your willingness to serve the community in which you work. I am inspired each day by your continued commitment and dedication to the profession of teaching.

Finally, to my family, you made this possible. You created an environment to learn, live and love. I share this with you and know that I have been blessed.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES .............................................................................................................x

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION ...........................................................................................................1
   Context.......................................................................................................................1
   Overview...................................................................................................................2
   Purpose of the Study...............................................................................................4
   Statement of Problem.............................................................................................6
   Research Questions.................................................................................................6
   Limitations...............................................................................................................7
   Delimitations..........................................................................................................7
   Significance of the Study.......................................................................................8
   Definitions and Terms............................................................................................9
   Summary...............................................................................................................11

2 LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................13
   Background of the Study.......................................................................................13
   Historical Perspective............................................................................................14
   Elementary and Secondary Education Act .........................................................14
   A Nation at Risk.....................................................................................................14
   What Matters Most................................................................................................17
   The National Education Summit........................................................................19
   No Child Left Behind.............................................................................................20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership and Changing Role of the Principal</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Historical Perspective</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Supervision</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Trends in Teacher Evaluation</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Danielson</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Stronge</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Marzano</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of Clinical Supervision</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal as Instructional Leader</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing Instruction with Classroom Walkthroughs</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition and Purpose</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkthrough Models</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Wandering Around</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Downey Curriculum Walkthrough Model</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Walk Tool</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring What Matters/Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHODS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restatement of the Problem</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions .......................................................................</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design and Procedures ...............................................</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology .................................................................</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol .......</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Sample ....................................................................</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews ......................................................................................</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator/Mentor Questions ..................................................</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Questions ..........................................................................</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis ..................................................................................</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary ...........................................................................................</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 FINDINGS .......................................................................................</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction ....................................................................................</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical District Context ..........................................................</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Profile of District and Selected Schools ......................</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings and Results .......................................................................</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to Research Questions ...................................................</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1 ........................................................................</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals ..............................................................................................</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development ..................................................................</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary ...........................................................................................</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2 ........................................................................</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of District Office</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION</strong></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Study</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Has Been Learned About the Walkthrough Process</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data is Personal for Teachers</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Learning</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol Outcomes: Alignment to Instruction</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering Other Measures</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting the EAR Protocol to other District Initiatives</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending the Culture of Collaboration</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for District Leadership</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Site Leadership</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Teachers</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Teacher Mentors</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>ENGAGEMENT, ALIGNMENT AND RIGOR CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGH PROTOCOL</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>SUPERINTENDENT’S LETTER OF SUPPORT</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>ADMINISTRATOR AND MENTOR QUESTIONS</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>TEACHER QUESTIONS</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>IRB APPROVAL</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School Enrollment</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Summary of Research</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Visits</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Demographic Data of Schools in the Study</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Demographic Data of Leaders Represented in the Study</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Demographic Data of Teachers Represented in the Study</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result.”

Richard Elmore (Fullan, 2009, p. 64)

Context

School districts across the country are now held to increasingly high levels of accountability for teaching and learning. Schools and school administrators must ensure that all students meet state standards, pass assessments, and graduate on time. Due to this standards-based, accountability-oriented environment, school administrators now, more than ever, are expected to be leaders visible in classrooms constantly assessing teaching and learning. They are expected to mentor, coach, support, and lead their instructional staff as they work to improve effectiveness within all classrooms and increase student achievement which will be discussed in Chapter 2. The focus on instruction and achievement has permeated the culture of schools in the United States and remains at the forefront of discussion and debate of policymakers, parents, community leaders, governing boards, and citizens. Preparing teachers for new instructional tasks and using professional development to help enhance skills continues to be a focus for school and district leaders. To accomplish this task, district officials must provide school administrators with a variety of supervision and coaching strategies to meet the challenge, engage teachers in classroom observations, discussions, and
professional development focused on increasing teacher effectiveness as it relates to teaching and learning. Critical in moving a system forward must be professional development. “Efforts to improve student achievement can succeed only by building the capacity of teachers to improve their instructional practice and the capacity of school systems to advance learning (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphans, 2009, p. 1).

One strategy utilized by school administrators has been the practice of classroom walkthroughs. Walkthroughs enable administrators and school leaders to make frequent, brief, and focused visits to numerous classrooms for the purpose of observing instruction and using the collected data to inform decisions about professional development and instruction (Hopkins, 2008). The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. Information collected through interviews with administrators, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers on the walkthrough process helped to illustrate how it operated in practice.

**Overview**

As instructional leaders, administrators need to spend considerable time in classrooms engaging teachers in discussions about teaching and learning (Johnston, 2003). According to Johnston (2003), the “learning walk” or “walk through” has been one of the most promising strategies for improving instruction. Administrators provide teachers with feedback to enhance their practice, and also use the data they collect during visits to drive professional development.
initiatives. By engaging in walkthroughs administrators “drive home the message that learning is the purpose of school – for teachers and students” (Schmoker, 2001, p. 117).

Classroom walkthrough describes a process of observing what takes place within a classroom. The walkthrough traditionally has been brief, three to twenty minutes, typically has not been connected to a formal teacher evaluation, and has been conducted by administrators, teacher leaders/mentors, and other district stakeholders, including classroom teachers. It has been intended to be a tool for supervising and improving instruction, as well as a means of collecting and organizing data to make decisions regarding professional development. Walkthroughs also have provided a way for administrators and other participants to be visible in classrooms and viewed as instructional leaders.

Several studies have illustrated a positive effect on student achievement when administrators conduct frequent classroom walkthroughs. Teachers have also reported that walkthroughs provide a means of accountability, with a focus on refining instructional practices, and the knowledge that their principals are more aware of the critical work taking place in their classrooms (Keruskin, 2005; Rossi, 2007).

Several walkthrough models utilized by school administrators are similar in nature and focus on classroom improvement. They include frequent, focused, brief visits that allow observation of teaching and learning taking place in the classroom (Frase & Hetzel, 1990; Richardson, 2001). However, each model differs in the type and frequency of feedback, length of visit, method of data
collection, and classroom focus (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). Some of the models described in the literature and utilized by administrators include Management by Wandering Around, the Downey Classroom Walk-Through, the Learning Walk Tool, and the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol (EAR).

When administrators engage in walkthroughs, they strive to create a culture of collaboration that supports teacher improvement and raised student achievement. Walkthroughs are intended to promote reflective dialogue and collaborative learning communities, provide a positive impact on student achievement, and foster data driven professional development (Anderson & Davenport, 2002). Cervone and Martinez-Miller (2007) stated classroom walkthroughs are the needed catalyst for school improvement. Data collected during walkthroughs must be utilized effectively to become valuable to schools. Walkthroughs are one tool used to improve student learning and teaching practice through the implementation of aligned, rigorous and engaging lessons (Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. The two schools implemented the EAR Protocol at the same time. The schools are located in different sections of the district – one in the southern portion and the other in the northeast section. Both schools received new principals since the initial training
but the assistant principals remained constant. Each school was faithful in implementation and used the collected data to make decisions concerning professional development as was intended when introduced during the initial training. The schools also had the opportunity to train staff members on the walkthrough protocol as part of continued implementation. Through a review of literature, interviews, and document analysis, the research explored the implementation process and actual practices involved at two schools within a suburban district and examined the experiences in the schools and the district.

School administrators in an era of increased accountability are expected to be skilled in providing instructional support to all teachers in an effort to improve practice. Administrators must now mentor, coach, and collaborate with teachers in order to support, guide, and foster reflective teaching (Schon, 1988). Effective leadership plays a significant role on student achievement. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) argued that, “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). School leaders therefore have an indirect influence on student learning. If teaching remains the most critical factor in improved student learning, then administrators need to focus on instruction and spend time in classrooms observing teaching and providing feedback. Teacher effectiveness, and ultimately student performance, will improve when administrators spend more time observing, coaching and conferencing with teachers (Frase, Downey & Canciamilla, 1999). Blasé and Blasé (2004) reported that teachers had a more positive view and relationship with administrators who
spent more time in their classrooms. Eisner (2002) suggested that administrators needed to spend a third of their time in classrooms in order to understand the school and learning that takes place.

For teacher effectiveness to improve, administrators must dedicate more of their time visiting classrooms, observing practice, and coaching teachers on how to improve their practice. Instructional leadership remains a critical component for administrators in order to improve teaching and learning.

**Statement of Problem**

Across the country more schools and administrators are using classroom walkthroughs in an effort to enhance teacher effectiveness and student learning in the classroom. The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district.

**Research Questions**

1. How do administrators collect and use the data from the classroom walkthroughs?

2. What do administrators and teachers say have been the important outcomes of the walkthroughs?

3. What specific changes within a school and classrooms occurred after implementation?

4. What do administrators and teachers recommend to improve the process currently in place in schools and the district?
5. What lessons does the research offer to other schools and districts contemplating implementation?

**Limitations**

The district has used the EAR Protocol for five years with the goal of enhanced teaching and learning as well as a more focused professional development plan. There had been some research conducted on classroom walkthroughs, with limited research on the EAR Protocol. Participants were interviewed on the process and practice, and their experiences of how it influenced practice including views of effectiveness. These interviews presented a subjective interpretation based upon the interviewee’s expectations and experiences. Participants shared experiences and views on further implementation and development within the district and in other districts considering implementation. Administrators and teacher mentors at participating schools were interviewed and a sampling of teachers involved in the walkthrough process were also interviewed.

The researcher conducted administrator interviews during the fourth quarter of the year. As administrators had been conducting walkthroughs throughout the year and were planning graduation and end-of-the-year activities, fatigue may need to be considered when reviewing data.

**Delimitations**

This research was conducted at two comprehensive high schools in a medium sized suburban district with over 6,000 students in the Southwestern United States in which the researcher served as an Assistant Superintendent and
oversaw the implementation of the EAR Protocol. The results of the research and implementation process may be shared with other districts beginning to use the EAR Protocol or considering implementation. Since the research was focused on two schools using a specific walkthrough model, results may only be generalizable to schools with similar demographics and conditions contemplating the EAR Protocol.

**Significance of the Study**

The study provided a detailed look at one district’s implementation and experience using the walkthrough process to measure engagement, alignment, and rigor within classrooms. Both administrator and teacher experiences were included. This study examined implementation and data as it related to perceptions on implementation and use. The link between administrator and teacher remains vital to the success of any school. Working to foster greater communication and collaboration between the two would be one way to ensure that classrooms have engaged, effective teachers. Administrator presence within classrooms reinforced the work of the schools and district on teaching and learning. Teacher and administrator description of program success and implementation and recommendations for future consideration within the district and also in other districts was included. Interviews were conducted to determine if other schools and/or districts might learn from the experiences these two schools experienced when implementing. Schools beginning the process might learn from the experiences of these two schools, reduce the pitfalls of implementation, and enhance positive program goals and outcomes.
Definitions and Terms

Alignment

What is being taught and what students are being asked to do are aligned with the standards and curriculum; are “on time” and on target with the scope and sequence of the course of study; and provide students opportunities to experience high stakes assessment methodologies among other assessment approaches.

(Connell & Broom, 2004)

Clinical Evaluation

A clinical evaluation uses a checklist of preferred objectives. Teachers are observed, notes are taken, the teacher’s actions are scripted by the observer, and a discussion or conference takes place.

Engagement

Students are actively processing information (listening, watching, reading, thinking, making) or communicating information (speaking, performing, writing) in ways that indicate they are focused on the task at hand and interested. (Connell & Broom, 2004)

Formal Observation

A planned, structured observation of a teacher by a trained evaluator. A formal observation can be announced or unannounced. The evaluator observes the teacher teaching a lesson. A formal observation might determine if a teacher meets expectations for performance.
Informal Observation

Informal observations are intended to provide more frequent information on work in a classroom. Evaluators are encouraged to conduct information observations by observing instruction and non-instructional routines at various time throughout an observation cycle.

Measuring What Matters

Measuring What Matters (MWM) represents a school improvement system which includes data collection, analysis and reporting tools developed by Institute for Research and Reform in Education staff and consultants around effective practices.

Pre-Observation Conference

The initial interaction between the administrator and teacher in which the lesson is previewed, and the purpose, time, length, and location of the observation are confirmed.

Professional Development

An ongoing process of learning new skills and knowledge related to one’s profession and implementing in the work place. Research on professional development suggests that best practice be job-embedded and play a key role in training informed and motivated employees.

Reflective Question

Typically left with a teacher after a completed visit and can assist a teacher in considering their practice and strengthen their skills within the classrooms. Left
by the observer and typically will lead to either a verbal or written dialogue on what was observed. The reflective questions are non-evaluative.

**Rigor**

Learning materials and instructional strategies being used challenge and encourage all students to produce work or respond at or above grade level. All students are required to demonstrate mastery at these levels and have the opportunity for re-teaching to mastery. (Connell & Broom, 2004)

**Summative Evaluation**

The final review and analysis of evaluation data related to the performance of a teacher will occur in a summative evaluation. The performance of the teacher can be used to determine continued employment.

**Supervision**

The process of supporting, evaluating and developing teachers and school staff.

**Teacher Evaluation**

The process of collecting data and evidence about a teacher’s performance that will enable administrators to make informed, professional judgments about teaching and learning.

**Summary**

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. Other districts, schools, administrators, and teachers will have a better understanding of the EAR
Protocol and implementation recommendations. It will also provide assistance to other districts, who currently use the EAR Protocol, in planning professional development, using the collected data, and engaging in instructional conversations to improve teaching and learning.

In Chapter 2 a literature review on various classroom walkthrough models will be discussed as well as the idea of administrators as instructional leaders. The literature review will also examine the history of classroom observation including clinical supervision.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

“People familiar with primary and secondary schools in the United States tend to agree that nothing determines learning more than the quality of teaching, and that nothing determines the quality of teaching more than the quality of school leadership.”

(Chenoweth and Theokas, 2011, vii)

Background of the Study

Federal legislation recently elevated the topic of teacher evaluation among all educators and education stakeholders. The job of ensuring that all teachers are highly effective within their classrooms has become a priority for school leaders in order to ensure that all students are achieving at higher levels and have equal access to quality instruction. The evaluation of teachers continues to be influenced by state and national mandates and now provides an opportunity to focus on teacher quality in relationship to student learning. Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston (2011) commented on teacher supervision and evaluation, “We believe that when done well, the process of supervision can be instrumental in producing incremental gains in teacher expertise; which can produce incremental gains in student achievement” (p. 3). The review of literature addresses the evolution of school leaders in the era of accountability, a historical overview of supervision, including clinical supervision, as well as classroom walkthrough observations, current classroom walkthrough observation models, and current conditions impacting teacher effectiveness and schools. This review begins with a historical perspective of educational reform and then focus on current practice using classroom walkthroughs.
Historical Perspective

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

In 1965, as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed. Its passage signaled the belief that education was the solution to poverty. The bill made educational reform an economic issue and was intended to provide support to children from low-income families (Stillwell-Parvenski, 2011). The role of the federal government focused on financial and material support for schools. ESEA increased federal influence on K-12 education but it did not address teachers, instruction, or learning outcomes. ESEA targeted funding but had no instructional or teacher prescriptions (Stillwell-Parvenski, 2011).

A Nation at Risk

In April 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) published A Nation at Risk calling for unprecedented changes to help schools improve education. The National Commission on Excellence in Education was formed by President Ronald Reagan in answer to the 1982 Gallup Poll, Public’s Attitudes Towards the Public School, which supported a belief of citizens that education was the major foundation for the success of the country (NCEE, p. 7). President Reagan said in response to the poll, “Certainly there are few areas of American life as important to our society, to our people, and to our families as our schools and colleges” (NCEE, p. 7). The report, which served as notice to the American people, warned that mediocrity was invading our schools and without a substantial intervention and lasting change the United States would
no longer be capable of competing in a global world economy (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). *A Nation at Risk* motivated lawmakers and educational agencies to work on creating standards for students and raising expectations for teachers, as well as enhancing course requirements for graduation, introducing uniform assessments to measure achievement, and improving teacher certification requirements (Fuhrman, 2003). Within the report were specific recommendations for the teaching profession:

- Teachers must demonstrate an aptitude for teaching and meet high standards before entering a classroom.
- An effective evaluation system should support decisions on salary, promotion, tenure and retention.
- There should be a clear distinction between what is required of a beginning teacher, an experienced teacher, and a master teacher.
- Governing boards, administration and teachers should collaborate on developing career ladder programs to reward those teachers who are distinguishing themselves in the classroom.
- Master teachers should be used to support the development and possible supervision of non-continuing teachers (NCEE, April 1983, Recommendation D).

*A Nation at Risk* defined excellence in education as it related to the individual learner, schools, and society. It called for schools and society to develop the talents of students to their fullest potential. It also included a commitment to life-long learning and rebuilding schools in order to prepare graduates for life in the work force of the future (p. 5).

The report, in Recommendation E, focused on Leadership and the expectation that school and district leaders would rise to the challenge put forth in the report (NCEE, April 1983, Recommendation E). Principals and superintendents remain crucial in developing school and community support for the reforms. They must lead professional development which will enable teachers
to better prepare students for the futures. Recommendation E also expected districts to be fiscally responsible in supporting schools which focus on achievement (NCEE, April 1983, Recommendation E). This was one of the first reports to focus on the principal as an instructional leader charged with improving student achievement.

In *The Manufactured Crisis* (1995) by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle, the authors questioned the statistics used to document the failure on which *A Nation at Risk* is based. The book alleged that the report was one way in which the public was misled on the quality of public schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Another critic of *A Nation at Risk* was education scholar John I. Goodlad. Goodlad wrote that *A Nation at Risk* focused the country on the negative aspects surrounding public education rather than focusing on the recommendations of the report. Goodlad also argued that the link between student achievement and the national economy was not as connected as originally reported (Goodlad, 2003). *A Nation at Risk* was also criticized for its emphasis on secondary education rather than focusing on the entire K-12 system (Peterson, 2003).

While *A Nation at Risk* had several weaknesses, it did lead to school reform and drew attention to educational policy. It also focused lawmakers and education on academic standards as a means of improving education for all students. The report also led to a call for greater school accountability (Weiss, 2003).
What Matters Most: Teaching and America’s Future

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) published What Matters Most: Teaching and America’s Future in September 1996 after two years of on-going research. What Matters Most served as a blueprint for “recruiting, preparing and supporting excellent teachers in all of America’s schools” (p. 10). The plan aimed at ensuring that schools had teachers who possessed the knowledge and skills necessary to reach all children and help all students succeed. This report was based upon three general principles which served as a goal for America’s future:

- The most influence on learning is what teachers know and can do in the classroom.
- The central importance for improving schools is recruiting, preparing and retaining quality teachers in every classroom.
- Teachers must be entrusted to teach and teach well if any reform is to be effective (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, Executive Summary, 1996).

The goal was to provide every student in America, within a decade, with “what should be his or her educational birthright: access to competent, caring, qualified teaching in schools organized for success” (p. 10). The NCTAF Commission identified a number of barriers to achieving the goal and these barriers included: “low expectations for student performance, unenforced standards for teachers, major flaws in teacher preparation programs, unsuccessful teacher recruitment, inadequate teacher induction programs, lack of professional development, and schools that are structured for failure rather than student success” (p. 11).
In order to overcome the barriers, the commission made five recommendations to improve American schools. These recommendations were passed upon key principles:

- Standards should drive teaching and learning. States were encouraged to establish standards, improve school accreditation, close poor performing schools, tighten teacher certification procedures, and use the National Boards as the standard for quality teaching.
- Teacher education institutions were urged to focus their programs around standards and create ongoing professional development for all teachers.
- The commission recognized the importance of recruiting and maintaining highly qualified teachers in the classrooms and encouraged states to assist districts in updating hiring practices and decrease teacher mobility.
- States and districts were encouraged to provide incentives for National Board Certification and create a means of removing incompetent teachers from the classroom.
- Finally, the commission called for the reallocation of resources to improve school organization. It also recommended hiring and retaining highly effective principals who clearly understand teaching and learning (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996)

The commission recognized that implementation of the five recommendations was going to be difficult and recommended the focus areas be pursued together at a national and state level.

