The main ideas of the book are:

- There are two key parts of the walk-through process -- frequent, short classroom visits, and conversations with teachers about how they make decisions when planning and implementing their teaching.
- The walk-through process is a practice that combines instructional supervision, ongoing professional development, coaching and mentoring, and adult learning.

Why I chose this book:
I believe the best type of professional development is ongoing, embedded in the school culture, and tailored to the needs of individual teachers. The walk-through process fits all of these categories. It is through individual conversations with teachers that the principal can impact teacher growth and bring about an improvement in teaching and learning.

By increasing the number and frequency of classroom visits, principals will know more than they ever have about their teachers’ practices. The walk-through process has tremendous potential to help principals strengthen their skills as instructional leaders, increase their visibility, add to their repertoire of instructional strategies they can share with other staff, improve their ability to identify areas for staff development, and alert them to teachers who might become marginal -- all benefits that lead to improved student achievement.

The Scoop  (In this summary you will learn…)

- The five steps involved in the walk-through process.
- How to actually perform these steps by using the two classroom scenarios in the summary.
- How to structure follow-up conversations to help teachers reflect on and improve their practice.
- The benefits of and research behind the walk-through approach.
- Provide the kind of differentiated professional development to meet the needs of individual teachers.
- How to conduct a workshop to introduce the walk-through process to your teachers and give your leadership team an opportunity to practice this new approach. (See The Main Idea’s Professional Development Extension at the end.)
1. Introduction and Rationale for the Walk-Through Approach

The walk-through approach described in this book was designed by Carolyn Downey. The authors believe it is quite different from other walk-through approaches that give feedback to teachers. They suggest, before you begin to read, that you think about your own experience with walk-throughs:

REFLECTION -- Think about or write answers to the following:
How often do you walk into the classroom? How long do you stay in each classroom? How frequently do you provide follow-up? What is the nature of the follow-up?

The main two parts of the walk-through process are frequent, short classroom visits, and conversations with teachers about how they make decisions when planning and implementing their teaching. Below are the five key ideas of this approach:

1. **Two- to three-minute, focused, yet informal observation.** The goal is *not* to evaluate a teacher, but rather to gather information about curriculum and pedagogy. It has been said that teachers make over 1,000 decisions a day; in 2 to 3 minutes we should be able to observe 5 to 10 decisions being made. If you only have 30 minutes to walk through classrooms, in a typical 10 to 15 minute walk-through you could only see 2 to 3 teachers. Instead, with frequent, short, observations, you can become familiar with the patterns and decisions teachers are making.

2. **Reflection** – The goal is to enable all educators to become reflective thinkers responsible for their own growth and who continuously analyze their own practice. The brief observations trigger thoughts for the teacher to consider in his or her decision-making about effective practice.

3. **Curriculum and Pedagogy** – In the classroom you gather data about the curricular and instructional decisions that impact students.

4. **Occasional Follow-Up** – The authors suggest follow-up conversations *not* take place after every visit. In fact, you may want to visit 8 to 10 times before such a conversation when it will be received in a meaningful way.

5. **Informal and Collaborative** – There is no checklist and notes are not placed in a file after an observation. Their approach is informal! Of course you will need to take notes to jog your memory since you are visiting so many classes. Overall, the goal is professional growth, not evaluation.

The goal of this walk-through process is to work collaboratively with teachers to help them improve their practice. Some are skeptical of such short observations, but visiting classrooms more regularly provides a more accurate picture and ample data to promote teacher growth. Of course at times you will need to stay longer than three minutes in a classroom and give more direct feedback to struggling or novice teachers rather than help teachers reflect. However, this method described above is intended for the majority of teachers who are in good standing and who are trying to impact student achievement.

Why Walk-Throughs?
The authors provide a number of powerful reasons to make brief walk-throughs part of your regular practice:
- Frequent sampling gives greater validity to what you observe
- Frequent observations lower teacher apprehension over time
- The more you observe, the more you know about the school’s functioning
- Observing helps you identify common areas in need of improvement to address through staff development
- The more you observe, the more you learn – the greater the repertoire of strategies you can share with other staff
- You can observe how effective your staff development has been in impacting teacher behavior in the classroom
- If parents call about a concern, you have your own first-hand data
- Frequent observations help you identify possible individuals who might become marginal without assistance

Administrators spend a great deal of time making changes in the structure of the organization. However, the only way to truly effect higher student achievement is through the teacher and his or her actions in the classroom. As an administrator, Downey realized that she could not go directly from her thoughts and actions to changing teacher behavior. This was not the way to implement truly long-lasting change. She had to motivate teachers to want to change, and telling or selling her own ideas wasn’t working. Individuals seemed to embrace new ideas better when they came as a result of self-reflection rather than the “boss” telling them how to change. Therefore, the goal of the Downey approach is not to change teacher behavior, but rather to influence a teacher’s thinking so that the teacher has a desire to change his or her own behavior.