Critics of the report were skeptical of the changes that colleges and universities were going to have to make to their education programs in order to meet the recommendations of What Matters Most. Teacher preparation programs were seen as flawed and unwilling to make the necessary changes in order to fulfill the recommendations in the report. Pitler and Goodwin (2008) stated that most states were using advanced degrees and teacher certificates/licenses to determine teacher quality rather than develop teachers and support them in the classroom.
The National Education Summit

The National Education Summit was convened in 1999 with a commitment from business, government, industry, and educational leaders to ensure that high academic standards were a part of every classroom and every school. Each state agreed to focus on three key issues:

- Improved teacher quality,
- Provide all students an opportunity to meet high standards, and
- Hold schools accountable for results (National Education Summit, 1999).

The Summit determined that every student should be entitled to a quality teacher (p. 5). Colleges and universities were challenged to increase the rigor and expectations of their teacher preparation programs. States and districts were encouraged to continue to support teachers through professional development which was organized around teaching and learning. The Summit also recommended teacher salaries needed to be examined to ensure that they were competitive and asked business leaders to commit to creating a pay-for-performance and incentive program to attract more teachers (p. 5).

The Summit also challenged states to create fair opportunities for all students to have access to a rigorous curriculum with teachers who were qualified to deliver and assess standards-based instruction. States were encouraged to allow districts flexibility in creating programs that provided choice for students and parents (NES, 1999). Participants of the Summit believed that choice and competition was healthy for public education. Technology was also encouraged as a means of improving educational opportunities (p. 12). Governors were asked to work with legislators and educational agencies to strengthen standards and
assessments. They were also encouraged to examine charter schools as a means of promoting competition.

Summit participants believed accountability was necessary for standard-based reform to occur. States, districts, and schools were to be held accountable for the achievement of all students and states were to create accountability systems including rewards for high performance and consequences for failure. Struggling schools and districts would receive assistance from both the state and national level if they struggled to meet standards. States were challenged to create systems to ensure no student was trapped in a failing school; in which all parents and students had an opportunity to attend a performing school (p. 12).

The Summit recommendations were entrusted to the states for implementation within a six month period (NES, 1999). The implementation process varied from state to state. The quality of implementation also varied between states. Each state adopted standards and began to implement standards-based accountability. While the recommendations were meant to provide guidance and support, the implementation process within each state made the measurement of effectiveness difficult.

No Child Left Behind

Three days after taking office in 2001 President George W. Bush announced No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and required all students to achieve at higher levels than ever before. It became the latest initiative to address educational reform in the United States and changed the work of school leaders and school systems
NCLB provided guidance to states, districts, and schools on how to improve student achievement, provided greater choice for parents and students, especially those attending low-performing schools, how to utilize Federal education dollars, and provided a strong emphasis on reading (NCLB, 2001). The federal government began to play a greater role in overseeing education in America and placed greater accountability upon schools. NCLB mandated that all students be provided with an opportunity to achieve and excel in school (Estacion, McMahon, & Quint, 2004). States were required to develop systems to test all students on state standards and ensure all teachers were “highly qualified.” NCLB also gave the federal government authority over states and districts accountable for student achievement (NCLB, 2001).

Public school administrators faced the challenge of ensuring accountability of teachers and students, as well as overseeing the implementation of a standards-based curriculum that would have 100% of students proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014. In 2004-2005, 74% of public schools met the requirement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This rate decreased to 60.6% during the 2009-2010 school year (USDOE, 2010).

Administrators were no longer able to manage their schools but had to lead and innovate in order to guarantee all students learned and achieved at higher levels. In order to meet the demands placed upon schools, principals were called upon to be instructional leaders, visible in classrooms, while they coached, mentored, and supported teachers, and worked to increase student achievement for all students in additional to leading safe schools.
Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

In 2010, the administration of President Barack Obama outlined their

*Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, the planned reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The blueprint focused on five priorities: college and career ready students; great teachers and leaders; raise the bar and reward excellence; promote innovation; and equity and opportunity. The second priority, great teacher and leaders in every school, was the key foundation for all other initiatives (USDOE, 2010). The reform hinged on the ability to identify and develop the effectiveness of teachers and leaders. The *Blueprint for Reform* entrusted and challenged states to define teacher and principal effectiveness based upon student growth (USDOE, 2010). States were required to create evaluation systems that identified and differentiated effective teachers. The U.S. Department of Education invited each State Educational Agency (SEA) to request flexibility on behalf of itself, its local educational agencies, and schools, in order to better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction. The voluntary opportunity provided educators and State and local leaders flexibility in regards to the specific requirements of *the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (USDOE, 2010) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. Thirty-three states have been approved for the waivers. The United States
Department of Education continues to monitor all states approved for the flexibility waivers to ensure their compliance in all requirements (USDOE, 2010).

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), including Race to the Top (RTTT), was funded as the most significant portion of President Obama’s education policy (USDOE, 2009). It mirrored the goals of *The Blueprint for Reform*. Under RTTT, states were seeking evidence of effective school improvement as outlined by federal guidelines in order to receive over $4.35 billion in incentive grants and stimulus funding (Paulson, 2010). RTTT emphasized the importance of school principals when it comes to increasing student achievement. The role of the principal became a key component of reform for the United States Department of Education. RTTT focused on four core education reform areas which included, “Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most” (USDOE, 2010). States and schools were rewarded based upon demonstrated success in raising student achievement and accelerated reform efforts.

**Instructional Leadership and Changing Role of the Principal**

**A Historical Perspective**

Historically, school administrators were expected to manage their schools which included budgets, schedules, staff, food service, discipline, crisis management, and extracurricular program oversight. They had a great deal of work to do but rarely did it increase student achievement. The days of managing
and administering are gone. Today, school administrators must lead academic improvements for all students (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011). The change must include supervising and improving teachers by providing opportunities for teachers and school leaders to be learners. In today’s educational institutions many types of supervision exist. Merriam-Webster has defined supervision as “the action, process or occupation of supervision.” Supervision can be both formal and informal with the ultimate goal of evaluation of teaching (Harris, 1997). While Harris provided the most simplistic definition, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2007) defined supervision as a school function to improves instruction through direct assistance to teachers, curriculum development, in-service training, group development, and action research. Research by Acheson and Waite (1998) described two purposes for supervision. The first was to promote professional growth and the second was to foster student learning. Garmstom, Lipton and Kaiser (1998) offered three main functions of supervision. The first was the belief that supervision should improve instruction. The second was the concept of an educator’s potential growth influenced by supervision. Finally, an organization’s potential to grow will be impacted by supervision. Blasé and Blasé (2004) defined and supported supervision as a means of building trust, empowering teachers, and encouraging reflection. Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston (2011) stated that, “the purpose of supervision should be the enhancement of teacher’s pedagogical skills, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student achievement” (p. 2). While many definitions exist all agree that it remains a strong component of a successful school.
How can schools and school leaders meet the demands of supervision when they must devote more and more time to management? In today’s schools, administrators, both principals and assistant principals, must be curricular and instructional leaders who are expert teachers, who support curricular efforts, provide professional development, use data to drive decision, mold the vision of their schools, and unite their faculties in a common effort to improve student achievement (Tucker, 2003). Can they do it all? Tucker (2003) identified the behaviors most important to instructional leadership as goal development; visibility on campus; supervision and evaluation; curriculum development and implementation; and student progress monitoring. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) characterized effective leaders as change agents who promote trust, build teamwork and focus on improvement through the use of short term goals. While ideal there remain many other demands placed upon school administrations.

While demands for school administrators’ time do exist, if they are to help teachers grow in an effort to improve student achievement, then they must devote a great deal of their time to working with teachers in the classroom. The main component effecting this growth must remain instructional supervision. Instructional supervision supports the act of professionals working together to determine and then refine what works best in classrooms. When done well, Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston (2011) believe the process can be instrumental in improving academic achievement for all students.
Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision models are a means of improving instructional practice and are considered a part of instructional supervision (Zepeda, 2003). In 1969 and 1973, Goldhammer and Cogan published works that brought clinical supervision into the educational forefront. Since then, the models have been altered to fit the needs and purposes of schools and educational leaders. Although altered through the years, each new model has included some of the basic elements of the original clinical supervision.

In 1969, Goldhammer identified five stages in clinical supervision. Stage One was the pre-observation conference which takes place between the teacher and supervisor. At the conference the teacher and supervisor go over the observation procedures and make a plan for the observation. Stage Two was the observation with the supervisor in the classroom scripting the lesson and watching the teacher interact with students. After the data (script) collection, the supervisor, in Stage Three, analyzed the data and develops a strategy on how it will be presented to the teacher. During Stage Four patterns and major themes are discussed with the teacher in an interactive conference. The supervisor directs the conference and illicits responses from the teacher. Finally in Stage Five, the teacher and supervisor develop a plan for the next observation cycle. These five stages are repeated at regular intervals each year.

In 1973, Cogan expanded Goldhammer’s five phases into eight. The eight stages include:

1. Relationship building
2. Planning for lessons
3. Planning the observation strategy
4. Observing
5. Teaching-learning process is analyzed
6. Planning the conference strategy
7. Conference
8. Renewed planning (pp. 10-12).

After the eighth step, the cycle will begin again.

There have been other versions of Goldhammer and Cogan’s clinical supervision models. Acheson and Gail (1992) attempted to simplify the process into three phases. The first phase was the planning conference, followed by the observation. The observation was then followed by the feedback conference. The model ended with the development of a plan of improvement for the next supervision cycle.

While there have been different models with a variety of stages, each model emphasized the teacher-supervisor relationship. This relationship has been viewed as a partnership in which the administrator offered guidance as the teacher worked to improve practice within the classroom. A dialogue built around instruction and learning leads to teacher self-reflection and self-evaluation. It continues to be extremely time consuming, and depending upon level of the dialogue, may not have a lasting impact on instruction (Graf, Fisher, & Werlinich, 2002)

**New Trends in Teacher Evaluation**

With the new emphasis on accountability in the classrooms, states around the country have revisited their expectations for teacher evaluation systems. A renewed push to change teacher evaluation systems to include some type of statistical measures of teachers’ effect on student learning has begun in every
The new emphasis supports designing a system that provides administrators with the necessary skills and tools to visit classrooms and engage teachers in meaningful dialogue about teaching, and look at student achievement data to determine if teaching impacted student academic growth. These new systems are based upon teaching standards and are specific in what they are attempting to measure. Improving teacher effectiveness so that student growth can occur remains constant. The new systems require a statistical measure as part of the evaluation instrument. Charlotte Danielson, James Stronge, and Robert Marzano have designed evaluation systems that are implemented by schools and districts around the country.

**Charlotte Danielson**

Charlotte Danielson identified three major components of an evaluation system: a clear definition of good teaching, fair and reliable methods to elicit evidence of good teaching, and trained evaluators who can make consistent judgment based upon evidence that they observe (Danielson, 2008). Danielson has stressed the importance of establishing a clear definition of exemplary teaching practice. This definition should not be controversial but instead reflect the consensus of teachers and administrators in a particular school and/or district (Danielson, 2008). Many districts have used components of professional practice as described by Danielson in her 2008 book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. In this work, Danielson focused on four domains and twenty-two components. Part of the process determines the importance of each domain and/or component, and also how it (the components) will look at different
levels of performance. Standards for each component and the of performance must be clear and unambiguous. They must also be known and understood by each stakeholder. Danielson has suggested using four levels of performance – unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished (Danielson, 2008).

Once a clear definition of teaching has been agreed upon the sources of evidence to be collected must be determined. Evidence comes from two primary sources: direct observation and the examination of artifacts. Danielson (2008) has stated, “The observation of classroom practice is the corner stone of the evidence of a teacher’s skill; engaging students in important learning is rightly considered to be the key to professional teaching. What teachers do in their interaction with students is what matters most in influencing student learning” (p. 2). The observation of teaching, along with the pre-conference and post-conference constitutes the majority of Danielson’s framework. Artifacts offer the best evidence of certain aspects of teaching and these artifacts are essential for teachers to demonstrate their skill in Planning and Preparation, and Professional Responsibilities (Danielson, 2008). No number of classroom observations will allow an administrator to see how a teacher maintains records, communicates with families, or engages in professional responsibilities or growth. This evidence can only be provided by the teacher in the form of logs, letters, and other written documents (Danielson, 2008).

Danielson has stressed that those making evaluative judgments of teachers and teaching must be adequately trained so that these observations are accurate, consistent, and based upon evidence. The consistency of judgment guarantees of
the reliability of the system (Danielson, 2008). Danielson continues to stress that the training of evaluators has several important elements. Evaluators must be able to recognize examples of the evaluative criteria in action. Each domain and component must be thoroughly explained and discussed. It is also important to review how the various components are similar to one another. Evaluators must also be trained on the skills necessary to have reflective conversations and provide constructive and purposeful feedback to teachers. These conversations are vital to the growth of the teacher and the improvement of practice within a classroom (Danielson, 2008).

**James Stronge**

James Stronge has linked high quality evaluation systems to improved instruction and achievement. He believed teacher evaluation must document the quality of teacher performance and then help the teacher improve. Stronge found that the two most frequently cited purposes of teacher evaluation are accountability and professional growth. A good evaluation system measures both accountability and performance. According to Stronge (2010), “Performance improvement and accountability purposes are not competing but supportive interests – dual interests that are essential for improvement of educational service delivers. The two roles are inextricably intertwined in the total evaluation process” (p. 2). A focus on accountability contributes to the personal growth of the teacher while improvement focuses on student achievement. By combining accountability and improvement, teachers improve while student achievement increases.
Stronge suggest that eight performance standards be aligned to measure teacher effectiveness within a classroom:

1. Professional Knowledge
2. Data-Driven Planning
3. Instructional Delivery
4. Assessment of Learning
5. Learning Environment
6. Communication and Advocacy
7. Professionalism
8. Student Progress (p. 5).

The eight indicators are aligned with the 2011 Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. These indicators are tangible behaviors that should be observed and documented within a classroom to let the administrators know if the teacher fulfills his/her responsibilities (Stronge, 2010). These indicators are observed during both formal and informal observations, as well as classroom walkthroughs. Stronge recommends using either a rating scale or a performance appraisal rubric to measure effectiveness of the indicator usage within a classroom (Stronge, 2010).

**Robert Marzano**

Focusing on a knowledge base for teaching, Robert Marzano developed an evaluation model with four domains: Classroom Strategies and Behaviors; Planning and Preparing; Reflecting on Teaching; and Collegiality and Professionalism (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). While similar to Danielson, Marzano identifies categories of strategies and behaviors, sixty in all, that are accompanied by rubrics and describe novice to expert use of the elements.

Domain I, Classroom Strategies and Behaviors, relates directly to what teachers do in the classroom. Teachers are asked, while planning for instruction,
to answer ten design questions. The questions serve as reminders of the strategies and behaviors they might use when teaching (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). The questions are organized into three lesson segments: routine, content, and those enacted on the spot. Domain I challenges teachers to plan ways to increase student engagement within the lesson. Marzano argues effective teachers are looking for ways to engage or reengage students in the learning (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

Planning and Preparation are covered in Domain II. There are nine questions to guide teachers in planning and preparing. These questions address three categories of planning: lessons and units, materials and resources, and the special needs of students. Marzano states a direct relationship between teacher planning, decision making, and student achievement (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Materials have always been a part of teaching and now technology must be considered. Teachers must plan to use all resources appropriately to enhance their teaching and the learning of all students. Planning for a variety of special needs students continues to be critical to success. Planning and preparing must include consideration not only special education students but also English Language Learners and students living below the poverty level.

Domain III has five questions that help teachers Reflect on Teaching. In this domain teachers are asked to reflect on their own practice. Marzano states that teachers who regularly reflect on their own practice desire to become better (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). This reflection leads to a professional
growth plan to enhance practice. The professional growth plan provides teachers with measurable objectives and a timeline for improving.

The final domain addressed Collegiality and Professionalism. Within Domain IV teachers have six questions to address and include three categories of activities: promoting a positive environment, promoting exchange of ideas and strategies, and promoting district and school development. A positive environment refers to the interaction between teachers and administrators. It will address the importance of building and sustaining a positive working environment. The exchange of ideas attempts to support the collaboration among teachers and fosters the growth of professional learning communities (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Finally, teachers are expected to promote district and school development.

The four domains are next separated into four levels of performance: innovating, applying, developing and beginning. The evaluator will rate each teacher using this scale. Teachers may also be asked to complete a self-reflection on their own practice before meeting with their administrator (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

**Criticism of Clinical Supervision**

Clinical supervision has a long and varied history, supported by a substantial body of research. Sullivan (1980) stated that clinical supervision was one of the more democratic forms of supervision, and it was effective in enabling teachers to grow in their teaching and learning through a desire for self-improvement. Yet recent research has argued that clinical supervision was not
adequate to promote teacher growth and development at a premium level. Smyth (1997) believed that clinical supervision was no longer effective and had lost its value in collaboration, and was seen more as inspection and surveillance in a classroom. Harris (1997) also stated it did not promote teacher growth and improvement in teaching and learning. Harris believed it ignored the needs of veteran teachers and did not allow them to grow and develop professionally. Hargreaves (1994) agreed that clinical supervision did not promote growth as well as limited collegiality between teacher and administrator. Another factor that hampered clinical supervision was time. It was extremely time consuming and limits the visibility of a school leader in a variety of classrooms and learning endeavors.

**Principal as Instructional Leader**

Accountability in schools has changed dramatically over the last several decades. The Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has reported defined accountability as professional educators being accountable to parents, students, and the public for the quality of their school’s performance. Now in the 21st century, ASCD defined accountability as students, parents, the public appropriately holding educators accountable for providing equitable, high-quality learning experiences for all students (Leithwood, K., Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstom, K., 2004). In 2006, the Wallace Foundation surveyed school and district administrators, policymakers, and other leaders, and found that principal leadership was one of the most pressing matters facing public education. (Knapp, Copland, Plecki, & Protin, 2006) The new definition of accountability
called for administrators to equip teachers with the means to transform schools to improve student achievement, and in order to do this, they must become more visible in classrooms.

School administrators wear different hats throughout the day from manager to administrator to curriculum leader to instructional leader. Every day, a balancing act, juggling their different roles while meeting the needs of their schools, teachers, students, and community members, yet they remain the central source of leadership and influence. Unfortunately, more time has been devoted to managerial duties rather than instructional leadership. The Council of Chief State School Officers (1996), developed standards for school leaders which identified the following for principals:

*Standard 2: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional programs conducive to student learning and staff professional growth* (ISLLC, p. 12).

The role of the principals has been redefined and has helped provided guidance to principals on how to blend supervision, professional development, and curriculum into a new definition of school leadership (Graf, Fisher, & Werlinich, 2002). Effective leadership makes a difference in improving schools and follows teaching as the school-related factors to have the most impact on student learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) tie three core responsibilities to student success: setting direction, developing people, and developing the organization (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011). Each of the three categories has three to five specific practices. Richard Elmore (2000) also described a list of practices tied to
increasing achievement. He focused on enhancing the skill and knowledge of those within the organization, creating a culture of expectations, and holding the organization together through relationships and holding everyone accountable (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011).

In 2001 the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published *21st Century School Administrators Skills* which defined instructional leadership for the modern principal. NASSP established five criteria to guide principals in leading:

1. Implement strategies for improving teaching and learning which include putting programs and improvements into action;
2. Develop a vision and establish clear goals;
3. Provide direction in achieving goals;
4. Encourage others to contribute to goal achievement; and
5. Secure commitment to a course of action from individuals to groups (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2001).

As an instructional leader, principals are responsible for maintaining and improving the instructional program at their school. DuFour (2002) indicated that the most accepted role of the contemporary principal must be to serve as an instructional leader.

Also in 2001, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) published *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*. The NAESP identified six standards that redefined instructional leadership for today’s principals at any level. The standards include:

1. Leading schools in a way that puts students and adult learning at the center. The principals serve as lead learner and teacher;
2. Promoting the academic success of all students by setting high expectations and high standards and organizing the school environment around school achievement;
3. Creating and demanding rigorous content and instruction that ensures student progress toward agreed upon standards;
4. Creating a climate of continuous learning for students that is supportive of student learning;
5. Using multiple sources of data as a tool to assess identify, and apply instructional improvement; and

The principal does not support instructional leadership without the help of his/her team. Instructional leadership must be everyone’s work in a district and at a school. Capacity development of the entire community must be supported in order to see a change in student achievement at a school (Lambert, 2002).

DuFour (2002), in *The Learning-Centered Principal*, stated that “an education leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conductive to learning” will see changes in teaching and learning that lead to an increase in achievement. DuFour (2002) argued that instructional leaders must put student and adult learning at the center of all schools in order to sustain improvement. The focus needs to be on learning and collaboration, and using data to improve classroom instruction. The principal must concentrate on curriculum and instruction if teaching and learning are to remain a priority on campus. (DuFour, 2002) Principals have to become leaders of learning who manage the instructional vision of the school and they must also develop a team able to deliver effective instruction.
Principals must begin to play a larger role in developing a professional community of teachers and staff who work collaboratively in order to improve instruction. Instructional leaders work tirelessly to improve achievement by focusing on teaching and learning. They promote a culture of high expectations, attack teacher isolationism, and connect directly with teachers and the work taking place in classrooms (Knapp, Copland, Plecki & Protin, 2006). Discussions about instructional strategies are often initiated by effective principals (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstom, 2004).

**Assessing Instruction with Classroom Walkthroughs**

**Definition and Purpose**

Monitoring teaching and assessing learning has become essential for instructional leaders. Regardless of the title, formal evaluation, classroom visits, or walkthroughs, administrators intent on increasing growth and achievement must be willing to spend time in classrooms, observing and commenting on what they see. Walkthroughs have become more popular in schools as a means of monitoring and improving classroom practice as well as allowing administrators to build a collaborative culture. Frase and Hetzel (2002), leaders in the walkthrough movement, described walkthroughs as “an active person-to-person process that relies on deeds, involvement and participation to create better schools” (p. 75). They went on to state that “wandering through classrooms is an opportunity to assess instructional effectiveness, diagnose problems and reinforce good teaching” (p. 75).
Cervone and Martinez-Miller (2007) claim classroom walkthroughs are a tool used to drive a cycle of continuous improvement by focusing on instruction. Walkthroughs need to become part of a routine, have an identified focus, and provide for reflective conversations. These walkthroughs are well-planned and purposeful in their intent to improve practice. Rossi (2007) defined walkthroughs as “frequent, focused, brief visits to classrooms that allow principals to observe firsthand the teaching and learning that are occurring in the classroom” (p. 9).

These brief, structured visits are typically followed by either a reflective question or a focused conversation between visitors and the teacher about what was occurring in the classroom. Staff members believe that walkthroughs have a positive impact on instruction by sharing best practice and creating a common language for a school (Protheroe, 2009). Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) found that effective school leaders who are frequently visible in the classrooms are able to connect to teachers and staff on a personal and professional level, are able to encourage teachers to use research-based best practices, assess the instructional practice of their teachers, praise teachers, solicit feedback, and deal with staff concerns. They become more effective leaders because their visibility on campus enables them to have a clear understanding of what takes place at their schools on a daily basis.

Walkthroughs provide both administrator and teachers with valuable information about instructional programs and the state of teaching within a school. More frequent visibility in classrooms allow administrators to develop a clear picture of instructional issues and patterns, demonstrate their interest in and
knowledge of the teaching and learning process, and have a structured dialogue with teachers about their practice (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). Administrators can assess if teachers are using research-based teaching strategies and if students understand the learning goals that teachers have set for them. Administrators will also be able to study student group patterns to see if they support learning (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008). The walkthrough process can also result in more thoughtful reflection about teaching practices for both the teacher and administrator and lead to an increase in student performance.

By far the greatest value to the walkthroughs allows administrators to gather data about their school, monitor the data, and then make informed decisions about professional development which will support teachers and students (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). The collection of data, over time, will allow principals to focus on instructional coaching staff rather than constantly evaluating, measure the impact of professional development strategies, and continue to be supportive of the formation of professional learning communities to enhance the overall teaching and learning experiences of students and teachers (Pitler & Goodwin, 2008). It can also be used to provide feedback to teachers as a means of improving practice.

**Walkthrough Models**

Various walkthrough models have been utilized to support teaching and learning and there are commonalities that exist within all. Walkthroughs are frequent, focused and brief visits that allow administrators to gather a snapshot of teaching and learning. Literature supports the concept of instructional leadership
and the walkthrough process. Eisner (2002) suggested that teaching become more of a public process than an isolated practice and walkthroughs provide a means of overcoming this barrier. He goes on to suggest that administrators should spend a third of their time in classrooms engaging teachers in the learning process (Eisner, 2002). According to Kachur, Stout and Edwards (2010), classroom walkthroughs represent an important method for instructional leaders to acquire more frequent profiles of what takes place in the classrooms of their campus. The walkthroughs provide snapshots of the instructional decisions and student learning that takes place daily. Walkthroughs give school leaders the ability to create a snapshot of a school’s strength and areas of concern. Blasé and Blasé (2001) suggest that principals who support quality instruction talk more openly with teachers about teaching and learning. This leads to a positive impact on student learning. The use of walkthroughs bring the teacher and administrator together to create a culture more supportive of teaching and therefore learning.

Management by Wandering Around

The origin of walkthroughs can be traced to Hewlett-Packard’s business model of Management by Wandering Around (MBWA). In the 1970s Hewlett-Packard executives, in an effort to get their managers out into the workplace, to be visible, implemented MBWA. They wanted their workers and managers to interact and engage in communication in an effort to improve production and morale in the workplace. It was an informal, hands-on approach to management. By listening and interacting with their employees they would reinforce the values of the company with every worker in the organization. The thought was
managers should be away from their desks, interacting with their employees, at least 50% of the time. This would allow them to experience the problems first hand and engage employees in both formal and informal communication about their work. MBWA was interactive and created an environment of collegiality and involvement (Frase & Hetzel, 1990).

The MBWA model has been translated to schools in an attempt to replicate the success that business experienced. Superintendent Tony Alvaradro and Deputy Superintendent Elaine Finde of the Community School District 2 in New York were early pioneers of utilizing MBWA in schools. They believed that it gave them an in-depth knowledge of district school and principals as well as allowed them an opportunity to pay attention to key elements of instruction and leadership (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010). A school administrator who never leaves the office sends a negative message to staff and students about the importance of what takes place within classrooms. An administrator who utilizes MBWA observes and listens to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the school and can deal with potential problems within the school in a proactive manner.

MBWA has helped unite teachers, administrators, student, and parents in pursuit of excellence. Teachers are held accountable, but MBWA also can help struggling teachers. A principal who used MBWA must commit fully to implementation. The result of full implementation of MBWA can be a school dedicated to encouraging and empowering teachers to get better in their teaching (Frase & Hetzel, 1990).
A MBWA principal must be visible in classrooms, in hallways, in department meetings, and approachable as well as open for discussion. The principal must observe and listen to discover the strengths, weaknesses, and potential problems in the school (Frase & Hetzel, 1990). This sends a clear message that the principal cares and supports the school. In utilizing MBWA, a principal cannot just wander around and not engage teachers in purposeful conversations about teaching and learning. According to Frase and Hetzel (1990), the principal must have a focus so the walks are purposeful and productive and should focus on four key elements. The first element contains the “look for’s” in the classroom. The second monitors the establishment of an orderly environment. Followed by time management and concluding with the creation of a positive and safe learning environment.

The Downey Curriculum Walkthrough Model

As an administrator in the 1960’s, Carolyn Downey was asked by a colleague to be more visible in classrooms. As a result she began spending more time in classrooms and these visits were well received by teachers who began to see their work as important (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). Downey quickly realized that to have an impact these visits needed to be more than symbolic, they needed to encourage a change in practice. She quickly became an advocate of the “reflective thought” process (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). This enabled her to engage in follow-up conferences or conversations with teachers to provide feedback and insight into what she
observed. The Downey Curriculum Walkthrough Model is highly collaborative and reflective, and has evolved over a multi-year period.

The Downey Curriculum Walkthrough Model consists of five basic components: visits are brief and focused; reflection areas are identified; information gathered about curriculum and learning; follow-up conversations occur on occasion; and the visits are informal. The Downey Curriculum Walkthroughs take two to three minutes to gather information about what takes place within the classroom (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). The visits are non-judgmental and non-evaluative. The brief visits allow administrators to make multiple visits in a 30 minute period. The short visits also allow administrators to become familiar with teaching patterns and decision making within the classroom. Administrators obtain more information about multiple classrooms when they spend only a few minutes in each. When in the classroom the administrator identifies possible areas for reflection to share with the teacher. The administrator must focus on and engage the teacher in a conversation centered on a thoughtful reflective question. The teacher becomes responsible for his/her own growth and development (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). The data gathered concerning curriculum and instruction will help guide professional development and let the administrator determine if curriculum implementation. The data will also alert the administrator to possible gains in student achievement. The Downey Curriculum Walkthrough Model calls for feedback in the form of a reflective conversation. This feedback does not need to occur after each visit. A teacher can be observed several times before the
administrator provides feedback (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). Finally, this model allows the administrator and teacher to work together to improve instruction and learning. There are not checklists or lesson summaries, only reflective questions and conversations about teaching and learning (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004). The emphasis for this model centers on collaboration and reflection.

**Learning Walk Tool**

In 1997, the University of Pittsburgh’s Institute for Learning developed a walkthrough protocol to be used in schools. The Learning Walk Tool looked at teaching and learning through the Principles of Learning with the key focus of improving instruction and learning. The Principles of Learning provide school leaders with a means of assessing instruction. The Principles are organized into nine components:

1. Organizing the effort
2. Clear expectations
3. Fair and credible evaluations
4. Recognition of accomplishment
5. Academic rigor in a thinking curriculum
6. Accountable talk
7. Socializing intelligence
8. Self-management of learning

While visiting classrooms, administrators look for the nine components. There are three parts to the Learning Walk Tool. Orientation establishes a focus and purpose. The second part provides administrators and opportunity to observe teaching and learning, followed by a debriefing to solve problems and plan for the future (Keruskin, 2005). The Learning Walk Tool focused on practice and how
teachers gain knowledge and understanding in order to refine practice. Learning Walks are conducted by a school administrator or a person from outside the school or district. There are three models that can be followed with Learning Walks: observational, collegial and supervisory. Observers, using the observational model, need to be familiar with the Principles of Learning in order to identify their presence in the classroom (Keruskin, 2005). They examine student work and talk to students while in the classroom. During a collegial walkthrough observers commit to gathering evidence and use the principles to assess student engagement. Observers then discuss with teachers how to better use resources and change practice to improve engagement with content and skills. Student work serves as evidence of learning within the classroom. Discussion becomes a part of the supervisory walkthrough and relates to how practice has changed since the last visit (Keruskin, 2005). At the end of each walkthrough a discussion between the observer and teacher occurs to address what was taking place within the classroom. Administrators, as they observe, look for patterns within the school and develop a plan to improve overall instruction within the school. The data collected directs the planning of professional development.

**Measuring What Matters/Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor**

Measuring What Matters (MWM, a continuous improvement model, developed by the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) includes data collection, analysis and reporting tools, and a focus on good teaching and student learning. In order to determine if good teaching and learning has occurred within classrooms, IRRE created a classroom walkthrough protocol, Engagement,
Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol (EAR) (Connell & Broom, 2004). The focus of the EAR Protocol first creates a common definition of instructional engagement, alignment and rigor that can be used by participating schools:

- **Engagement** - Students are actively processing information (listening, watching, reading, thinking, making) or communicating information (speaking, performing, writing) in ways that indicate they are focused on the task at hand and interested in it (Connell & Broom, 2004).

- **Alignment** - What is being taught and what students are being asked to do are aligned with the standards and curriculum; are “on time” and on target with the scope and sequence of the course of study; and provide students opportunities to experience high stakes assessment methodologies among other assessment approaches (Connell & Broom, 2004).

- **Rigor** - Learning materials and instructional strategies being used challenge and encourage all students to produce work or respond at or above grade level. All students are required to demonstrate mastery at these levels and have the opportunity for re-teaching (Connell & Broom, 2004).

The EAR Protocol has school leaders make frequent, twenty minute visits to classrooms in order to gather data, use the data to drive professional development, and engage teachers in reflective conversations in an effort to improve practice. Classroom visit information will be collected and uploaded into
a data collection system that synthesizes the data and administrators can use the results in planning professional development.

When measuring for engagement, administrators look for the percentage of students who are focused on the work and also who are actively engaged in the work requested. During training there was a great deal of time provided to distinguish between students who are actively engaged and students who are merely compliant. Visitors are encouraged to talk to students while conducting visits to correctly identify actively engaged students.

When collecting evidence on alignment, administrators examine learning materials and observe learning activities. They look to see if the learning materials reflect the content standards, are aligned to the curriculum, and are aligned to the pacing guides. They examine the same things for learning activities. While in the classrooms, administrators also study the student work expected within the classroom to determine if the work products expected are aligned to state grade level performance standards. In the area of alignment, administrators also must determine if students are being exposed to and practice high stakes assessment methodologies (Connell & Broom, 2004).

When in classrooms rigor must also be examined. Administrators look at the learning materials to ascertain if content taught remains at an appropriate level of difficulty and whether students are asked to demonstrate proficient or higher levels of learning. They are also expected to examine student work while in the classroom. Administrators must determine the percentage of students who are
required to demonstrate whether or not they have mastered content being taught while the administrator remains in the classroom (Connell & Broom, 2004).

Once engagement, alignment and rigor data has been collected and uploaded administrators have a variety of report options from which to choose. Administrators are able to view data from the school level down to the teacher level. Data can be gathered and reported for each of the prompts on the classroom walkthrough instrument.

**Summary**

Changes in education have made it necessary for administrators to become instructional leaders and spend more time in classrooms, observing and coaching teachers. Methods of observing and coaching are rapidly changing. Federal and state mandates are now focused on teacher effectiveness as a means of improving student achievement. Administrators must now spend more time in classrooms and provide teachers with feedback and professional development to improve their teaching. Administrators have increased pressure to lead engaging professional development that will enhance teaching and learning. Administrators have begun to use a variety of classroom walkthrough tools to enhance their work with teachers. The EAR Protocol provides administrators and teacher leaders one such opportunity to focus on engagement, alignment and rigor when visiting classrooms. This focus can also be translated into professional development practice.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

“The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance.”

Richard Elmore (Schmoker, 2001, p. 126)

Introduction

An increase in accountability has changed how school leaders, especially principals, run their schools. In an effort to increase student achievement and keep a focus on teaching and learning, principals must spend more time in classrooms and lead purposeful professional development. As a means of remaining connected to classrooms and instruction, principals must spend more time conducting classroom walkthroughs to determine if students are engaged in learning. Classroom walkthroughs are frequent, focused, brief visits that allow firsthand observation of teaching and learning in classrooms (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase & Poston, 2004).

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. The study examined what teacher and administrators experienced in the implementation process, their involvement in the training, and what they have learned from the implementation. This chapter will focus on the research methods used to collect and analyze data.
Restatement of the Problem

More administrators are using walkthroughs in an effort to impact teacher effectiveness in the classroom. The purpose of this research was to describe the implementation and continued practice using the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough (EAR) by looking at trends over a five year period, examining administrator and teacher experiences, and assessing what administrators and teachers have learned during the implementation of the protocol at two high schools.

Research Questions

1. How do administrators collect and use the data from the classroom walkthroughs?
2. What do administrators and teachers say have been the important outcomes of the walkthroughs?
3. What specific changes within a school and classrooms occurred after implementation?
4. What do administrators and teachers recommend to improve the process currently in place in schools and the district?
5. What lessons does the case study offer to other schools and districts contemplating implementation?

Research Design and Procedures

Research will describe how two schools in the same suburban district implemented and used a classroom walkthrough protocol introduced five years ago. According to Stake (2010), qualitative research considers how things work
within natural settings. He also stated that people who do qualitative research do so in an attempt to improve what they are researching. Creswell (2009) provided guidance to researchers in exploring, in depth, a “program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 13). These studies are bound by time and activity, and provide multiple means of collecting data. The goal of the research was to provide insight into the experience of administrators and teachers within the same district. The research will gain understanding of how teachers perceived classroom walkthroughs and what benefits administration believed they received. The researcher will also gain an understanding of how the classroom walkthroughs have been implemented and supported instruction, particularly engagement, alignment and rigor.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. While the district has four comprehensive high schools, only two were included in the study. The two schools selected had a variety of teachers who had been trained on the protocols and the schools were the most representative of their surrounding communities. The study explored administrator and teacher routines and procedures used in the classroom. The process involved three stages. The first step was a review of literature that focused on reform efforts in education, teacher evaluation/supervision, classroom walkthrough models, and teacher performance. The second stage involved administrator and teacher interviews on classroom
walkthroughs and their relation to student learning as perceived by interviewees.

The third and final stage included analysis of data collected. This study was conducted at two comprehensive high schools in a medium sized suburban district in the Southwestern United States.

**Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol**

Measuring What Matters (MWM) has developed a set of tools including the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol (EAR). The protocol contains four sections with three to five multi-part questions. The first section has the administrator or teacher leader identify the overall goal(s) of the classroom visit. Visits may be conducted to assess engagement, alignment, rigor, or all three. The administrator or teacher leader must identify the learning materials and learning activities observed in the classroom. These two lists, materials and activities, are customized for each school and/or district using the protocol.

The second section of the EAR Protocol contains three questions on the level of engagement observed in the classroom. The first question asks observers to determine the number of students on task for the preponderance of time observed. The second question asks the observer to look more closely at what students are doing and identify the number of students actively processing information by thinking, speaking, writing, making, performing, or listening. The final question asks the observer to randomly visit with students to determine what they are doing. Possible questions might include: What are you working on? What does the teacher expect you to learn by doing this work? Why do you think
this work is important? How interesting is this work to you? The observer records the number of visited students on task and the number actively engaged (Connell & Broom, 2004).

There are three questions in the third section that address alignment of the learning materials and activities to determine if they support the standards, curriculum, and scope and sequence of the class. Observers are encouraged to examine the curriculum and pacing guides for the class after the visit. They are also able to examine a course syllabus, if available. Section three also explores the exposure that students have to high stakes test methodology. The observer must determine if all students have an opportunity to practice assessment methodologies used on state tests and on high stakes assessment (Connell & Broom, 2004).

The final section of the protocol contains five questions on the level of rigor in the classroom. First, the observer must determine if the learning material used are at or above appropriate level of difficulty for the class. Next, student work should be examined to determine if students are asked to demonstrate proficient or higher levels of learning. The observer next ascertains if evaluation and grading of student work reflects state grade level performance standards. If time allows, the observer should look for rubrics and classroom grading guidelines. The observer should also determine if the students receive oral or written feedback. The number of students required to demonstrate mastery will be assessed as well as the number of students whose responses were inspected during learning. The final question asks the observer to record the number of
students who appear to have mastered content being assessed before the teacher moves on to new content (Connell & Broom, 2004).

At the conclusion of each visit, the observer uploads the information to the IRRE data warehouse for compilation and stored for future use. Site administrators and teacher leaders are able to log onto the IRRE website and download the data that they need in order to inform their planning and practice.