REFLECTION – The authors suggest you think about or write an answer to the following:
Think back to your original thoughts about walk-throughs. How has this introduction influenced your thoughts?
2. Conducting the Five Steps of the Walk-Through Observation

This chapter describes the five steps of the walk-through observation in detail. Remember that the goal is not to judge the teacher and point out strengths and weaknesses. The goal is to gather information on multiple short visits to use to facilitate a discussion with teachers about their decisions. By accumulating data from multiple brief visits we begin to see patterns and possible areas for dialogue. At first teachers will not understand why you are visiting for such a short period of time and will think you cannot see anything in such a visit. Over time they will see that you are not judging and you are collecting a lot more data for conversations with them for their professional growth. To describe how the five steps work, it is helpful to refer to a sample observation. The scenario below is from a 12th-grade language arts class and the observation only took 3 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12th-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS SCENARIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: How many syllables does it need to have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choral response: Six. [About half the students. ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: And you have to say this in your head: Iambic pentameter. One of the things we mix this up with is “anapestic.” I need someone to come to the board and write three anapestic feet. [Five hands are raised. ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia: [Student goes to the board and illustrates three anapestic feet. ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: What is the critical difference between an iambic and anapestic foot? [A few raise their hands. ] If you know, raise your hand with an open hand. If you know, but don’t want to be called on, raise your hand with a closed hand. If you don’t know, raise your hand and cup your hand. [Most raise hands with an open hand. ] John.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John: Anapestic has three and iambic has two syllables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: That’s right. What is the next critical thing? [8 students raise their hands. ] Susan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFLECTION – The authors suggest you think about or write an answer to the following:
What did you observe in the above scenario and what follow-up comments might you give the teacher?

The goal of the observation is to see if students are attending, and what curricular and instructional decisions the teacher is choosing to make, not to judge the teacher’s practices. The first three steps below should always be done, and the last two only if you have time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIVE-STEP WALK-THROUGH OBSERVATION STRUCTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Student Orientation to the Work – Do students appear to be attending when you first walk in the room?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Curricular Decisions – What objectives has the teacher chosen to teach and are these aligned to the curriculum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Instructional Decisions – What instructional practices is the teacher choosing to help students achieve the objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4: “Walk-the-Walls” – What evidence is there of past objectives or instructional practices in the classroom (on walls, projects, etc. )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5: Safety and Health Issues – Are there any noticeable safety or health issues that need to be addressed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 1: STUDENT ORIENTATION TO WORK
This step is conducted within the first two seconds – preferably before the students see you (it can even be done through the classroom window. ) It is just a quick look to see if attending behavior is in place – whether listening, interacting, or working alone – not an exact count of who is engaged. In fact, we cannot know if they are actually paying attention. Also, it is important not to disrupt the class. Do not have the teacher announce your presence or send students over to tell you what they are doing. Below is an example of what you might record for Step 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Arts Scenario – Step 1: Student Orientation to the Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine. Students oriented to teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: CURRICULAR DECISIONS
This is the step where we will spend the majority of our 2 to 3 minutes of the observation – describing the actual curricular objectives being taught. Note that most of us tend to focus more on instructional practices in our observations. Instead, in this step we will focus on what content (skill, knowledge, process, or concept) is being taught so we can see where that content falls in the written curriculum. To examine curricular documents to determine where the taught curricular objective are located, sometimes principals must go back to the office, other times principals might have the scope and sequence in their electronic organizers. In order to do this step quickly, principals often become advocates for having a clear set of objectives, by grade or department, with a reasonable number of student learnings that everyone can understand.
Note that the goal in this step is just to be descriptive, not to speculate why a teacher has chosen an objective above or below grade level. This will be discussed later with the teacher. Note that you should only focus on two or three objectives even when there are multiple activities in the classroom. Also, to ascertain the objectives, instead of standing in the back of the room, you need to view actual student work and may even need to ask students, “What are you learning?” If you ask, “What are you doing?” you will hear more about the activity than the content. This is just the first part of Step 2, but you might record something like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Arts Scenario – Step 2: Curricular Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Taught:</strong> Distinguish between an iambic and anapestic foot (syllables and stress) that might be used in a sonnet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course:</strong> 12th Grade English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Calibration:</strong> Could be a prerequisite skill. “Use iambic and anapestic feet in writing a sonnet” is from the district’s 7th-grade English curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get more details about the content taught, you can divide the content into three areas, or the 3 C’s: **Content, Context, and Cognitive type.** The **Context** describes the conditions under which students will demonstrate the learning. It includes the **Givens** (directions and information given to the students), the **Nature of the Student Response** (did the student respond by writing, speaking, bubbling in, etc.), and any **Special Vocabulary**. The third C, **Cognitive type** describes the type of thinking, from Bloom’s Taxonomy, that is called for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis of the Student Objectives (The 3 C’s) – Continuation of Step 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content:</strong> The skill, knowledge, process, or concept to be learned. (In the 12th grade example: To distinguish between an iambic and anapestic foot.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> The conditions under which the students will demonstrate their learning. (In the 12th grade example, oral directions were Given, the Nature of the Student Response was oral and hand clapping, and the Special Vocabulary was iambic, anapestic, sonnet.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Type:</strong> Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation. (In the example, the cognitive type is Knowledge.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the information recorded for any of the items above were a trend or pattern based on a number of visits, that could lead to a reflective discussion with a teacher around the decisions about the Content, Context, and Cognitive type chosen. Also, if the teacher thinks she or he is teaching one objective, but your observations reveal otherwise, this is another opportunity for discussion.

**Step 3: INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS**

In this step you look for **practices** the teacher uses to teach the objectives such as questioning skills, grouping strategies, and informal assessment strategies. There are three components of this step:

- **Generic Instructional Practices:** list the practices that could be used regardless of age or subject area (such as comparing and contrasting, homework use, feedback, etc.)
- **School/District Focus:** If the school has a focus on a specific strategy – like cooperative learning – look to see if and how these strategies are implemented in the classroom.
- **Subject-Specific Instructional Practices:** look for research-based strategies that are specific to the subject you are observing such as using manipulatives or mental computation in mathematics.

**Step 4: “WALK-THE-WALLS”**

You may not have time after completing Steps 1 through 3, but if you do, you may want to observe what is on the wall as an indication of past or future learnings. The walls reveal objectives and also the teacher’s curricular and instructional decisions.

**Step 5: SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUES**

This is not a formal inspection, but naturally you will note any health or safety concerns such as backpacks in the aisles, burned-out lights, chemical odors, inadequate traffic flow because of tables and chairs, etc.

Try out Steps 1 through 3 with the scenario below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6th-Grade Mathematics Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher:</strong> A percent means a part of 100. What is 30/100? [Teacher writes percent on the board. Three students raise their hands.] James? James: 30 percent. Teacher: Thank you. Any questions so far? [No hands go up.] What if I gave you 20/100? [Teacher writes percent on board. Six students raise hands.] Sally? Sally: 20. Teacher: 20 what? Sally: 20 percent. Teacher: Good. What if you have 7 out of 100? [Teacher writes percent on the board. Five students raise their hands.] Mark? Mark: 7 percent. Teacher: Thank you. What is all this leading to? Think for about 5 seconds. What am I trying to note? What if I had 100/100? [Teacher writes percent on board. Five students raise hands.] James? James: 100 percent. Teacher: Very good. Remember how ratios are a type of fraction. If I reduced 100/100 what would it be? [Teacher pointing to percent on the board. Five students raise hands.] Mary? Mary: 1. Teacher: The whole number one equals 100 percent. If it is less than 100 percent it is a what?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Follow-Up Conversations

This chapter is about the three different types of follow-up conversations you can have with teachers – direct, indirect, and reflective. The type of conversation depends on where teachers are in their development. The goal of these conversations with teachers is to help them improve their practice through reflection. The coaching model used moves teachers through dependent, independent, and interdependent stages with the goal of treating the teacher as a collegial participant in a reflective conversation. This departs from the traditional model of the supervisor judging and directing. Instead, these conversations should serve as a motivational approach. Remember that overall, the walk-through approach is not for dealing with marginal employees. Below are descriptions of how you can respond in three different types of follow-up conversations.