**Population and Sample**

The district for this study includes four comprehensive high schools plus two alternative programs. Training and implementation began during the 2008-2009 school year. The selected school administrators and teacher leaders received training on the EAR Protocol and began conducting walkthroughs in October 2008. Trained observers were instructed to complete walkthroughs in all content areas. All teachers received training that included an overview of the EAR Protocol and were provided examples of how data would be presented and used at each school. The initial training was conducted by IRRE staff members.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with administrators who implemented the EAR Protocol, teacher mentors, and teachers who have been observed and trained on the protocol. The purpose of the interview was to determine the perceptions and experiences of the administrators and teachers. A semi-structured interview approach was used. This approach allowed the researcher to develop a general set of questions to be used with each interviewee and vary questions and expand questions as the interview progressed based upon answers and discussion (Lichtman, 2006). The study attempted to determine if
there has been a perceived increase in teacher effectiveness at the schools that were implementing the walkthrough protocol. The interview questions were used to gather descriptive data on administrator and teacher perspectives. This data was analyzed and considered as the district moved to expand the implementation process.

Interviews were conducted and data was analyzed to see if there was a correlation between the two schools. During the interview, administrators and teachers were asked to provide their thoughts on the process and make recommendations on future implementation ideas for other districts. The recommendations will be used to help guide other districts as they consider implementation.

While the two schools (School 1 and School 2) are located in the same district (District A) within a suburb in the Southwestern United States, they are vastly different. Located in the southern section of the district, School 1 is located in the southern section of the district and has a higher free and reduced lunch population (65%). Over 1800 students attend School 1. School 1 was in school improvement for several years. Located in the northeast section of the district School 2 has a smaller free and reduced lunch population (26%). School 2 continues to grow and remains the largest school in the district with over 2200 students. It has been academically successful in the past but has recently has become stagnant on the state assessment. School 2 was never in school improvement.
Table 1

School Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9\textsuperscript{th}</th>
<th>10\textsuperscript{th}</th>
<th>11\textsuperscript{th}</th>
<th>12\textsuperscript{th}</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>2212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data reported of 2011-2012 school year from state department of education website.

**Interviews**

The researcher conducted interviews with three administrators and one mentor from each site. Permission to conduct research in the District was requested and granted by the Superintendent. The study was also approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Six teachers agreed to participate in the interviews. Both groups were interviewed on their involvement and perception of the EAR Protocol at their school. Open-ended questions were used to direct the interviews and illicit input from all interviewees. The questions assisted in gathering descriptive data from each site. After IRB approval the researcher used administrator and teacher interviews, as well as analysis of the interviews, as the main methods of collecting data. The administrators and teachers were identified and asked to participate in the study by letter. Interview date and time was arranged by email. Each potential subject was provided the purpose of the study, their role, and the anticipated outcomes. The researcher informed all participants their responses would remain confidential.

Administrator interviews were conducted first during the fourth quarter of the year. The researcher used a semi-structured format and interviewed each
administrator in their office. The interviews lasted approximately 60 to 80 minutes and were audio recorded. Teacher interviews were conducted next. Again, a semi-structured format was used. The researcher met each teacher at his or her school and the interviews were approximately 40 to 60 minutes. An interview protocol was used for all interviews.

The researcher was a former Assistant Superintendent in the district and was involved with the implementation of the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol (EAR). During the five years that the researcher was in the district, the district implemented the walkthroughs and the researcher arranged for the training of all administrators and teacher leaders. This experience led to the researcher’s interest in the EAR Protocol. This experience provided the researcher with additional insight and understanding in approaching the interviews and appreciation for the changes that each campus made to the process.

**Administrator/Mentor Questions**

1. How much time do you spend in an instructional leadership role in your current position? What activities do you consider most important in this role?

2. How often do you conduct engagement, alignment and rigor walkthroughs? Do you have a schedule that you follow? What is the purpose of a schedule? Has it helped your campus?
3. What are your purposes for completing the walkthroughs? Does the same purpose work for every walkthrough? Do teachers know and understand what the purpose is? How do you know they know?

4. Describe the focus of a typical engagement, alignment and rigor walkthrough and how you use the information collected?

5. What happens after conducting a walkthrough? Why is this important?

6. What are some things, instructionally, that have happened at this school that you think are a direct result of walkthroughs?

7. What impact have the walkthroughs had on teachers and students? What impact does the data gathered have on school improvement and/or professional development?

8. If I asked your teachers to discuss the benefits of the walkthroughs, what would they tell me? What would they say are the drawbacks?

9. How did you begin implementing the walkthroughs? What advice would you give an administrator who is considering using the engagement, alignment and rigor walkthrough protocol?

10. What advice do you wish someone had given you? If you could change something about the implementation process, what would you change?

11. Is there anything else, related to your administrative role and classroom walkthroughs, that you would like to share?

**Teacher Questions**

1. As a teacher, what’s your view of the engagement, alignment and rigor walkthroughs? Helpful or not? Why or why not?
2. How were you prepared for the engagement, alignment and rigor walkthroughs?

3. What feedback do you get from your administrator after a walkthrough? What kind of information would you want to receive? How do you use the feedback provided from walkthroughs?

4. How does the school culture differ because of walkthroughs?

5. How does the school use the data from walkthroughs?

6. Tell me something that happened in your classroom that you consider to be a direct result of walkthroughs? Your school?

7. Have you learned new instructional strategies as a result of being involved in the walkthroughs and looking at the data?

8. Has the walkthrough data helped you to see the link between teaching and student performance?

9. In your opinion, what are the drawbacks of the walkthroughs?

10. Are there some other issues, related to classroom walkthroughs, that you would like to share?

**Data Analysis**

To protect the identity of the district, schools, and participants, pseudonyms were used. Each interview was transcribed verbatim within a week after the interview. Notes were also collected during each interview. Interview data was analyzed as interviews were conducted. Themes and codes emerged as the analysis progressed.
Data analysis and collection occurred simultaneously throughout the research process. This simultaneous collection and analysis allowed the researcher to make adjustments throughout the process (Merriam, 1998). The continued collection of data allowed the researcher to identify recurring themes.

The analysis of the interview data involved working with each interviewee’s response, breaking answers and themes into manageable units, synthesizing responses, and searching for patterns, while trying to discover the effects of implementation of the classroom walkthrough process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data/answers were coded and content was analyzed to determine commonalities in answers. According to Creswell (2002), coding supports the process of labeling text and segmenting it to form broad themes. These themes are then used “to form a major idea” (p. 267). For this case study, the data was organized according to the individual responses of the administrators and teachers in order to identify themes representing different aspects of implementation at each school. Consensus themes were then studied and a descriptive summary was written.
Table 2

Summary of Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Sources of Information</th>
<th>Analysis of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do administrators collect and use the data from the classroom walkthroughs?</td>
<td>Administrator interviews</td>
<td>Sort interview data into themes and then codes, and then complete summary of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Participate in collaborative dialogue with administrator and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do administrators and teachers say have been the important outcomes of the walkthroughs?</td>
<td>Document analysis of EAR data and interviews</td>
<td>Review implementation plan and training documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What specific changes within a school and classrooms occurred after implementation?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use Creswell as a resource for interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do administrators and teachers recommend to improve the process currently in place in schools and the district?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What lessons does the research offer to other schools and districts contemplating implementation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The researcher utilized interviews of administrators, teacher mentors, and teachers to gather data on the experiences of participants at two schools using the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol. The results of these interviews were coded and analyzed in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

“The personal accountability dimension measures the likelihood that the principal will hold him/herself accountable for student learning, even when many factors are out of his/her control.”
(Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011, p. 92)

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. To accomplish this task, the researcher analyzed interview responses from school administrators and teachers who participated in the EAR Protocol training and implementation. Interviews were conducted over a five-month period and were conducted at the school of each participant. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Notes were also collected at each interview. Chapter 4 contains a profile of each school represented, demographic data from each participant, a discussion of each research question, and a summary of major themes.

Historical District Context

The district the researcher previously worked was interested in working with the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) on Measuring What Matters (MWM) and the EAR Protocol. During the fall of 2007, while serving as Assistant Superintendent, the district where the researcher worked was approached by IRRE proposing a partnership. The Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) operates as a nonprofit organization and partners with schools, states, and districts to develop more personalized, engaging, and
rigorous learning environments in struggling secondary schools. IRRE draws on a national team of more than 50 experts who work in specialized teams to provide professional development, strategic consultation, and technical assistance, as our partners focus on combinations of the core strategies (Connell & Broom, 2004). They work with entire districts, clusters of large high schools and middle schools, or single high schools and feeder middle schools within a district (Connell & Broom, 2004). IRRE was seeking funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Department of Education to partner with the district on their First Things First Initiative (FTF).

First Things First has focused on five core strategies for transforming the school experience for secondary students in ways that dramatically improve academic performance. The strategies include strengthening instruction; effective use of data; personalized learning communities; advocating for students and families; and building system capacity to strengthen and sustain reform (Connell & Broom, 2004).

IRRE has refined these strategies through intensive partnerships with districts and schools in urban, suburban, and rural communities, and through careful research on the partnerships’ effectiveness (Connell & Broom, 2004). For many partners, the results delivered improvements in students’ graduation rates and performance. IRRE provides embedded training and ongoing support to school and district staff to initiate the core strategies and then to strengthen and sustain the reform as their role lessens. IRRE works with schools and districts to identify a team of leaders who are trained to deliver content. IRRE works with
this team to prepare them to become teacher leaders, conduct calibration visits, and work with schools and districts on data collection and analysis. After working with IRRE, school and district leaders are able to assume the role established by IRRE.

IRRE had been involved in Kansas City, Kansas schools for approximately twelve years, and arranged for a district team of six district administrators, including a Governing Board member, to travel to Kansas City, Kansas and observed their work in January 2008. The team spent three days in Kansas City, and shortly after the return a team from IRRE visited the district to assess the likelihood of a successful partnership. After both visits, it was decided that for a beneficial partnership existed between IRRE and the district. In early 2008 IRRE was notified that they would not be funded for their research and the district would not be able to participate in training on the EAR Protocol without their support of IRRE.

After the district learned that IRRE would not be funded, the state department of education announced a competitive grant opportunity focused on high schools implementing systemic change to improve achievement. The district the researcher worked with completed a grant application for $425,000 to support the work that was taking place and implement the EAR Protocol. The district focused on four success strategies, but was most interested in what was identified as Strategy #1 which would allow for the implementation of MWM and the EAR Protocol -

Strategy #1  Develop a systematic program to assess curricular effectiveness in the areas of engagement, alignment, and
rigor (EAR) and then provide professional development to support teachers and help them deliver instruction that is consistently engaging, aligned with state standards, and rigorous. Teachers will receive embedded coaching and work together to examine lesson plans and student work with a focus on examining the extent of engagement, alignment and rigor in the classroom.

The district was fortunate to be awarded $425,000 in the spring of 2008. Throughout the spring and summer the district coordinated with IRRE to begin training staff at all schools on the EAR Protocol in the fall of 2008.

In October 2008, the district trained the first group of 30 administrators and teacher leaders. This training involved an initial two-day orientation followed by a period of three weeks to conduct ten classroom visits using the EAR Protocol and hold calibration conferences which consisted of a discussion of what was observed in the classrooms. This was followed by another two-day training conducted by IRRE. The grant afforded the district the opportunity to have four teams of two IRRE trainers make three visits throughout the year to ensure that school participants were aligned in what they were observing when conducting visits and the EAR Protocol was being faithfully implemented. Throughout the 2008-2009 school year the district worked closely with IRRE. At the end of the first year the district had conducted 2,524 classroom walkthroughs using the EAR Protocol. These visited were conducted by trained district staff as well as the eight IRRE employees working with the district.

During the 2009-2010 school year an additional 35 district leaders, site administrators, and teachers were trained by IRRE to use the protocol and began conducting visits. It was during this year that the district identified three district
administrators, two assistant principals and one district director, to work closely with IRRE on becoming trainers. Throughout the year the district trainers worked with IRRE as they trained the 35 new leaders. The goal for the district was to sustain the training component and continued implementation of EAR. During the year, 1,047 classroom walkthroughs were conducted. These visits were conducted by district staff only.

The 2010-2011 year brought new training opportunities and it was during this year that district personnel assumed all training and follow up activities throughout the district. Beginning in the fall of 2010 the district was able to train leaders and only partner with IRRE for technical support in compiling and storing data. The district trainers began training staff and conducted calibration visits with previously trained leaders. Each district leader was required to conduct three classroom walkthrough visits each week and use the data to make decisions about planning professional development and improving teaching.

Table 3

*Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol Visits*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Visits</td>
<td>2,524</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>1,422</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data downloaded on September 27, 2012

There were a high number of visits during the first year of implementation (208-2009) due to the fact eight IRRE trainers were working with district leaders to conduct visits. During the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school year each district administrator was expected to conduct three to four EAR visits per week. District
administrators also conducted visits at each site and worked closely with site
administrators. During the 2011-2012 school year a change in district leadership
brought change to the implementation process. Site administrators were not
expected to do visits for approximately six months and there was little support to
the sites in conducting visits and working with the data. In the spring of 2012, the
district recommitted to conducting visits and again had administrators participated
in three to four visits per week.

**Demographic Profile of District and Selected Schools**

The research was conducted within a medium sized suburban district in
the Southwestern United States. Four comprehensive high schools and two
alternative programs support students within the district but only two were
selected for the case study. Each administrator and teacher selected to participate
in the study had been trained on the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor
Classroom Walkthrough Protocol, either as an observer or a teacher, and had
participated in its implementation and/or use within the district.

School 1 serves students in the southern section of District A. It has an
enrollment of over 1800 students in grades 9 through 12. The school has a
diverse population (approximately 2% Asian, 1.5% Native American, 11%
African American, 57% Hispanic and 28.5% White). Sixty-four percent of the
student body participates in the free and reduced lunch program. There are 69
certificated teachers. School 1 opened in the 1950s and continues to be supported
throughout the community. Within the last ten years four principals and
numerous staff changes have impacted School 1. School 1 qualifies as a Title I
Targeted Assistance school. It has not may Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in six years and recently earned a B school under the state accountability system.

School 2 was the second school to be built in District A, and at one time was the freshman-only campus for School 1. It serves students in the northeast portion of the district. It has an enrollment of 2212 students in grades 9 through 12. The school has a less diverse student population than School 1 (approximately 8% Asian, 10% African American, 34% Hispanic, 2% Multi-Racial and 46% White). Twenty-seven percent of the student body qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. There are 86 certificated teachers. School 2 continues to grow and has a planned expansion program to add more classroom space to the existing site. Within the last ten years there have been two principals. School 2 has a stable staff with limited turnover and employees of District A send their children to School 2. Recently School 2 earned a B school under the state accountability system and has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the last six years. School 2 dropped a letter grade in 2012 under the state accountability system.

Table 4 provides a summary of demographic information of each school in the study.
### Table 4

*Demographic Data of the Schools in the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrollment</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>2212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Teacher</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Grade</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets AYP Status</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data reported of 2011-2012 school year from state department of education website.

Ten district leaders voluntarily participated in the research study. District leaders included the Superintendent, two Directors (Career and Technical Education, and Curriculum and Instruction), two principals, three assistant principals, and two teacher mentors. The Superintendent had been the principal of School 2 when the initial training occurred and later moved to the District Office. All but one principal (School 1) participated in the original training in 2008 and had been conducting classroom walkthroughs consistently since first
being trained. The experience level of school and district leadership ranges from one to twelve years. Limited administrative experience exists within the district. With the exception of the Superintendent, no administrator or teacher leader has served in a leadership position for longer than seven years. Many of the administrators were hired the year that the district began implementation of the EAR Protocol. Several administrators were initially trained while serving as teacher or teacher mentors and then moved into administration. Disaggregated demographic data for the leaders represented in the study are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Demographic Data of the Leaders Represented in the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Total Leadership Experience</th>
<th>Highest Degree Attainment</th>
<th>Number of years conducting walkthroughs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Director of CTE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>MBA and Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher Mentor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Teacher Mentor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Six secondary teachers participated in the study. Six teachers were selected, at random, to participate. Emphasis was placed on teachers who taught in a core content area of Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math. The total years of teacher experience ranged from five to twenty-three years. The teacher participants represented teacher who taught grades 9 through 12. The degree level of the teachers ranged from Bachelors to Masters. Four of the teachers who participated were also trained to conduct classroom walkthroughs.

**Table 6**

*Demographic Data of the Teachers Represented in the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
<th>Years at Current School</th>
<th>Highest Degree Attainment</th>
<th>Trained to use EAR Protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings and Results**

Data was analyzed and organized from all interviews conducted. The researcher examined the workings of the classroom walkthroughs at the two schools and within the district. Analysis of interview data was ongoing. The researcher looked for common patterns and similarities in answers of respondents, including both teachers and administrators. Recurring patterns/themes were
categorized in relation to the research questions. The organization of this section centers on the five research questions.

**Response to Research Questions**

*Research Question 1*

How do administrators collect and use the data from the classroom walkthroughs?

The purpose of the first research question was to understand how the data collected during the walkthroughs was used in the district and at each campus. This question was asked and answered by both administrators and teachers. The Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol allowed the district and schools to collect data from each visit. These data were uploaded to a secure website and organized for easy use. Data were categorized by major topic – engagement, alignment and rigor, as well as sub-categories. There are a multitude of reports that can be generated and shared with all staff. During training all users were provided an opportunity to interact with the data and receive instruction on how to have data discussions with stakeholders. IRRE provided all trained staff with several protocols to use to illicit conversations with staff on collected data. Professional development activities supposed to be designed and implemented to support the use of the provided protocols. There was not a great deal of practice on using the protocol.

Interviews revealed that data primarily being used by administrators to set goals and plan professional development was a difficult task due to a lack of consistent training and time provided to use and analyze the collected data. The
school and district administrator responses illustrated that the practice of using data to drive professional development and integrate it into each campus was not being done consistently at the two schools. The Superintendent (A) had used collected data in the district’s annual report to the Governing Board, “I use it in the annual report as you know. We’re finishing our second annual report and we’ve dedicated a page to the process and the results and comparisons.” It was also a part of the Superintendent’s evaluation, “I also have embedded this (data from EAR walkthroughs) with my contract with the pay for performance. I have it as one of my data sets. I’m taking ownership.” During his interview he stated that his hope was the site administrators would use the data to help drive their school goals and professional development throughout the year. Superintendent A did see the data as more of a support, a safety net, “I see them (data sets) as support measures or safety net measures. I don’t necessarily see them as, this is what we’re accountable for and if we come up short, we’re going to miss a school goal.” He saw the data as a strategy schools could bring to professional development and as another piece of data for administrators to help them with their jobs.

Goals

The data collected through the classroom walkthroughs served as a guide and was used to assist with school goal setting. Administrators look at the percentage of classrooms which are engaged, aligned, and rigorous and plan professional development to increase these percentages. Each school within the district was required to set yearly goals reported to the Superintendent and
Governing Board. These goals are monitored throughout the year at both the schools and in the District Office. The expectation was established by the Superintendent and Governing Board with the implementation of the EAR Protocol. The schools reviewed the data and use it in goal setting. Each site established goal indicators and worked to meet the measures. According to Superintendent A,

The way we’re structured, as you are aware, the principals have a big say in their goal planning in that level, in the format and they do. There are indicators. I know campuses also use those measures and have expectations around those measures. I see them more as support measures or safety net measures. This is what we’re accountable for and if we come up short, we’re going to miss a school goal. (A)

District Office administrators also know each school has at least one goal to support the EAR Protocol and they work to support the sites in their work. District Office administrators are required to complete classroom walkthroughs, analyze data, and work with site administrators in planning professional development. These administrators work closely with school administrators to help them achieve their goals.

The principals know this data must be used to determine and measure their school goals. Teaching and learning must drive all school goals and help students meet state assessment standards as well as district assessment standards. As Principal D from School 2 remarked,

We have 12 goals and I think probably all the teaching and learning goals have EAR data directly related to whether or not we’re meeting that goal. It is a good data piece for use to use to determine, ‘Are we meeting the goals of moving kids forward for AIMS (state assessment)? Are we meeting the direct goals for different subgroups?’ It’s valuable in that respect. (D)
Assistant Principal I believed School 1 could do a better job of using the data to support school goals,

I think that in the past we had a school goal that involved EAR specifically. We were able to create, I think, one or two of our own goals, and that was one of them. This past year I would say that we really haven’t used it in that capacity. I think that looking at the goals that we do have as a school, I think that EAR could play a part in those goals. I think you could create a goal specifically surrounding EAR just like you could surround AIMS or something else. I think that you could also use it in addition to what you’re already doing and kind of like you were saying before. How does where you score in EAR impact those other areas? If as a school you’re doing better in these areas, are you doing better in your other goal areas as well? I think you could really – I mean, gosh, you could do a lot of research surrounding that and, I think, find some pretty interesting answers. (I)

The Superintendent and Governing Board require sites to complete a certain number (three) of classroom walkthroughs each week. The Superintendent reviews the number of visits completed and the data collected. The information has been shared with the Governing Board. There was a drop in the number of classroom visits and data collection during the 2011-2012 year but the Superintendent believes this has been addressed,

The thing I’m a little disappointed again – and I have to see the results after fourth quarter, but I think we’re going to have a little more richness on some campuses. The unevenness of the number of visits the district did. We have to bring that to the forefront of the conversation, so that’ll be interesting. (A)

Since goals are required of each school, a desire for support and communication on the importance of the EAR Protocol has developed and sites now expect from the District Office. Principal D thought if schools are to be held
accountable for the collection of data, then the conversations and support must begin at the district level. According to Principal D,

I think administrators at the sites need some pressure from administrators at the district when it comes to, ‘Let’s look at your data.’ Having a conversation with a district administrator and sitting down and saying, ‘Okay, what is your data showing you? What are you doing with this? How is it being effective?’ I think that there needs to be continuous level of support that this is important. This needs to happen and it’s important because we will look at your data and it does drive our instruction and if you’re not doing that, you need to get back to that. I mean, once a district takes over, they need to really find a way to make this part of the culture of an administrator. (D)

EAR Protocol data, now used by teachers to set their own individual student achievement goals, has developed as a district requirement. Each teacher must set two student achievement SMART (smart, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound) goals at the beginning of the year and work on these goals throughout the year. At the beginning of the year teachers meet with their evaluator and set goals for the year. The teachers use multiple data points – state assessment scores, end-of-course assessment scores, EAR data, and pre/post test scores in setting their goals. The teachers have access to the collected data from their Department Chairs during professional development, and use it in their goals setting and are held accountable for meeting each goal. At School 2, Assistant Principal E stated,

I think it has to be tied with something. When we met earlier, in August, we decided that active learning was going be one of our targets that was the expectation that it be one of their (teacher) SMART goals. They would implement a certain number of active learning strategies. I mean, they were being held accountable for that. They had to turn in their SMART goals. We checked where they were within their plans to see if they were meeting those and it they were or were not, why not and where they were. It was tied to something. I think if you’re not tying it to
anything, it doesn’t mean anything. It’s not going to mean anything to them. (E)

For several years, School 2 has used the data with their teachers and has seen increases in student achievement. While the school’s achievement label has not increased, the school has seen an increase in assessment data.

Content areas and departments have not yet begun to use the data to set content specific goals. The Director of Career and Technical Education (B), works in the District Office and has not seen the data being used by the Career and Technical Education Department,

I don’t think I can say departments have specific goals around the data. I could be wrong. I know in speaking with CTE, I personally haven’t done anything as far as goals with the whole, entire department. I have not heard any of the departments at each site talk about having a goals specific around the data. Theirs is more about the end-of-course assessments, improving those scores. (B)

Teachers realized that administrators and schools have a focus for the year and use the data to support their goals. Teacher W commented,

One of their (administrators) big goals obviously is to improve instruction but also to increase formative assessment in lessons and making sure things are aligned. I know that that the assistant principals is focused on this because it’s one of the goals and has been a focus. (W)

Another teacher remarked that the school had not used the data as much as he would have like. Teacher X commented,

I have seen very little done with the data with the whole school. Teachers haven’t asked about it. I know they’re interested in how they did. I think it would be helpful for teachers to see what is working really well. If we had a whole school dissemination or if we were looking at it in our own department. That would seem a natural place to have conversations. (X)

Teacher U discussed using the data in content learning teams and using it to help with pre/post test and assessment results,
Well, we have learning teams, and we use our data extensively. We do the pretests and the posttests, so we take our pretest data and we used we look at the standards that we are lower in. Those are the ones that we’re going to highlight or pay focus to throughout the year. Then we are developing common assessments, common quizzes and common lesson plans to focus on those areas of concern and weaknesses to help us pull those scores up.

We look at the data all the time. Then chapter assessments, we are doing common chapter assessments, so then we’ll all get together in our learning teams and go, “Okay, which problem did you guys miss the most in your classes?” We look at our data even with the chapter test, too, to see, “Okay, where are we all struggling? Where are we all doing really well?” Or, “Wait, you did really good on that and I didn’t, so what are you doing?” We’re having those conversations. (U)

Teacher V discussed using the data to set SMART goals,

We even write—and we have SMART goals and we write down exactly what we’re working on and we have percentages that we have to come up with. Let’s say, for example, in a certain standard kids only passed it with like a 40% on the end-of-course assessment. Our SMART goal would be that the end-of-course assessment they pass it with like a 65%, so we have those SMART goals, too. (V)

Both teachers and administrators are interested in analyzing and using the data to improve instruction. Administrators realized that teachers want to utilize their own data and have struggled with how much data to share and where it would be appropriate to share. Teachers are extremely interested in how they personally did and how their departments/content areas performed. Teachers are ready to spend more time with the data and use it in making decisions centered on their own teaching.

**Professional Development**

Some respondents believed that the data collected on engagement, alignment, and rigor must be used throughout the district to support the planning of professional development. The respondents have attended meetings and
trainings in which the data was presented. The richness of the collected data allows schools, and administrators, to provide specific, focused professional development.

Principal D shared the experience of School 2 in using the data during professional development activities and sharing it with teachers,

We share school-wide information in staff development so that the data is part of it. The teachers are able to see it, which hopefully gives them some insight into, as a school, are we implementing what research tells us are effective ways to keep kids engaged. I drive staff development in many ways. You have to kind of continue to spiral. Use the data. Show it to teachers. Refer back to if you see an area where you think the numbers are dropping then it reminds people. I think it’s like anything. If you don’t talk about it, it can start to fade away a little. (D)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C), shared how at School 1 the data was not used much the year before but recommitment to using it for professional development. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) stated,

…this year we didn’t use it as much as I would have liked as far as the whole group data and looking at trends. We are really trying to identify what areas the whole group, team, community can focus on. That’s something that I’d like to get back to, because we did not do that as much….We met with the Measuring What Matters people just recently and they talked a little bit more about how to strategically use it, the different ways you can use it. Still trying to think, get creative, and think about the different stuff, and how they’re revising the instrument. It looks kind of cool. (C)

Assistant Principal I discussed how the data was used in the past to make decisions about professional development. In the past, the administrative team looked at the data and decided how to use it in professional development. She shared that teachers are being asked to present information during professional development,
As a school, as far as administrators using the data, we would take a look at it in our admin meetings. We would talk about why we think certain areas were low and certain areas were high. Also, some of the things that came away from that is thinking of professional development and what can we do to help all teachers. What strategies are they using? How did they find it. Then we would have them do breakout (sessions) in professional development where we could have teachers attend. The teachers really enjoyed that. That was another way we used data for professional development. (I)

Assistant Principal H commented on how the administrative team uses the data to make decisions on professional development,

In the very beginning our administrative team picked the one category and sub-indicator that we were going to really focus on. We tried to look at things and determine how we can work that into professional development. Practice it, get the ideas down. Introduce and teach, then model strategies and get this down, so everyone knows what we’re working towards. (H)

Part of the planning for professional development involved decisions on how much data to share with teachers. This topic caused participants to think and garnered different responses. Principal D believed it essential to give teachers more access to the data so they can more actively participate in professional development,

I think that the future really – the piece I think that we need to move towards – is giving teachers more access to the data so they can see it themselves. You can’t just spend Wednesday mornings as an administrator teaching teachers. At some point they need to be able to sit down and look at things as a learning team. That to me is where the real work is going to happen. What I’d like to do is really find a way to create more access for teachers to look at data. You know I think directing them in certain areas is what we’d like them to look at. I think that’s the future. If this is going to continue, then to me administrator’s main focus is to collect data and then direct teachers to look at that data and hopefully be accepting. (D)

Assistant Principal H discussed how teachers break into small groups to discuss the data but it was a struggle to coordinate the teacher teams,
During PD (professional development) we’ve actually shared the data. They’ve (teachers) gotten into small groups whether it’s departments or even lower, into specific course selection areas and had them do their own reflections on the protocol and on their percentages. It was a challenge for us to make it meaningful for each department. (H)

School 2 trained teacher leaders on the protocol and has shared the data that the teachers collected with the entire staff. Principal D commented,

If they (teachers) were a part of the data collection, when you handed them the data they might feel a little more accepting of what they see as opposed to this is coming from the top down. This is now coming from my peer. This is what my colleagues are saying, not just my principal. That’s a big step for them to get to a comfort level. It takes times. (D)

While those interviewed realized the value of the data, some concern remained about the time it takes to download and organize the collected data. The Director of Career and Technical Education (B), remarked on the time needed,

I think the instrument, as far as what’s housing the data, is probably what’s most confusing. I don’t think that anybody really has a good comfort level and going and pulling data and getting the types of reports that they specifically want. It always seems to be that time factor of who’s going to pull the data, then interpret the data. What data do we want to look at? What are we focusing on? What is it really telling us? I wish I could say that data has been used more widely, and is part of conversations all the time, but I don’t think that it is. (B)

Summary

Through Research Question 1, the researcher determined there had limited training on how to use the data and what data to study. School 1 and School 2 had different commitment levels in using data. Assistant principals believed their schools were not effectively using their data. There seemed to be some difficulty in using the data efficiently and effectively. Administrators were looking at data in the hope of finding trends which would help drive their professional development plans. They discussed the abundance of data, the time it took to
compile, and their uncertainty of how to use and share with their teachers. They have collected five years of data but struggle, according to their responses, with how to use it effectively. Teachers would like to see more specific data on their departments and the courses they teach. They are also interested in comparing themselves to other schools. Teachers could not articulate what the data was telling them or how it made a difference in teaching and to their students. Teachers have not made the connection between the collection of data and professional development. It appeared that more work needed to be done in this area to make the connection more clear.

**Research Question 2**

What do administrators and teachers say have been the important outcomes of the walkthroughs?

Numerous descriptions of the significance of the walkthrough by both teachers and students since the District began using the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol have been examined. The researcher found that all administrators and teachers reported a positive value for the practice since implementation. The greatest impact appeared to be in the calibration visits and conversations related to instruction.

**Common Instructional Vocabulary**

According to interviewees, one of the most important aspects of the protocol was the development of a common instructional vocabulary around the protocol throughout the district and schools. The common instructional vocabulary helped create uniformity among the schools and the teachers.
Throughout the district administrators and teachers were taught the meaning of engagement, alignment and rigor and provided examples of what each looked like in a classroom. Many of the interviewees commented on the power of a common instructional vocabulary.

Assistant Principal I shared how this common instructional vocabulary helped School 1,

I think that another big piece is making sure the vocabulary is the same across the staff. What one of you thinks is rigor, the other thinks the same. It’s one of the things that we did with our department chairs at the very beginning is to put our engagement, alignment, and rigor and say what does this mean to you when you hear this word? That was something that was a big deal for our campus that we were all speaking the same language. (I)

Assistant Principal H, who is also at School 1, agreed,

The biggest thing is it gave us a common vocabulary and a common definition for engagement, alignment and rigor. When we were able to go through the protocol and specify those things and really open it up to everybody. We’re not hiding anything. This is exactly what we’re looking at. This is exactly what we mean by this. As soon as we got the common vocabulary and the common definitions, then they (teachers) could understand there was a connection to when we go over engagement strategies. (H)

The Director of Career and Technical Education (B) also agreed, “It’s brought a focus to engagement, alignment and rigor and what those definitions are.”

**Culture of Visibility and Classroom Visit Routines**

Another positive impact in both schools was the change in culture which opened doors and provided more opportunities for administrators and teacher leaders to be visible in classrooms. The first year was a change for many teachers, with so many people visiting their classrooms. Teachers were unsure of
the number of visitors who would be in their classrooms and did not understand completely what they were doing with the collected information. After the first year they welcomed the visits and looked forward to seeing administrators in their rooms. Principal D stated, “The teachers don’t mind at all. It’s a part of our culture now. I think there might have been some concern in the beginning, but now it’s just a part of what we do.” The teachers at School 1 expected administration to be more visible in the classrooms and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) believed that this was a result of the classroom walkthrough implementation and shared, they “want the admin to be more visible.” Teachers were also asking administrators to visit and watch them teach because they were more comfortable with visitors in their rooms. Principal D stated,

The teachers are pretty comfortable with having us in their rooms. The teachers don’t mind at all. It’s a part of our culture now so I think there might have been some concern in the beginning when we started but anymore it’s just part of what we do. It gives us an idea of where we are as a school. (D)

Assistant Principal I agreed that teachers were more comfortable with visitors,

I think they (teachers) would say that they like having administrators in their classrooms being visible and giving positive and reflective feedback. I think that has been something that for the most part teachers have enjoyed. I think they would say that there is a benefit for them. (I)

Assistant Principal H also believed that the visibility on campus had been positive,

The outcome is foremost we’re out and about on the campus, and we know what’s going on. The teachers are seeing us. We’re able to share the protocol with them. It builds relationships and rapport. They see that we’re checking on the teachers. Sometimes they will ask about the
protocol. We get to share with them, and they really talk to us. The large majority of the teachers who have been here for three or four years would indicate that, number one, that they like us out in classrooms. We are out there. We know what’s going on. I think they see a connection between what we’re addressing on the protocol and the professional development.

(H)

This culture of visibility might have drawbacks but teachers no longer work in isolation and have more administrators in their classrooms.

Administrators saw good instruction on the majority of visits but there were times when they observed lessons that were not supportive of student learning. When this occurred they might stop the observation to deal with what was taking place in the classroom.

**Researcher Vignette**

While conducting an EAR Protocol visit in another district, the researcher had the opportunity to interact with a student in a Social Studies classroom. The student felt comfortable in sharing his impression of the teacher and the class. It illustrates that students have high expectations for their teachers and come to class wanting to learn and be challenged.

The researcher recently participated in an observation and visited a classroom that was not conducive to learning. As part of a calibration team, the research entered a 12th grade United States Government classroom. The agenda on the board listed a review of the two-party system in the United States and there were a number of review questions on the Smartboard. Upon entering the classroom, what the researcher observed was a teacher who was lecturing his class on completing homework and reading from their textbooks. The lecture on these two things went on for some time. At one point, a student whispered to the researcher, “This class is horrible.” The researcher asked the students why the class was horrible. The student explained that all the teacher did was talk and lecture to them like they were “little kids” and they weren’t learning anything. The researcher and team left the classrooms and did not complete the calibration visit. The researcher reported the incident to the campus principal who was going to investigate.
Using Calibration Visits to Foster Conversations about Instruction

Administrators also stated that another value of the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol were the calibration visits conducted with groups of administrators and teacher leaders, usually three to five, and the conversations that result from these visits. Teams of administrators and teacher leaders visit a classroom together and after the visit conduct a calibration visit where team members shared the perspective of the visit. Each team member discussed the engagement, alignment and rigor they observed in the classroom.

The Superintendent (A) believed this was one of the three most powerful impacts of using the protocol, “The conversations are uniquely about learning, teaching, about engagement, about rigor, so one of the nice things there is that it’s embedded.” He also believed the conversations amongst teacher and administrators unique to the process and contributed to the success of the program. Superintendent A stated,

I think within the context of the calibration meetings, the development of a common language, a common understanding of what they’re actually seeing, an effort to draw a consensus to what they’re seeing in a way that is adaptable. It becomes universal. It extends beyond the school house wall. It becomes something that’s credible at a district level, at an off-site campus level, an alternate campus level. It’s created wonderful conversations amongst teachers and administrators. (A)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) also agreed that the conversations were a powerful part of the process,

I think it’s just so useful and beneficial for us to be talking together as an administrative team. It’s so interesting and insightful for me to hear what “I” is saying. What “I” saw, what “H” saw. It just helps me to kind of respect them in a different light, and to have that information in my head of what are the kinds of things that they really point out, and see, and
suggest. Along with that, the calibration piece which get us the inner rater reliability. It’s fun. (C)

Assistant Principal I agreed that the conversations have been beneficial,

Having those conversations with them (teachers) was something really need because you see it (classroom) from different perspectives. You see things from different viewpoints. We are talking about how many kids are doing this and that. I think we have had some conversation as administrators in the district. I think there is a connection there. Looking for engagement, alignment and rigor in a classroom and then offering feedback. We’ve had a lot of conversations on this. I really want to emphasize the calibration because I think that is the area where I learn the most. At first I didn’t like it. I didn’t want to do it and talk to other people about what I saw. Now I like it. It sparks powerful discussions. (I)

Even at the District Office level, administrators saw the value in the calibration visits and the conversations. The Director of Career and Technical Education (B) remarked,

One of the values in the tool – at least I have found, is this whole concept of the calibrations and collaboration. We had some really good conversations, and it was so funny because “C” was intimidated going into it because I was a trainer. It gave us a focus for conversations that we’re having. (B)

Teachers were interested in knowing what administrators thought of their lessons and wanted feedback to let them know what they were doing well.

Teacher V commented,

…it just leave a note or an email to say, ‘I like this.’ I’ve never had negative feedback from somebody coming in. They’ve always had positive things to say. I’m not saying that I’m a great teacher, but that is nice, because you do get negative other times so it’s nice to have somebody looking for what you’re doing rights. They’re not looking for what you’re doing wrong. (V)

Another teacher was looking for feedback on things to improve on.

Teacher Z stated,

I would hope that if I was doing something that could be improved on they would say, ‘You might want to consider this.’ I do want it in a positive
way. I would not want a corrective measure. You can always have positive instruction, constructive criticism. As long as we can talk about it. (Z)

**Measure of Student Engagement: Compliance versus Engagement**

Measuring student engagement was another positive impact of the walkthrough process. The Superintendent believed that continuing to work on engaging students will eventually lead to improved student achievement. Since implementation, a great deal of discussion about engagement strategies has occurred at School 2. Prior to training, Assistant Principal E believed that most teachers had a definition of engagement but were confusing compliance with engagement. After training and implantation, School 2 developed a shared vision and definition for engagement. She believed that this shared definition brought structure to teaching on the campus.