I. DIRECT FEEDBACK – Dependent Stage

For years administrators have believed that a note needed to be left after visiting a class and teachers came to expect this. However, in this approach, the authors suggest you visit often, but seldom leave a note. Notes are one-way correspondences that can often be misread by teachers, particularly if you include an area in need of improvement. Instead, only use notes for novices, and they should always be in the form of positive reinforcement. If you do use a note, see the suggestions below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions for a Quality Positive Note</th>
<th>Sample Positive Note to a 6th-Grade Mathematics Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be descriptive and specific, focus on the effect on student learning/behavior, present a rationale/research for using the behavior, encourage the teacher to continue, be genuine and positive</td>
<td>Your style is so helpful for students. One of the strategies you use is to allow wait time after your questions. This gives each student a chance to respond and this increases learning. Keep up the good work and think about how and when you decide to use wait time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A better approach is to use dialogue because it is a two-way interaction that allows you to clarify ideas, influence thought, and to see the teacher’s reaction. Sometimes administrators, when they want to provide direct feedback, use questions so they do not seem as harsh, “How do you decide when to use wait time?” However, this can make the novice teacher feel uncomfortable. If you have something to declare, then say it! “I would like to chat with you about wait time – how you decide when to use it, when not to use it and how long to wait.” This statement is direct, but it is still soft in tone. Note that the direct statement is not made in a vacuum – it is part of a 10 to 15 minute conversation that would include the following elements:

1. Set a 10 – 15 minute time frame for the conversation.
2. Reinforce that the teacher is a reflective person.
3. Give a focused statement on the teaching practice to be discussed.
4. Invite the teacher to reflect with you.
5. Describe the behavior observed in the lesson and the curricular or instructional practice into which it fits.
6. Talk about the teaching practice and related research about it.
7. Check for understanding.
8. End with a reflective question to continue the thinking.
9. Exit quickly – teachers are busy!

Remember that these are not for interactions with teachers who are marginal – in those cases, you would use stronger statements about what needs to change, “I expect you to use all of the instructional time available for learning. You have too much down time…”

II. AN INDIRECT APPROACH – Independent Stage

If you determine the teacher is at a more independent level, have the teacher do the reflecting. It is important to be in the classrooms of independent teachers as much as anyone else. Just your presence alone will influence their thinking. In this approach, even if you have an area of improvement in mind, “zip the lip.” The point is to get the individual to become a reflective teacher and this will not happen if you are choosing the area of improvement. Instead, be very indirect and make a statement like, “Things seemed to be working well for you today in your classroom.” Notice that there is no focus on a particular teaching practice. After the teacher brings up a particular practice you can probe for the criteria the teacher uses in making a particular decision. Below is an example of what a supervisor might say (without the teacher’s part). These conversations need only be a few minutes long.

**Hi, do you have about 3 or 4 minutes to chat?... When I walked through your room it seemed like students were learning what you wanted them to. I know you enjoy reflecting on your work; would you like to take a couple of minutes to think about your practices?... When you think about this lesson, what decisions were you making that seemed to be working well for the students?... Very interesting, so one of the areas you make decisions on is [teaching practice brought up by the teacher]. When you are planning and thinking about [teaching practice] what criteria do you use to decide when and how to use [the practice] to help students in their learning? ... Got to run. If you want to chat further, let me know.**

III. A REFLECTIVE APPROACH – Collegial Stage

The ultimate goal is to bring your teachers to collegial collaboration. The heart of this step is coming up with the reflective question. This question has no one correct answer and the principal does not play “gotcha.” Instead the reflective question is based on the data from the principal’s observations and encourages the teacher to think about his/her practice in order to improve. Here is an example of a reflective question about an instructional decision:

In planning your lessons around the district curriculum, and in thinking about activities you might use, what thoughts go on in your mind about which activities to select to impact student achievement?
This may seem like a long question. It is long because there are five elements in a reflective question. Also, note that these questions are not written down. The five elements of a reflective question are:

1. Situation – What the teacher chooses to do depends on the context.
2. Teacher Reflection – We want teachers to make reflections about their decision patterns, not about one single lesson. We are used to reflecting on a single lesson observed, “How did you decide…?” Instead, break this habit and use the present tense, “How do you decide…?” We want reflection for action, not reflection on action.
3. Choice – Teachers decide what they teach and we want them to reflect on the curricular and instructional choices they have made.
4. Decision – In discussing the decisions the teacher makes, bring this conversation back to the teaching practice in a general way.
5. Student Impact – The goal is for teachers to always analyze the decisions they make in light of the impact on student learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION ELEMENTS</th>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Situation</td>
<td>“When planning your lessons around the district curriculum…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher Reflection</td>
<td>…and thinking about the learning activities you might select to teach the objectives…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Choice</td>
<td>…what thoughts go on in your mind…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Decision</td>
<td>…about which of the activities to select…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Student Impact</td>
<td>…to have a high likelihood that each student learns the objectives?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These reflective questions should be part of a 3 to 4 minute conversation structured similarly to the independent approach. Part of the success of this approach depends on creating a culture in which a reflective approach will be accepted. For now, if a teacher seems defensive, you can simply say, “It sounds like you think I want a particular answer to my question. I don’t.” Remember that most teachers have never had a collegial conversation with a principal, so this will be new. This new approach may be a challenge for some supervisors as well. Some will think it is wishy-washy. However, it has been the authors’ experience that simply telling experienced teachers what to do seldom works, and it often alienates them. Instead, this is an approach to inspire teachers to think and change.

WRITE YOUR OWN REFLECTIVE QUESTION – The authors suggest you try to write a reflective question

Go back to the 12th-grade or 6th-grade teaching scenario. Choose a teaching practice to focus on, and write a reflective question that contains all five elements listed above (Situation, Teacher Reflection, etc.) Then practice saying it orally since these questions won’t be written down.

4. Creating a Taxonomy of Reflective Questions

This chapter encourages principals to use varying levels of reflective questions with teachers depending on the teacher’s stage of development. Principals want to choose reflective questions that will lead to a teacher’s reflection and growth. Each question should promote intellectual/conceptual/cognitive growth, but not so much as to be overwhelming. This means a beginning teacher and an experienced one should not receive the same question. To do this, the principal needs to know the teacher well and should keep in mind that the question should be:

- At the right level of difficulty
- Seen as meaningful to the teacher
- Tied to the current issues of the teacher
- Related to school- or district- improvement focus
- Potentially impacting student achievement
- Tied to past reflective questions posed

A principal chooses the level of question based on where teachers are in their stages of development. Below are some guidelines.

Level 1 and Level 2 Reflective Questions

Ask less experienced teachers about their decisions concerning the planning for their curriculum content and instructional activities. Below is a sample Level 1 question:

“When you are planning your math lessons (1. Situation) and thinking about the type of problems you might select (2. Teacher Reflection), what factors do you use (3. Choice) to decide on the selection of problems (4. Decision) to move students forward in their learning (5. Student Impact)"

Level 2 questions would center around the idea of fidelity of design – that is, whether the criteria for the content or activities chosen were actually carried through. The idea is to look for congruence between setting up activities and using data to determine if the activities were congruent with the design criteria. Here is an example of a Level 2 question:

“After you plan your lesson activities in social studies and use your criteria for designing those activities, what thoughts go on in your mind as you are using activities to help you determine if what is transpiring in the classroom is congruent with your plans, in order that your activities enhance student learning?”

Level 3 Reflective Questions

While Levels 1 and 2 focus more on the teacher’s role, Level 3 focuses more on the students. Level 3 questions focus on formative or ongoing observation and assessment – that is, how students learn and react to the curriculum design activities. The idea is to look at teacher judgments about whether they are getting immediate results from the students in the classroom. Below is a sample Level 3 question that is generic (not tailored to a specific discipline or grade level):

“When teaching and thinking about whether you are getting the desired results from the criteria you use to plan, what thoughts go on in your mind about the usefulness of those criteria in getting the desired results from…to help each student achieve?”
### Level 4 and 5 Reflective Questions

These questions focus on curricular and instructional decisions made based on summative assessment data. Looking at this data may form the basis for teachers to change the curriculum content or instruction they use. At Level 5 teachers look at whether their curricular and instructional decisions are maximizing student learning. A sample Level 5 question might look like this:

"When you are using small-group work and thinking about strategies you might use to differentiate instruction so that each student learns the content, what criteria do you use to select those strategies that will help each student master the desired learnings?"