At School 2, Principal D thought that one of the most positive impacts of implementation was the focus on engagement. He stated,

I think that one of the direct – one of the biggest changes – is teachers know more about engagement strategies. They understand in a 90-minute class that you need to check for understanding a number of times. You know to me the engagement piece has really had an impact on teachers and how they teach and plan for a lesson. I think they would tell you that it gives them more information as to whether their kids are engaged and learning. It they’re not engaged, what does it matter if they’re on the curriculum map? I think that teachers would say they’ve learned more about what engagement is and I think that they believe that’s made a difference in how they teach. (D)

One teacher commented on how student engagement has improved from her perspective. Teacher U noted,

Over the course of three or four years I’ve been doing this, I think engagement has definitely gone up. I think that’s because it is a focus in our school. I’m a small piece of that. I know that some teachers have a competition on who can increase engagement strategies. (U)
Teacher Y also agreed that engagement strategies were being used by more teachers. Y commented,

I think more teachers are using strategies to engage their students. With that specific in mind, keeping these kids involved in their own learning. That would be the number one. (Y)

Teacher Z commented,

Seriously, the conversations about engagement have really increased, and everybody’s like, ‘What engagement strategy did you use for that? Well, how did you get all the kids to participate in that?’ It’s really fun. (Z)

Teacher W stated,

Especially the engagement part, because I think of rigor and engagement this way. If the rigor is too difficult, not as many students are going to be engaged, because it’s too difficult for them to do. Rigor’s not always defined as difficulty, but a lot of people do define it that way. In my mind and in my classroom, I would rather have 100% engagement than only maybe like 75% because the rigor is just at a point where not everybody can be completely engaged in it. I would rather have 100% engagement and then work them up towards that rigor. (W)

Reflective Questions

Administrators are making use of reflective questions. Reflective questions are provided to the teacher at the end of a visit and meant to provide an opportunity for teacher and visitor to engage in a conversation about the teaching that was observed. Principal D has used reflective questions since beginning the walkthroughs, “I mean I have not left them as often as I should. I think that when you put those out there it’s effective. Some teachers respond and some don’t. I think it’s helpful and it does kind of provide them with more feedback.” He believed that his staff were looking for the feedback to improve their teaching.
The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) also used reflective questions to start conversation.

Assistant Principal I found that in the beginning the reflective questions seemed evaluative to many teachers and modified questions. She now utilizes email to send reflective questions and then receives feedback from teacher. She stated,

We were given training on question stems and I think a lot of them (stems) the teachers can take the wrong way. I tried to make it into a conversation. I like doing it by email because they directly respond. I don’t think I ever had a teacher who didn’t respond to me. They want to talk about it. That was neat because then it just became more of a dialogue. I like to do it fact-to-face too. There just wasn’t always time to do that. I like asking the simpler reflective questions. ‘Talk to me about how you plan your lesson.’ ‘When you’re doing your lesson with an engagement strategies do you normally use?’ ‘Which one did you feel like I saw today?’ Just questions like that. I think we really kind of changed that up a little bit from the training that we got because teacher took some of those questions a little bit hard. That’s not what we wanted.

Assistant Principal H found that reflective questions lead to genuine conversations that promoted vibrant dialogue. She remarked,

Then the result of that is the reflective question that you can provide the teachers. Which promote a genuine conversation in a non-evaluative mode that is more relaxed and things like that which only betters the instruction on campus. I’ll go to email- and I will write a con/pro or a minus/plus. ‘This is what I saw.’ ‘I saw this in the classroom.’ I’ll make sure I put down something positive right off the bat that I saw. Then I will let them know what I noticed, and then I will ask the reflective question.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) believed it took time to build trust with teachers in order to ensure that the reflective questions helped improve teaching and learning. She also thought that some teachers wanted more feedback than the reflective question provided. The Director stated,
Now I know that EAR worked with us on writing reflective questions and I think that the teachers that really trust you want beyond that. They want a piece of advice. I think the reflective question is a safe place to start. Later, then as you develop those relationships with teachers and the teachers who want more, to go ahead and give them some more feedback. I do with teachers that I have that relationship with. Now with teachers that I don’t really know. Those teachers I don’t leave a questions, I just write ‘thank you for sharing,’ and then I’ll write a piece that I saw that was really good. (C)

**Student Conversations**

The protocol required visiting administrators and leaders to engage in conversations with students while they were in classrooms. Students have been asked to share their thoughts on learning and how the knowledge will be used.

The Director of Career and Technical Education (B) stated,

…once we started asking question, kids focused more on what they were supposed to be learning. Before EAR (classroom walkthroughs) no one asked them (the students) what they were working on or learning. (B)

She also thought it was surprising to students that an administrator was talking to them. Students believed administrators were in classrooms to observe the teachers and were surprised to be participate in the process.

At School 2, Assistant Principal E shared that prior to implementation students would tell you what they were working on “but very rarely can they tell you why they’re doing it, how it will help them in the future.” This changed with implementation especially in math. She believed that students were used to doing a large number of problems as practice. Prior to implementation they did not know the purpose. Post implementation, they began to understand why they were working on problems. The interviewees believed that involving students in these
conversations added focus to the importance of teaching in the classroom and learning outcomes.

Principal D discussed the impact that the classroom conversations had on students,

Well, if you have the opportunity during the visit, there are certain questions you’re supposed to ask students. One of the questions is basically, ‘Do you understand what you’re learning today?’ What are the expectations for learning? In general students know the answer to that and for me that is a real important piece about teaching and learning. I do get frustrated at time because I feel like when I go into a classroom I don’t hear a teacher say something to the effect of, ‘This is what we’re attempting to learn today.’ I think that once we started asking questions, I think kids were more focused on, ‘What am I supposed to learn today?’ It might have an impact on them if they hear that from different administrators when they’re in the room. (D)

Teacher V discussed having many visitors in her classroom and working with students to understand the purpose and getting them to understand it was important to share their thoughts with visitors,

Once I explained it to them, they’re fine with it. They’re very fine with it, and do you know what they love? They love it when somebody comes in and then goes up and asks them a question. They love that, because then they feel like they’re important and what they’re doing matters. But of course, they always ask the two that aren’t doing something a lot of times. (V)

**Students Advocating for Themselves**

Assistant Principal E believed that involving students in the conversations about teaching and learning helped students advocate for better teaching. She commented,

I will give you an example. There’s a math teacher that is really struggling. He’s only in his second year and was put on an improvement plan and we talked about the same thing twice. I’m coming in and when I came in, after all the discussion, he had it all there. I had to meet with as student in that class on something separate. The student said, ‘Ya know
the one time you came in it was fun and we actually learned something.’

(E)

Assistant Principal C believed it also helped focus students on learning,

It’s important that kids know what’s going on in the classroom. Teachers sometimes, if they don’t write the objective on the board, they think it’s pretty obvious what we’re doing. It’s pretty obvious that the students should know what they’re doing. They don’t always know. There’s a little bit of an alignment gap, or a miscommunication there. It makes them (students) think about what is the teacher really trying to accomplish here. Why is this important? It’s a community of learning. They like it, because I think it makes them feel important. (C)

Teacher Mentor J believed that students are enjoying their learning,

I think that kids are enjoying their learning a little more because they are getting more engaging activities, more opportunities as high school kids, to talk. It’s pulled some of the lecturing out and gave the kids more opportunity to be involved in direct instruction. I think it’s had a positive impact on students. (J)

Teachers also appreciated that the protocol allows for student conversations. Teacher V talked about how students like sharing what they are learning. V commented,

Like the rest of us, they love to have somebody want to talk to them about them and what they’re doing. I think it makes the students more aware of what they are truly learning, not just learning by rote, but having to think about it. (V)

Teacher W also commented on the student conversations,

It’s really funny because I’ve talked to other people (administrators), and they’re like the kids are coming up to them and asking when they are coming back in. They like it. They feel important and kind of empowered by it. (W)

Teacher U commented,

Yes. I think they love having a voice in their education. I’m being observed today, but whenever I’m being observed, I always tell my students—it’s (Assistant Principal)—I go, (Assistant Principal) is coming in to observe you tomorrow in our classroom. I want them to think it’s about them, because it is. (U)
Summary

The Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol created conversation between teachers and administrators, but also students and administrators. There was increased visibility of administrators in classrooms and on campus. Teachers were talking about trying engagement strategies in an attempt to raise rigor in all classrooms. Both administrators and teachers commented on students owning their learning, advocating for themselves, and talking about this with visitors.

Research Question 3

What specific changes within a school and classrooms occurred after implementation?

As the District continued with implementation and expanded the number of administrators and teachers who received training on the protocol, there were changes that became evident at each site. There was a renewed focus on teaching and learning at each campus as evidenced by teachers using engagement strategies. Teachers have asked for more collaboration time with their peers and have requested that administrators visit their classrooms regularly. As teachers received more classroom visits, they began to ask for feedback and wanted to see the collected data. Administrators examined the relationship between the EAR data and student achievement to determine if there was a correlation between the two.
Focus on Teaching

The implementation of the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol helped the administrators focus their time on teaching and learning. Administrative teams spend time discussing what they have observed in classrooms. Principal D stated,

I do try to focus most of my efforts on instruction and improving instruction and learning. We have weekly meeting with the leadership team and the first thing we talk about is our vision – every time – which is all students college and career ready. Measuring What Matters is helpful with focusing on teaching and learning because it’s a different conversation than, ‘What teachers are not doing well?’ It’s more of ‘Where are we at with our curriculum expectations?’ (D)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) also stated teachers have seen how the protocol can enhance the work being done in their classrooms,

Some of the most powerful statements I’ve heard are from the teachers, and the teacher that’s not the department chair event, just says, ‘Now it makes sense to me.’ It opens your eyes to what is going on in a classroom. Using the protocol to identify the basic things you’re looking for. (C)

Assistant Principal E thought the protocol has helped guide teaching and learning conversations with teachers,

That kind of helps guide me on who the teachers are that need some extra help and where they need to grow. I don’t think we use it collectively. We may talk about it. Initially we had a big charge – we’re going to talk about engagement strategies. We’re going to model them and we still do. (E)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) observed teachers change their lesson planning and delivery of instruction. She stated,

In the beginning I think they (teachers) were going through the motions and now they’re actually doing it, asking questions, asking people to come in. They are planning on the majority of students being engaged. Other teachers are trying to chunk information and do more checks for
understanding. I think that some people switch up their lessons. I think we see them analyze the assessment questions on their assessments. (C)

Teacher Mentor F observed teachers trying to improve in certain areas and become excited when they achieve their goals,

Over the course of three or four years I’ve been doing this, I think engagement definitely has gone up. I think that’s just because that focus in our school. Some teachers, I’ve seen them strive for rigor. When they hit Rigor 2, they’re so excited. They made that a goal and it was important to them. Some teachers have a little battle going to see who can hit Rigor 2 first. I think that kind of motivates them. (F)

Numerous teachers commented on the focus on teaching and learning at their schools since the implementation of the EAR Protocol. Teacher V remarked,

Whenever you are being observed, you’re more aware of what you are doing. I think you’re just more tuned in to exactly how you are functioning in the classroom. When somebody comes in, no matter what point they are seeing, you should be doing the right job. If you’re not, you shouldn’t be in the classroom. (V)

Teacher W commented,

If you’re more aware and trying to be more rigorous, trying to have them (students) more engaged, how could it not help? We might do something and not know we’re doing it but when we’re made aware of what we’re doing, we’re going to do it again. It’s going to make us more effective as a teacher and therefore be able to help our students achieve more. (W)

Teacher Z also commented on the focus on teaching,

Well, I think it makes you aware of what the classroom might look like to somebody who’s coming in looking for those things, because usually as a teacher, you’re not up here going, “How many students are engaged at this moment? What is my rigor today?” Normally in an everyday setting, you’re not thinking of that all the time, but now that we’ve started the EAR program, I am constantly looking, “Okay, who’s engaged, who’s not engaged? How many are just sitting there? How many are really participating?” It just makes you aware of the fact that good teaching means more students are engaged and participating in the activities and strategies. (Z)
**Teachers Requesting More Feedback**

The implementation helped teachers feel comfortable in asking for guidance in their classrooms and asking administrators to come in and provide feedback. Assistant Principal H viewed this as a means of improving instruction,

A teacher comes to me and is like, ‘Hey, come in today. I’m going to try this for the first time.’ Most teachers would be like, oh boy, I hope nobody comes in today because I’m trying this. He’s got a different perception now. I’ll go in and do a visit and then we’ll talk about what I saw. (H)

**Summary**

Participants felt that the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol brought a renewed focus to teaching and learning. Teachers requested more feedback in hopes of improving their classroom practice. Administrators and teachers worked together to improve student achievement and ensure that students are prepared to meet the District’s vision of all students being college and career ready.

**Research Question 4**

What do administrators and teachers recommend to improve the process currently in place in schools and the district?

Each interviewee was asked to comment on how the current process could be improved. After five years of using the EAR Protocol, interviewees gave suggestions on improving the current practice. There were components of the process that interviewees liked but there were also things they believed could be improved to enhance the experience for administrators and teachers, but more importantly they believed achievement would be enhanced.
Scheduling Visits

Finding time to complete visits was important to the administrators and teacher leaders. They commented on how helpful it was to have a set schedule for conducting visits. Principal D commented on the difficulty in maintaining a visitation schedule with the demands of leading a school,

I think that the thing that I would also put in there is it’s difficult to maintain the number of visits a week. It’s difficult over the year. You get distracted and you want to go different ways. I think that it does come down to leadership and if leaders are saying that it is important. I mean it can feel a bit overwhelming but it’s just what administrators do. If you’re an administrator it’s what you do. (D)

Assistant Principal I believed that when implementation began her team was more focused on completing visits and they scheduled time to do visits together,

What we would do when we first started it is we would talk about our areas. We would do an EAR on a teacher and talk about what we saw. We would get the chance to ‘show off’ one of our teachers. It was really neat. It was a neat experience when we scheduled to work together. (I)

Assistant Principal H also shared the benefits of a set schedule and how a schedule could be improved to ensure that visits were conducted during different times during the same class period,

Now when we first started we had a pretty rigid schedule that we followed. There was a list in the principal’s office that you had to go in and highlight and we were committed to getting into all classes. There was value in that we could see where everybody had gone and where we needed to go. If we’re going to do a schedule like that I would also like to see on the schedule whether you’re going the first half hour, the middle half hour, or the last half hour. (H)

Teachers liked to see administrators in their classrooms but wanted a more structured schedule of when administrators planned to visit. Several teachers
remarked that it was overwhelming when too many people come in or they come in too often. Teacher V stated,

There was one point it got a little insane because in one 90-minute block I have over nine people in and out of my classroom. That does get disruptive. We’ve had too many at one time and it disrupts the class. (V)

Teacher Z commented on the inconsistency of visits from year to year. Z remarked,

Last year I did not have one person come in. Years before I’ve had multiple visits but last year I actually had no observations with the EAR protocol. (Z)

**District Office Support**

There were several comments on how the process could be improved if the District Office became more involved. The Superintendent (A) admitted to not being as involved. He stated,

The more visits you do and the more sets of eyes that can be on that and it’s very well calibrated, but the more you can do so that it’s institutionalized. It was very powerful and very successful when I was a principal. As a superintendent, I have to admit, I have not been as involved in the walkthrough process. (A)

Principal D believed that the early support of the District Office was important in the success of the implementation,

I think the training was very effective. I think that it was a bit of an eye opener for a lot of administrators. I think one piece of implementation that was very effective was there was a lot of emphasis on doing visits. It was very important to the district and it was being brought in to help school. If you’re not hearing it from the top down, all the way from the district office to school site administrators and then into the teaching level, it becomes a little less important and things aren’t getting done the way they should be. (D)

Assistant Principal I thought the District Office should be more involved and be on each campus more,
I think it was another opportunity for district to get out on campuses because I think sometimes that doesn’t happen as much as it should. I think that it’s nice to see district people in the classrooms and caring about what’s going on in the sites. I think it’s a positive thing to get them on the sites. (I)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) worried with other initiatives the District Office does not continue to support the process and it will not be successful. She stated,

The worry that I have is that we have common core, we have the new teacher evaluation, we have turnitin.com, we have NBC Learns. It’s just one more thing that when you put it on the plate becomes insurmountable. As long as it’s supported by the district office and the people in charge, and we continue to follow up – you know when we have Director’s meetings and we start our Director’s meeting off with an EAR visit. That’s got to be the focus. (C)

Resources

There was one administrator who believed there was a need for additional resources to strengthen the process. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (C) believed there was a need for additional resources to support teachers,

One of the things that I see as a helpful tool is some way to dial into more resources. If you’re reflecting on Rigor 4 you could attach something for a teacher to review. (C)

More Training

The researcher interviewed two administrators who believed there was a need for more training. Assistant Principal I believed there is a need to continued training for teachers,

We really felt that if we brought them (teachers) in and got them involved in it (EAR Protocol) that they would be able to share with their department. I think that was one of the big pieces for us. Training more department chairs would help us get into more rooms. I really just think that getting teachers in there and trained would have a big impact. It would have the biggest impact on how they feel about EAR and get them to buy-in more. It you can get them at least just the basic training and
have them go on a walkthrough or two and see the process, I think that could really improve scores. (I)

Assistant Principal H also believed more training and more opportunities to take untrained teachers on classroom visits was important to support the process,

It’s been really tough. We’ve offered many times to take teacher with us on our visits, and it’s been kind of difficult to get them to go. This was an individual she was ready and willing to use what she saw to better herself. That’s a lot easier when you have somebody like that. (H)

Teacher U wanted to see all teachers trained on the EAR Protocol and use it in lesson planning. She stated that it would benefit all teachers to receive training. Teacher U commented on how important it was that the District was training all new hires on the EAR Protocol.

**Summary**

The researcher found that there were several things that the interviewees believed would strengthen the process and make it better for administrators and teachers. As the district continues with the protocol there will be a continued need to support the process with training, resources, and continued involvement from the District Office.

**Research Question 5**

What lessons does the case study offer to other schools and districts contemplating implementation?

The last research question addressed recommendations for other schools and districts considering future implementation. Each interviewee was asked to comment on what they learned and would recommend to other districts.
Professional Development

Several interviewees believed that staff development would benefit other schools and districts considering implementation. The Superintendent stated,

I would suggest that you don’t underestimate the need for staff development. Look at your budget and think about how you can make it happen. (A)

Principal D believed that staff development helped teachers use protocol and talk to each other,

You have to really spend some time on what protocols work and if you have a traditional teacher who is a stand and talk teacher, that’s a big shift for them. It’s really big for them to have to turn over control to kids to allow a little bit of chaos, so to speak, in their room. When it’s you and you’re talking and they’re (students) sitting there listening, everything is in control. When you step out of that role and you have students talking to each other, people get concerned. I would emphasize getting teacher to understand the protocols. (D)

Assistant Principal I believed that staff development and patience will help with implementation,

Number one, be open minded as the collaborative process goes through. Be open to being willing to utilize the protocol. Secondly, be patient because it takes a lot of time and a lot of team calibrations, conversations, and collaboration to get on the same page, and it’s every changing. You have to be patient and try to fit it into your schedule. (I)

Assistant Principal H thought staff development and working with the teaching staff was vital to the success of the walkthrough process. She commented,

Make sure it is well communicated – the goals and objectives for using this and how it’s going to impact kids. Making sure that they (teachers) know all the language, the terminology that’s being used and what it means. Then making sure that there is very good training, which I think we had. I felt that it was one of the best trainings I’ve ever had in this district. (H)
Teacher V believed professional development was important in order to implement in another district. V commented,

I truly believe they (district) did what they needed to do to make it a smooth transition for teachers. We were informed before we started. Maybe if they (district) had a video that could show an EAR being done, just to show that there is no distraction, there doesn’t have to be. Just so you have a picture in your mind of what’s going to happen. I’m a visual learning and would have liked a video. (V)

Teacher X shared that teachers needed to have an understanding of the entire process. X stated,

The teachers have to really understand what the process is, what the questions are. You have to present it in a way that everyone understands. It’s about giving teachers information to help them get better. (X)

Teacher Z discussed the benefit of training all teachers on the EAR Protocol in order to enhance instruction,

I think personally it would be beneficial if every teacher was trained on EAR, because then they know what they want their classroom to look like. That was a big aha moment for me when I got trained in EAR. What are they looking for? Okay, now I know what I want my classroom to look like and I know what I want my students to be doing when they walk in. It was great. (Z)

**Commitment**

School and districts considering implementation should assess the commitment of their leaders and teachers. The Superintendent commented,

The first advice I would give is to research the protocol. Talk to the experts. Take time with your stakeholders to make sure that it’s introduced in a non-threatening manner and time to make sure that they understand the variants between coaching and support. (A)

Principal D states the importance of an understanding of the process,

I think that the advice I would give them is how to approach teaching – teachers. You know what is engagement and how do you engage students in a lesson? I think the most important thing I would do is to make sure that you start off with an understanding that engagements not
entertainment; engaging students doesn’t mean they’re entertained by a
teacher up there who is being funny or dramatic. I think that was a big
thing for me to recognize and listen to a group make negative comments
about engagement. That was really frustrating for me to hear. (D)

The Director of Career and Technical Education also commented on the
commitment it takes to ensure success,

The action steps involved in making the commitment to the observations,
getting out there and doing them. I mean, I think most people are in the
place right now, they recognize that observations are important and good
to do. Build a schedule of observation times. Then you have to stick to it.
It’s really hard. There are really, really important things that come up.
You make the decision to stick to your schedule or not to. It’s just tough.
(B)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction believed it important to follow
a defined process,

Stick with it. At the beginning when everyone is excited about it, it’s easy
to do. As the year goes on, and everything starts piling up, it’s easy to put
it on the bottom of the stack. Stick with it, and make sure that you
schedule your visits. Start that at the beginning of the year, schedule your
visits. Even schedule the data times that you and your team are going to
look at the data and preserve it. Really plan for it, make it intentional, and
make it a part of your own professional development. It should be
successful. (C)

The teachers who have been trained on the EAR Protocol believed it can
impact instruction and should be welcomed by the teaching staff. Teacher U
stated,

I would give them advice that EAR does matter, that no, you’re not going
to be evaluated as far as our evaluation system goes, but the data we’re
collecting is a reflection of you and what’s going on in your room. Even
though it’s not toward your evaluation process and you shouldn’t be
frightful of it, it is important and it does matter. When people come into
your classroom, how many students are engaged? That’s important, and
you should be responsible for that and know that that’s important and want
to improve on that. (U)
Support of District Office

Support from the district is key to implementation and success. The Superintendent stated,

There has to be a good set and awareness of what strategies are needed. There has to be a good survey of materials, teachers and stakeholders in terms of the learning needs of the organization. You want to look at your available budget for staff development and what types of priorities you can build around. Look at your Board’s initiatives and expectations. There has to be a centered commitment on student achievement. (A)

The Director of Career and Technical Education commented on the importance of District Office modeling expectations for site administrators,

They could definitely model that expectation. They can always get out more too. I mean, they do get out. Invite more calibration visits with admin I think, and with other stakeholders, other department chairs. I think that would be doing more to help. I think modeling, setting an example and holding people to it. I respect if somebody tells me that I was supposed to do this many and I didn’t do it. I’ll feel embarrassed and then I’ll try to do better. (B)

Assistant Principal I also believed the district needed to support the change,

If the district is behind it and they’re throwing their support to it, and they care about it enough to take all of our administrators and mentor teachers and all of our main district officials and train everybody and spend the time and the money on that, then wow it must be important. Then I take that back to my site that this is something that the district believes is going to help us achieve our mission and vision. This is going to be good for kids and good for teachers so let’s get started. Knowing all campuses were doing it, not just School 1. It was something that everyone was doing. It was research based. It was something that was going to impact positively the teaching and learning on our campus. (I)

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction stated the district leaders needed to own the process and be visible,

The district leaders need to own it. I think that is a huge thing. Teachers want to see them in classrooms. I think that they could win a lot by
having staff from the district office in classrooms using the EAR protocol. Saying that it’s important, focusing on it, starting meetings with it, supplying site with reflective questions. (C)

Summary

Interviewees believed using the EAR Protocol was improving instruction at their respective schools. They thought there was a need for additional training. Several teachers mentioned it would be beneficial to train all teachers on the protocol and using the instructional vocabulary in planning lessons. Also emphasized was a commitment from the District Office in supporting schools with classroom walkthroughs. Interviewees wanted to see District Office staff model expectations and make the protocol part of district culture.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

“It is at the school leadership level that this tough work of refashioning school structures must be done, which means that it is up to principals to establish the vision that all children can learn and then help everyone in their school figure out how to help them do so.” (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011, p. 192)

Introduction

The findings of the research study were presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will provide a brief summary of the study, discuss of findings, implications, and recommendations for further study. Administrators and teachers at two suburban high schools in the Southwestern United States shared their experience with the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol (EAR). The information from the study may serve as a guide for districts and schools considering the implementation of the EAR Protocol.

Summary of the Study

Increased accountability has changed the expectations of school leaders. Administrators can no longer be managers of their schools, but must be more involved in instructional programs and be present in classrooms to assess teaching and learning through a variety of observation methods. School administrators must have knowledge of classroom instruction to determine if students are engaged in the learning process and teachers are providing rigorous instruction.

Although several classroom walkthrough protocols exist research indicated that they are becoming a valuable tool that allows administrators to observe classroom practice (Johnston, 2003). Classroom walkthroughs are being
used to facilitate improvement in teaching and learning. There are a variety of models with shared commonalities. Walkthroughs are conducted frequently and focused on student learning. Walkthroughs allow administrators and teacher leaders to gather data on classroom instruction and this data can be used in planning professional development as well as coaching teachers. Teachers and administrators are actively engaged in the learning process and focused on increasing student achievement through improved instruction. In 2008, Stiggins and Duke conducted a study which indicated teachers have a desire to see principals and other administrators in their classrooms and want feedback on what was observed. Teacher isolation still exists but classroom walkthroughs can contribute to a change in culture on many campuses (Stiggins & Duke, 2008).

The purpose of this research was to describe how walkthroughs operate in practice and how they were experienced by school administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers at two schools within the same suburban district. The research was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do administrators collect and use the data collected from the classroom walkthroughs?
2. What do administrators and teachers say have been the important outcomes of the walkthroughs?
3. What specific changes within a school and classrooms occurred after implementation?
4. What do administrators and teachers recommend to improve the process currently in place in schools and the district?
5. What lessons does the case study offer to other schools and districts contemplating implementation?

Participants in this research study were all employed in the same district and were involved in training, implementation and continued use of the EAR Protocol. The two schools were selected because they had leaders who had been involved with the EAR Protocol since the initial training and both schools had trained teachers to use the protocol. One-on-one interviews were conducted with administrators and teacher leaders who had been using the EAR Protocol, as well as teachers who had been visited by trained administrators. A semi-structured interview approach was used which allowed the researcher to vary and expand questions as the interview progressed. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed. In order to protect the identity of the district, schools and participants, pseudonyms were used. The analysis of data involved working with interviewee responses, breaking the responses into themes and manageable units, synthesizing responses, and searching for patterns. The study revealed how the EAR Protocol and walkthrough process was utilized and perceived on each two campuses.
What Has Been Learned About the Walkthrough Process

Chapter 4 highlighted the findings of research from both an administrator and teacher perspective. This section will present a thorough discussion of what was learned through the research. There were common processes and criteria among a variety of classroom walkthroughs being used in schools and districts around the country. However, there does not appear to be consensus in implementation or follow through of walkthroughs to ensure success. District and school administrators attempt to implement and commit to visits with little support or guidance. Choosing a model to fits a district and school’s desire to improve teaching and learning can be more difficult due to minimal evidence that supports a specific model or implementation plan. For the purpose of this study, a classroom walkthrough has been defined as a short classroom observation used to gather information about the curriculum being taught and engagement of the students. The walkthrough process collects data used to facilitate conversations with teachers and allows administrators to make informed decisions about planning professional development. The research study attempted to provide guidance to districts and schools by examining how the EAR Protocol was implemented and how it worked in practice by interviewing participants.

Trust

Results from the interview suggested that the EAR process worked best in schools with established trust between administrators and teachers, and open communication structures. School 2 appeared to have a culture where the administrative team had established collaborative practices between themselves
and teachers by encouraging dialogue and discussion centered on teaching and learning. The administrative team spent time creating learning teams of like-subject teachers and created an environment that allowed teachers to discuss their classrooms and student performance. Because of this involvement and shared commitment both teachers and the leadership team thought they were learning and growing together, which allowed them to utilize the data collected from the walkthroughs in a professional manner that focused on increased engagement and rigor within the classroom. This shared dialogue and commitment to learning was not as noticeable at School 1. School 1 appeared to be struggling with a lack of trust towards the leadership team that blocked cooperation among participants and slowed implementation throughout the campus.

**Data is Personal for Teachers**

Throughout the interviews all administrators acknowledged the volume of data that had been collected since implementation in 2008. Administrators have continued to collect data but admitted that they have not used it as originally hoped. They talked about how difficult it was to determine what data to utilize and several mentioned the time involved in accessing it on the IRRE website. The administrators admitted that they had not done a good job of sharing data with teachers and this was confirmed by the teachers in the study.

In administrator interviews there was discussion on the need for further training in using data. Several school leaders mentioned they would like to see data focus lead by the District Office. They discussed the possibility of working in data teams to compile and organize date in order to present to teachers.
Wayman, Midgley, and Stringfield (2007) discussed the use of data teams to assist educators in improving their craft. School leaders are crucial in supporting and spreading the use of data within their schools. They also discussed how administrators should make data the central focus of instructional leadership in order to improve practice (Wayman, Midgley, & Stringfield, 2007). If this concept of data teams could be introduced in District A, administrators would be more comfortable using the collected data and creating opportunities to share with teachers.

Teachers in the study were interested in seeing how data related directly to their classrooms and students as well as the content areas in which they taught. They wanted to see their overall school data to determine if they were performing better than the other schools, but they also wanted to focus on their classrooms and their students. Teachers were especially interested in data that related to engagement and rigor. They believed that alignment was strong and did not need to focus on this area. They were comfortable with their curriculum and wanted to learn more about engagement strategies and increasing rigor. Both schools had spent time working on engagement strategies and staff were very interested in utilizing these skills in their classrooms. During the teacher interviews it was surprising to see the level of commitment teachers had in wanting to get better and help their students improve. They made a direct connection between engaging students in their own learning and how this would help both schools. The teachers were eager for more data and were disappointed that it was not being presented in a timely manner.
Impact on Learning

During the interview process it was discovered that not all teachers had received training on the EAR Protocol and many thought that this training would benefit all teachers. One teacher discussed taking time during professional development to train all teachers on the protocol and the common instructional language. Others mentioned the use of district trainers and using them to provide ongoing training to staff. The teachers who had been trained talked about how they believed the training made them better in the classrooms. One teacher shared when she plans lessons, she references the protocol to ensure that her lessons have engagement strategies and that she continues to provide rigorous instruction.

The teachers were comfortable with administrators being in their classrooms and actually enjoyed seeing them more frequently. They wanted more feedback from the administrators. When district staff were initially trained they were encouraged to use reflective questions and have been doing so since 2008. While the administrators believed that this was creating professional dialogue, the teachers were not happy with the format. Teachers wanted specific feedback on what was taking place in their classrooms. School 2 spent a great deal of time learning engagement strategies and teachers wanted specific feedback on how they were using the strategies. They also wanted administrators to stay in their rooms longer. Several of the teachers thought that twenty minutes was not a long enough period to view instruction. During the interviews two teachers switched
between the EAR Protocol and the district evaluation system. There appeared to be a need for more training on differentiating between the two instruments.

Teachers thought that the academic culture at both schools had improved. They believe that their schools were more focused on teaching and learning and gave some credit to the EAR Protocol. They valued the professional development that they received on engagement strategies and they appreciated the time provided during professional development to have learning conversations with peers. The administrators indicated that they had observed positive instructional changes while visiting classrooms. They attributed this to the focus on the EAR Protocol and professional development.

Administrators and teachers commented on the importance of conversations with students as part of the walkthrough process but no one gave specific examples of an increase in student achievement on either campus as a result of the process. Teachers thought that students had a better understanding of what they were supposed to be working on while in class but they could not provide a specific example or data on any type of assessment that supported student learning. After implementation both schools maintained their state achievement label but there was no direct evidence linking this to the implementation of the classroom walkthroughs. Administrators commented that teacher practice had improved and believed that this has increased achievement. When asked what data they were using to support this belief in student achievement, the standard answer was the state assessments used in reading, writing and math.
Having administrators in classrooms, observing teachers and talking to students, was cited as having made a positive difference. Interviewees talked about openness at both schools and a belief that teachers were improving and students would benefit from this improvement. Both administrators and teachers remain committed to continuing the walkthroughs and expanding participation in the future.

**Protocol Outcomes – Alignment to Instruction**

Research indicates that teacher effectiveness can have a positive impact on student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Frase, 2005; English, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005). Today schools are focused on relating and measuring teacher effectiveness in regards to student achievement. The EAR Protocol provides administrators a means to be visible in classrooms, observe instruction and the impact on the classroom. Visibility of administration lets teachers know that teaching and learning remains important and that school leaders are investing their time, effort and energy in assessing teachers.

Administrators thought that they are now, after implementation, more aware of teaching within classrooms on campus. They know which teachers teach rigorous lessons, use engagement strategies, and engage students in the learning process. The administrators use the EAR Protocol and their visibility in the classroom to identify teacher leaders and use their expertise to lead professional development and mentor non-veteran teachers.

Both administrators and teachers commented on the level of conversations that now existed on both campuses. Administrators thought that their ability to
communicate with teachers about classroom issues had improved. There was a shared instructional language that makes this conversation more relevant and the collegiality had improved. Teachers were more open to receiving feedback from administrators and were actively, at times, searching this out. Administrators are working to find strategies to share with teachers and are providing teachers with research to improve their teaching. Teachers are also more comfortable sharing best practices with each other and are visiting the classroom of their peers to observe teaching techniques.

The EAR Protocol and training process added to a culture on campus that was supporting teaching and learning. The quality of professional development improved and teachers are more involved with the planning and presenting during early release days. Knowing the number of visits decreased during the year of the study, it will be interesting to see if administrators will dedicate themselves to being more visible throughout the year knowing the impact they have on teachers.

**Considering Other Measures**

In Chapter 4 it was reported that participants wanted more professional development. Teachers wanted to see each staff trained on the EAR Protocol and share a common understanding of the instructional vocabulary. The teachers believed that if all staff could be trained and use the protocol when planning their lessons, that instruction, and ultimately achievement, would improve.

Administrators wanted to train more teachers but they also wanted more training on how to access and interact with the data. The administrators discussed the
need for a district database of strategies and trainings that could be provided to the teachers.

Teachers wanted more feedback. They shared that they did not get the amount of feedback that they thought would help them improve. There was a difference between administrators and teachers regarding feedback. Administrators believed they were giving appropriate feedback but teachers did not agree. The administrators focused on leaving reflective questions and teachers wanted specific comments that would help them implement something new in their classroom. Teachers thought that they did not have the time required to participate in the reflective dialogue. Training on reflective questions and conversations could assist in resolving the difference in perspectives.

**Connecting the EAR Protocol to Other District Initiatives**

Administrators wanted support from the District Office to aid with implementation. Several administrators mentioned that the district had recently participated in *McREL Balanced Leadership Training* and they referenced the 21 Leadership Responsibilities that are part of the training. Administrators want to be instructional leaders and seem frustrated that they spend more time managing their schools rather than engaging in activities directly related to teaching and learning. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found a relationship between leadership and student achievement. They mention several of the 21 Leadership Responsibilities that promote student achievement and the administrators spent time discussing these qualities and wanted to spend more time focusing on these qualities. They were most interested in *Monitors and Evaluates, Visibility,* and
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2003). The administrators truly want to be instructional leaders and need to be supported to ensure that this will happen.

Extending the Culture of Collaboration

All interviewees valued the EAR Protocol and encouraged other school and districts to participate. Without hesitation, interviewees stated that it would be beneficial to other districts. Participants believed that the EAR Protocol had a positive impact on teaching and increased achievement. Teachers emphasized the importance of training all teacher and administrators stressed the importance of support from the District Office. They believed that one or two district administrators had to drive implementation and make it a priority in all district meetings. Administrators mentioned that they believed districts considering implementation should visit other districts and schools to see the impact. They thought it was important to communicate the vision, purpose, and process to all stakeholders. Several teachers mentioned it would be important to communicate with parents the impact that the EAR Protocol would have on instruction and learning. They believed that since students were a part of the process that parents should be updated.

Recommendations

An in-depth study on classroom walkthroughs indicated a need for more research on the process, implementation, and outcomes. There was less research on how to utilize the data in professional development planning to increase student achievement. Listening to the experience of administrators, teacher
leaders, and teachers in District A, the EAR Protocol was being used as it was intended, but from discussions it was a process that needed to be refined at both the district and school level. Interviewees discussed the need for more training and support from the District Office. Teachers mentioned that they believed that training the entire district on the protocol and language would produce a common understanding and utilization of engagement strategies within classrooms. The refinement could have an impact on other schools and districts considering implementation of the EAR Protocol.

**Recommendations for District Leadership**

The following recommendations are offered to District Leadership considering implementing a classroom walkthrough process such as the EAR Protocol.

- Build the capacity of school leaders and teachers before undertaking implantation. Consider surveying staff to determine readiness for change and classroom walkthroughs.

- Create a mission, vision, and goals for the classroom walkthrough process with multiple stakeholder groups (administrators, teachers, mentors, Governing Board, students). This should be shared at training and should remain visible throughout implementation.

- Create data teams to help site administrators gather, utilize and share data with staff after implementation. Consider using data dialogue protocols to help staff understand and use presented data.
• Keep the process visible. Update the Governing Board. Make the process part of district presentations. Have school leaders share with site councils and various parent groups.

• Conduct classrooms walkthroughs with school administrators at their schools. Talk to teachers about teaching and learning. Engage students in conversations about what they are learning.

• Create direct connections between the protocol and student achievement. Look for multiple data points that could support implementation.

Recommendations for Site Leadership

The following recommendations are offered to site leadership considering implementing a classroom walkthrough process such as the EAR Protocol.

• Work with site leadership team to create a classroom walkthrough schedule and then hold all parties accountable to the schedule.

• Educate teachers on the process and set clear expectations of intended outcomes.

• Share data with teachers and encourage them to use this data when planning lessons and professional development.

• Work with teachers to provide feedback that will help them grow. Reflective questions do not work for all staff. Make sure that feedback is provided quickly. Teachers do not want to wait.

• Look for ways to illustrate how the walkthrough process is impacting instruction. This might include newsletter updates or anecdotes from teachers.
• Make an effort to be in every classroom.

• Educate teachers on process and goals of the walkthrough protocol.

**Recommendations for Teachers**

The following recommendations are offered to teachers considering implementing a classroom walkthrough process such as the EAR Protocol.

• Utilize engagements strategies regularly.

• Use the protocol when lesson planning.

• Do not assume that everything is aligned. With the introduction of the Common Core State Standards, take time to ensure that lessons are aligned to standards.

• Remind students that they are part of the learning process.

• Ask to be trained or go on visits with administrators.

• Ask for timely feedback.

• Recognize the importance of building.

**Recommendations for Teacher Mentors**

The following recommendations are offered to teacher mentors considering implementing a classroom walkthrough process such as the EAR Protocol.

• Visit the rooms of first and second year teachers. Share observations and data collected.

• Provide EAR Protocol training to all new teachers.

• Focus on engagement, alignment and rigor when working with new teachers.
• Conduct classroom walkthroughs with site administrators.
• Have new teachers observe veteran teachers who are strong teachers and are utilizing multiple strategies.

Implications

Classroom walkthroughs have the potential to influence instruction in a positive way by providing teachers, administrators, and schools with greater visibility in classrooms and the data need to make decisions about teaching and learning. They also allow for administrators to step into the role of instructional leader on their campuses. Districts, schools, and administrators who are considering implementing classroom walkthroughs could consider the successes and struggles of School 1 and School 2 in District A. A common vision, purpose, and goals of the classroom walkthrough process must exist and there must be a connection to the visits and results. The value of classroom walkthroughs may vary between sites, but the overall goal need to be identified and adhered to throughout the process. The vision, purpose, and goals of the classroom walkthrough process must be communicated to all involved, from district level administration to teachers. In the case of District A, the vision and communication was less consistent and it was clear that principals did not feel supported by the district and that teachers had a vague understanding of the overall initiative, especially at School 1.