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### 5. Establishing Procedures for Implementing the Walk-Throughs

This chapter includes some of the logistics you should think through before implementing walk-throughs. It is a mistake to just start the walk-through process; instead you should plan for it carefully to make sure it is well received. Below are some issues to consider.

#### Finding the Time

It is important to develop a schedule for conducting visits as well as relying on unscheduled times. Currently, research shows that principals spend only about 2.5 to 10 percent of their time in classrooms. Given the benefits to student achievement, principals who implement this process try to devote 25 percent of their time to it.

Look at how much time you currently spend in classrooms. Jot down those times for a typical week on a form like the one below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Mon.</th>
<th>Tues.</th>
<th>Wed.</th>
<th>Thurs.</th>
<th>Fri.</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before school day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After doing this exercise, now think about the amount of time you would like to spend on visits and reflective dialogues. These discussions can be held before and after school and during teachers’ planning periods. Now create a new schedule that you would like to keep. In order to keep such a schedule, walk-throughs need to become one of the highest priorities in your daily activities. You may also want additional staff -- such as assistant principals, department chairs, mentor teachers -- to get training in this process to help.

Also, unplanned time is perfect for walk-throughs since you just need a few minutes. Consider using the time if an appointment is canceled, or stop on your way if you’re walking through the building to check on a physical plant problem. Some principals return from outside meetings and enter the school by a side door so they can visit classes on the way back to the office. One principal programmed his screen saver to periodically flash Walk-Through, Walk-Through as a reminder to leave his office!

#### Preparing Staff, Students, and Parents

It is vital that staff, students, and parents are all made aware of this new technique before you start using it. You could write a letter to the staff (a sample letter is on pp.102-3) explaining the purpose of the walk-through approach and then follow up with a teacher orientation to the process. (See The Main Idea’s orientation workshop at the end of the summary.) It is also important to bring the union on board before starting the process. Also, this approach works best in a school with a certain level of trust. If you do not believe you have that trust right now, consider beginning the walk-throughs with teacher volunteers who are willing to work with you.

You will also need to inform students that the principal will be visiting frequently and that they should not stop what they are doing to ask questions or say hello. Finally, parents need to be informed that you will not be immediately available to them when they call, but you will be developing a much more detailed knowledge of the instruction in the building as a result of these walk-throughs.

#### Record Keeping

The most important thing about record keeping is to keep it simple! When you visit a classroom you might use a blank 3x5 index card to record information for yourself (not for anyone’s file). Here is an example of what it might look like filled out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Mark Anders</th>
<th>Class taught: 6th Grade Math</th>
<th>Date/time: 9/19/08 11:35am</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRICULAR DECISIONS</strong></td>
<td><strong>INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prepared by:</strong> The Main Idea 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Review strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Convert fractions to percent</td>
<td>• Symbolic problems</td>
<td>• Real word vs. symbolic problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Convert fractions to whole numbers</td>
<td>• Oral student response</td>
<td>• Metacognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Type: Knowledge level</td>
<td>District Calibration: At the 4th grade level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you want to discuss an item on the card in a reflective dialogue with the teacher, you could circle it. If you note a potential pattern or trend, you could place a check mark by that. Over time, principals develop their own unique recording practices.
6. Implementing Changes

REFLECTION – Before reading this section, the authors suggest you think about or write answers to the following:

1. What do I know about the process of change?
2. What helps people accept change and go along with a new way of doing things?
3. What do leaders have to do to bring about change?
4. How do I determine whether or not change is actually beneficial?

This chapter covers some of the factors that go into effectively implementing the walk-through approach. Many practitioners have implemented the walk-through with follow-up conversations approach and there are lessons to be drawn from their experiences. Below are some important lessons about change that are true for the walk-through process:

1. Change is possible, given the proper commitment.
2. Leadership must initiate change. To get results from systemic and deliberate change, it must come from the leader.
3. Coerced change will probably fail. Collaboration is needed. You need to set aside your inspectorial demeanor and work collegially with teachers. Teachers must perceive you as a colleague who is knowledgeable and interested in what they are doing.
4. Slow change is better than rapid change.
5. Change must make sense. Change will garner credibility if it is supported by evidence from data-driven approaches.
6. Change requires a positive relationship with faculty. The reflective and collaborative nature of the walk-through process is impossible in an adverse environment. The success depends on the nature of your relationships with faculty. If your teachers’ image of you is one of a checklist-armed, stern-faced observer who supports them when they succeed and disparages them for shortcomings, it is challenging to switch to the role of a supportive collaborator. You will need to first spend time rebuilding a more positive, constructive relationship with your staff. Teachers need to see you as a valuable resource for improving teaching and learning.