It is equally important to provide appropriate and thorough professional development on the use of the walkthrough, the evidence to be collected, and the process used in examining and working with the evidence. Professional
development must be ongoing and provided at all levels of the organization. Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, and Lemons (2006) identify the need to identify and develop a vision of the desired future as one step of the process. There seemed to be little evidence of this in District 1. Administrators did not share common understanding of the purpose of the initiative and teachers could not identify a clear purpose.

There was a great deal of data being collected and stored in an online data warehouse. During the initial training in 2008, there was some professional development given to administrators on how to use the data but it was not sufficient. Many of the administrators interviewed were overwhelmed with the amount of data collected and did not have a clear picture of how it could or should be used. The teachers did not have an understanding of how much data had actually been collected. Additional professional development on analyzing and interpreting the walkthrough data would potentially allow for greater success in focusing on classroom practice as a means of increasing student achievement.

The use of the classroom walkthrough to increase dialogue between administrators and teachers which could lead to changes in instruction is important to consider. Through the use of reflective questions and follow-up conversations teaching and learning remain the focus and lead to an increase in achievement. Work needs to be done in providing training to administrators on writing and using reflective questions and with teachers on how to react and respond to a reflective question.
**Future Research**

The lack of information about implementation of classrooms walkthroughs and the varied responses on the length, purpose, and procedures for walkthroughs indicated a need for more research on the process and outcomes. Further research on the differences between school level and district level implementation is also needed. Recommendations for future research include:

- Conduct similar research in another district;
- Conduct similar research at all schools within a district that utilize classroom walkthroughs;
- Examine schools and districts that have implemented classroom walkthroughs and then experienced a change in district or site leadership;
- Follow the process at secondary schools versus elementary schools;
- Conduct research on the implementation of different classroom walkthrough models;
- Measure the changes in student engagement in classrooms and as schools that are using the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol;
- Follow the process in districts with different populations including demographics and teacher experience;
- Replicate the study and analyze student achievement data;
- Conduct a study that examines the leadership styles of principals who are utilizing classroom walkthroughs;
• Replicate the study within a district where there is more stability in leadership at the site and district level;
• Study how to transition an innovative program from one leader to another;
• Examine how the protocol may operate in departments with a close curriculum alignment.
REFERENCES


Pitler, H. & Goodwin, B. (2008). Classroom walkthroughs: Learning to see the trees and the forest. McREL.


APPENDIX A

ENGAGEMENT, ALIGNMENT AND RIGOR CLASSROOM

WALKTHROUGH PROTOCOL
# ENGAGEMENT, ALIGNMENT AND RIGOR (EAR)

## CLASSROOM VISIT PROTOCOL

| School Name | __________________________   | Name of SLC: __________________________ |

| ___________________’s ______________________ class was visited on ______________________ |
| (teacher) | (subject) | (date) |
| at ________ for ________ minutes. | # of students in the class: ______ | # of visitors: ______ |
| (time) | (#) |

Period: ______

Predominant Content: ________________

---

**Names of all team visitors**

(Please list all visitors and then circle your name)

---

Are you the Leader? YES____ NO______; Is this consensus? YES____ NO______
1. **Instructional goals assessed**
   - [ ] engagement
   - [ ] alignment
   - [ ] rigor

   **Engagement**: Students are on task; interested in the work; and they are actively processing information (listening, reading, thinking, making) and/or communicating information (speaking, performing, writing).

   **Alignment**: What is being taught and what students are being asked to do are aligned with the standards and curriculum; are “on time” and on target with the scope and sequence of the course of study; and provide students opportunities to experience high stakes assessment methodologies among other assessment approaches.

   **Rigor**: Learning materials and instructional strategies being used challenge and encourage all students to produce work or respond at or above grade level or at or above the IEP designated level. All students are required to demonstrate mastery at these levels and have the opportunity for re-teaching to mastery.

2. **Learning materials used (select all observed):**
   - [ ] Calculators
   - [ ] Chalk Boards
   - [ ] Chart/Graph Paper
   - [ ] Computers
   - [ ] Dry Erase Boards
   - [ ] Internet
   - [ ] Journals
   - [ ] Library Books
   - [ ] Manipulatives/hands-on materials
   - [ ] Math or Literacy Tool Kits
   - [ ] Notebooks
   - [ ] Overheads
   - [ ] Problem of the Day

   What materials is the teacher using to build understanding around the content?

   Check off **ALL** learning materials observed.

   Circle **PREDOMINANT** learning materials observed.
3. **Learning activities used (select all observed):**

- Bell Work on Board
- Cooperative Learning Strategies
- Summarizing and Note Taking
- Comparing and Contrasting
- Generating and testing hypotheses
- Creating Non-linguistic representations
- Student Demonstrations
- Explanation of Academic Task
- Student Presentations
- Group Projects
- Test/Quiz Taking
- Group Work
- Watching Videos
- Individual Projects
- Learning Centers
- Individual Writing
- Lecture
- Individuals Working on Worksheets
- Silent Reading
- Whole Class Discussion/Questions and Answers
- Writer’s Workshop
- Taking Notes
- Whole Class Guided Instruction
- Small Group Guided Instruction

What learning structures and activities are evident?

Check off **ALL** learning activities and structures observed.

Circle **PREDOMINANT** learning activities or structures observed.

---

**ENGAGEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISITOR PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scan 1:</strong> _____ out of _____ students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scan 2:</strong> _____ out of _____ students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scan 3:</strong> _____ out of _____ students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. _____ # of students were on task.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perform multiple scans of the room during the visit and estimate the number of students who appear to be on task as asked or instructed. Use the multiple scans to determine the number of students on task for the preponderance of the time you were in the room.
Scan 1: ____ out of ____ students
Scan 2: ____ out of ____ students
Scan 3: ____ out of ____ students

2. ____ # of students were actively engaged in the work requested.

3. Of the ____ (#) students visited individually:
   a. ____ (#) were on task and
   b. ____ (#) were actively engaged in this work.

Choose three to five students randomly who are on task and ask them if it'd be alright if you talked to them about what they're doing.

Interview probes:

1) What are you working on?
2) What does teacher expect you to learn by doing this work?
3) Why do you think this work is important?
4) How interesting is this work to you? Not at all? A little? Really interesting? Why?

Code student as on task if probes 1 and 2 match with observed assignment and expectations.

Code student as actively engaged if probe 3 is answered cogently and 4 is answered at least a "little interesting."
### ALIGNMENT

1. **The learning materials:**
   - a. __did__ __did not reflect content standards guiding this class.
   - b. __were__ __were not aligned with the designated curriculum to teach those standards. (On target)
   - c. __were__ __were not aligned with the pacing guide of this course or grade level curriculum. (On time)

2. **The learning activities:**
   - a. __did__ __did not reflect content standards guiding this class.
   - b. __were__ __were not aligned with the designated curriculum to teach those standards. (On target)
   - c. __were__ __were not aligned with the scope and sequence of the course according to the course syllabus. (On time)

3. **Students** __did__ __did not use high stakes test methodology in the same manner in which they will be expected to use them on a high stakes assessment.

### VISITOR PROMPTS

- Observe the learning materials (those there at the beginning of the visit and introduced over the course of the visit) – review learning materials you checked earlier.
- Are those materials aligned:
  1) With the district content standards covered by this course?
  2) With the designated district curriculum for this instructional unit?
- Using the district syllabus or pacing guide for this course of study, determine whether the instructional materials are “on time.”

- Observe the learning activities underway and initiated during the visit – review learning activities you checked earlier.
- Do these activities incorporate content aligned with the district/state standards to be learned in this course of study?
- Are they aligned with the designated district curriculum or prescribed curriculum (i.e. Art Matters) to teach these standards?
- Using the syllabus or pacing guide for this course of study, determine whether the learning activities are “on time” (within a 1-2 week window).

- Observe the work students are being asked to do during the visit.
- Are students getting opportunities to practice assessment methodologies used in state tests and other high stakes assessments? i.e. Creating analogies with vocabulary from the ACT would be reflective of the high stakes assessment methodologies; simply using ACT Vocabulary in a recall situation would not.

*Modified for each state to reflect tests they administer.*

---

1 Teacher interview may be required to complete this assessment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGOR</th>
<th>VISITOR PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The learning materials ___ did ___ did not present content at an appropriate difficulty level.</td>
<td>Are learning materials observed at the grade level or above (review learning materials checked or prescribed curriculum being used) or guided by a student’s IEP when appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The student work expected ___ did ___ did not allow students to demonstrate proficient or higher levels of learning such as those included in state grade level performance standards.</td>
<td>Observe student work being displayed and work requested during and following learning activities (review learning activities checked): What level of thinking and performing do the learning activities require and does the student work required reflect: Basic? Understanding, Remembering Intermediate? Analyzing, Applying Advanced? Creating, Evaluating Code student work expected as rigorous only if preponderance of observed work and work expected during classroom visit were at Intermediate Level and Advanced Level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A. Evaluations/grading of student work ___ did ___ did not reflect state grade level performance standards.</td>
<td>A. Look for evidence: 1. Are grading procedures standards-based and appropriately tied to progress toward and achievement of proficient work according to state grade level standards and objectives for the course or a student’s IEP when applicable? 2. Are grading rubrics and examples of student work displayed and/or easily accessible to students? 3. Do rubrics and examples demonstrate proficient and exemplary work according to state grade-level standards and objectives for the course or a student’s IEP when applicable?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Teacher interview may be required to complete this assessment.  
3 Observer may need to examine the tests or assessments used after the observation is completed.
If possible, to confirm your response, choose two or three students randomly and ask them: 4) whether and how they use rubrics to judge the quality of their and others’ work; and, 5) to show you a piece of their work on the topic they’re working on now that they are proud of and explain what their grade was and why they got it.

Code evaluations/grading of student work as rigorous if probes 1-3 are ‘yes’; and, when available, if probes 4 and 5 are cogently responded to by all students questioned.

B. If formative assessments take place during the visit (such as oral responses to questions, peer conversations, cooperative learning structures, written answers, demonstrations, quizzes) listen for teacher’s responses to students, are they receiving feedback that will help them improve or extend their thinking or responses?

If no formative assessments take place look for evidence of written feedback on assessments or assignments that provide the student with guidance for improvement.

B. Students ___ did ___ did not receive oral or written feedback after an assessment or check for understanding.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGOR</th>
<th>VISITOR PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. A. Students ___ were ____ were not given a formative assessment.</td>
<td>Observe whether and how students are asked to demonstrate their understanding of the content being taught (i.e. formative assessments such as oral responses to questions, peer conversations, cooperative learning structures, written answers, demonstrations, or quizzes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. ___ Number of students required to demonstrate mastery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. ___ Number of students whose responses were inspected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Following a formative assessment:</td>
<td>If possible, observe the number of students who appear to have mastered the content being assessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>__ Almost All (&gt;80%) __ Most (50-80%) __ Few (≤49%) students had mastered the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>__ I could not determine levels of student mastery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>__ The teacher retaught material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>__ The teacher moved on to new content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immediately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Not Applicable (no formative assessment given)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B – SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER OF SUPPORT

April 13, 2012

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University under the Direction of Dr. Arnold Danzig. I am currently working on a case study and would like to explain and describe the implementation and use of the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol at School 1 and School 2 in the District A. I will also be examining how its use is experienced by participants. As part of my study, I would like your permission to conduct interviews with administrators and teachers at School 1 and School 2. I would also like to have your permission to observe administrators on each campus conducting an EAR visit. My hope is that the results of the case study will enable other schools and districts that are about going to begin the implementation process learn from a district that has been implementing for four years.

Participants will be invited to share their perspectives and experiences. I would like to interview three administrators, one mentor, and five teachers from each campus. The interviews will be audio taped. The conversations will be confidential and all identifying features will be eliminated in the audio transcripts of these recorded interviews to ensure anonymity of the interviewee and the school. I will also eliminate identifying features from the district. Prior to the interviews, I will prepare a list of questions or prompts that will serve as a basis for the interviews. I view these interviews more as conversations than formal surveys with strict interview protocols to be followed across all settings. I am interested in their perspectives and in specific ideas that they think are important for understanding and implementing the engagement, alignment and rigor protocol as a means of improving instruction. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in participating.

Although there will be no direct benefit to participants and the district, the possible benefits of your participation include the opportunity to contribute to change how the engagement, alignment and rigor protocol is used.

Thank you for your consideration. If you approve the study, I would greatly appreciate a letter of support. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (623) xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Lexi Cunningham
Enclosure: Letter to Participants

Interview Questions – Administrators/Mentors

Interview Questions - Teachers
APPENDIX C – LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Measuring What Matters Through Engagement, Alignment and Rigor
Administrative/Mentor Research Group
Information Letter

Dear Administrator/Mentor,

I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University under the direction of Dr. Arnold Danzig. I am currently working on a case study to explain and describe the implementation and use of the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol at two schools in the District, and how its use is experienced by participants. As part of my study, I will be collecting information on administrator and mentor experience in using the EAR Protocol and its impact on instruction. Through this case study I will be examining administrator/mentor and teacher experiences, and assessing what administrators and teachers have learned during the implementation of the protocol. My hope is to improve the implementation process for other schools and districts that are about going to begin the implementation process.

You are being invited to participate in an individual interview to share with me your perspectives and experiences. I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. If you agree to be audiotaped, the tapes will be stored in my home office and once transcribed, the interview will be deleted. These conversations will be confidential and all identifying features will be eliminated in the audio transcripts of these recorded interviews to ensure anonymity. Prior to the interviews, I will prepare a list of questions or prompts that will serve as a basis for the interviews. I view these interviews more as conversations than formal surveys with strict interview protocols to be followed across all settings. I am interested in your perspectives and in specific ideas that you think are important for understanding and implementing the engagement, alignment and rigor protocol as a means of improving instruction. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your participation in this effort is completely voluntary. Your time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes, and if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the project at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect you in any way. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. In some cases, follow-up interviews may be requested. Please let me know if would prefer not to be contacted for a follow-up interview. The results of the research may be shared with broader audiences.
and/or published but your name will not be used. In addition, neither the school nor the district will be named. Your responses will be confidential. Your participation will have no effect on employment.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefits of your participation include the opportunity to contribute to change how the engagement, alignment and rigor protocol is used.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call, (623) xxx-xxxx, or email, lexi.cunningham@tuhsd.org, me, or Dr. Arnold Danzig at adanzig@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Lexi Cunningham

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.
Measuring What Matters Through Engagement, Alignment and Rigor

Teacher Research Group

Information Letter

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University under the direction of Dr. Arnold Danzig. I am currently working on a case study to explain and describe the implementation and use of the Engagement, Alignment and Rigor Classroom Walkthrough Protocol at two schools in the District, and how its use is experienced by participants. As part of my study, I will be collecting information on administrator and mentor experience in using the EAR Protocol and its impact on instruction. Through this case study I will be examining administrator/mentor and teacher experiences, and assessing what administrators and teachers have learned during the implementation of the protocol. My hope is to improve the implementation process for other schools and districts that are about going to begin the implementation process.

You are being invited to participate in an individual interview to share with me your perspectives and experiences. I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. If you agree to be audiotaped, the tapes will be stored in my home office and once transcribed, the interview will be deleted. These conversations will be confidential and all identifying features will be eliminated in the audio transcripts of these recorded interviews to ensure anonymity. Prior to the interviews, I will prepare a list of questions or prompts that will serve as a basis for the interviews. I view these interviews more as conversations than formal surveys with strict interview protocols to be followed across all settings. I am interested in your perspectives and in specific ideas that you think are important for understanding and analyzing the use of the engagement, alignment and rigor protocol as a means of improving teacher effectiveness. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your participation in this effort is completely voluntary. Your time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes, and if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the project at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect you in any way. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. In some cases, follow-up interviews may be requested. Please let me know if would prefer not to be contacted for a follow-up interview. The results of the research may be shared with broader audiences and/or published but your name will not be used. In addition, neither the school nor the district will be named. Your responses will be confidential. Your participation will have no effect on employment.
Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefits of your participation include the opportunity to contribute to change how the engagement, alignment and rigor protocol is used.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call, (623) xxx-xxxx, or email, lexi.cunningham@tuhsd.org, me, or Dr. Arnold Danzig at adanzig@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Lexi Cunningham

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.
APPENDIX D

ADMINISTRATOR AND MENTOR QUESTIONS
APPENDIX D – ADMINISTRATOR AND MENTOR QUESTIONS

Measuring What Matters Through Engagement, Alignment and Rigor

Administrator/Mentor Research Group

Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer: Lexi Cunningham</th>
<th>Study ID: ______________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date: ______________</td>
<td>Time: ______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss the purpose of the study, individuals and sources of data being collected, what will be done with the data to protect confidentiality of the interviewee, and how long the interview will take. Remind interviewee that the interview will be taped.

Administrator/Mentor Questions

1. How much time do you spend in an instructional leadership role in your current position? What activities do you consider most important in this role?
2. How often do you conduct engagement, alignment and rigor walkthroughs? Do you have a schedule that you follow? What is the purpose of a schedule? Has it helped your campus?
3. What are your purposes for completing the walkthroughs? Does the same purpose work for every walkthrough? Do teachers know and understand what the purpose is? How do you know they know?
4. Describe the focus of a typical engagement, alignment and rigor walkthrough and how you use the information collected?
5. What happens after conducting a walkthrough? Why is this important?
6. What are some things, instructionally, that have happened at this school that you think are a direct result of walkthroughs?
7. What impact have the walkthroughs had on teachers and students? What impact does the data gathered have on school improvement and/or professional development?
8. If I asked your teachers to discuss the benefits of the walkthroughs, what would they tell me? What would they say the drawbacks are?
9. How did you begin implementing the walkthroughs? What advice would you give an administrator who is considering using the engagement, alignment and rigor walkthrough protocol?
10. What advice do you wish someone had given you? If you could change something about the implementation process, what would you change?
11. Is there anything else, related to your administrative role and classroom walkthroughs, that you would like to discuss?

Thank the individual for their cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure them of the confidentiality of the responses and the potential for follow up conversations.
APPENDIX E – TEACHER QUESTIONS

Measuring What Matters Through Engagement, Alignment and Rigor

Teacher Research Group

Survey Questions

Interviewer: Lexi Cunningham

Study ID: _____________________

Date: ______________ Time: ______________ Place: ______________

Discuss the purpose of the study, individuals and sources of date being collected, what will be done with the data to protect confidentiality of the interviewee, and how long the interview will take. Remind interviewee that the interview will be taped.

Teacher Questions

1. As a teacher, what’s your view of the engagement, alignment and rigor walkthroughs? Helpful or not? Why or why not?
2. How were you prepared for the engagement, alignment and rigor walkthroughs?
3. What feedback do you get from your administrator after a walkthrough? What kind of information would you want to receive? How do you use the feedback provided from walkthroughs?
4. How does the school culture differ because of walkthroughs?
5. How does the school use the data from walkthroughs?
6. Tell me something that happened in your classroom that you consider to be a direct result of walkthroughs? Your school?
7. Have you learned new instructional strategies as a result of being involved in the walkthroughs and looking at the data?
8. Has the walkthrough data helped you to see the link between teaching and student performance?
9. In your opinion, what are the drawbacks of the walkthroughs?
10. Are there some other issues, related to classroom walkthroughs, that you would like to discuss?

Thank the individual for their cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure them of the confidentiality of the responses and the potential for follow up conversations.

Years in Education

Years at Current School

Highest Degree Earned
To: Arnold Danzig
   College of

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
   Soc Beh IRB

Date: 04/20/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 04/20/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1204007741

Study Title: Classroom Walkthroughs: A Case Study of Two Schools

The above referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.