Working Effectively with the Marginal Teacher

It is difficult to implement the walk-through approach with a marginal teacher. In fact, as mentioned earlier, this approach is meant primarily for functioning teachers. However, in implementing this new process, you will need to know how to intervene if you come across a marginal teacher. Below are some factors in identifying a marginal teacher:

- Are you spending a lot of time in that teacher’s classroom due to a need to intervene?
- Are you frequently motivated to give feedback about some skill that needs improvement?
- Are your conversations with the teacher directive on your part rather than probing?
- Is the teacher open about classroom problems or does s/he refuse to accept responsibility for inadequate performance?

When you identify a marginal teacher you will need to change the reflective questioning approach of the walk-through model into a more directive form of assistance. Your visits will become much more frequent, and your conversations will become more frank in tone and direct in counsel. You essentially become the teacher’s teacher rather than a supportive collaborator.

Lessons Learned from Successful Implementation

Thousands of people have been trained in this approach. The book contains some brief narratives of examples of successful implementation (pp. 116 – 123). Below are two examples of successful ways to improve implementation. The key idea in each example is that principals were given the opportunity to hone their skills in this process after they initially learned it:

- To help improve implementation, after training all of the principals and assistant principals in the walk-through process, one associate superintendent visited each school. He spent his first hour visiting classrooms with the principal, pausing between rooms to debrief what was observed and to practice the five-step observation structure and the reflective question. This gave principals a chance to hone their skills in identifying the objective being taught and selecting a possible teaching practice for follow-up conversation with the teacher. Then each assistant principal, one at a time, spent an additional hour with the associate superintendent and the principal to practice these same skills. After a half day of practice, the team was able to visit 35 or more classrooms and the administrative staff received additional coaching in the process.
- One assistant superintendent held her monthly meeting with principals at a different school site each time. During the first half-hour of the meeting, principals visited classrooms using the walk-through protocol, and the next half hour was devoted to debriefing the lessons observed and planning follow-up conversations.

7. A New Role for Supervision: Promoting Teacher Growth

Over the years, teachers and administrators have become cynical about supervision. This is partially due to the historical roots of supervision. From around 1620 to 1850 supervision was inspectional in nature, often in the form of clergy coming in to make sure that rules were being followed. They were simply looking for deficiencies. Since that time, supervision has taken on many forms and today there is no agreed-upon definition, but many teachers view it negatively. However, in their research, the authors have found that the overwhelming majority of teacher evaluations are positive and teachers are rated as satisfactory or above. This is the case even in many schools where the students are failing, not reading at grade level, and not graduating. Clearly there is a disconnect between current forms of supervision and the academic success of students. Instead, we need to replace older models of supervision with one that combines instructional supervision, ongoing professional development, coaching and mentoring, and adult learning. The authors...
believe the walk-through process provides this new type of supervision and has the power, if implemented completely, to change the culture of the school so that it is more collaborative and reflective. Implementing a more effective type of supervision – as the research has shown – has long been linked to successful schools.

In order for teaching and learning to improve, there must be teacher growth. However, as John Dewey emphasized, teacher growth does not magically and spontaneously unfold. Teachers depend on their interactions with the principal and other professionals. To properly support teachers, principals need to understand teachers’ different developmental and learning needs and differentiate their support. Not all teachers are at the same level of cognitive growth. This differentiated support over time is what builds a trusting relationship between teacher and principal. It used to be thought that the principal could not provide both a supportive role for teachers in their growth (a formative role) and also play the more formal summative role of teacher evaluation. Now it is believed that playing the formative role supports the summative one. The walk-through process, by using reflective dialogue to engage teachers in their own growth at their own level, is the type of newer formative supervisory practice that will help teachers improve their practice and meet the needs of students.

8. What the Research Says

Walk-throughs represent a newer approach to supervision and professional development, but the idea has its roots in the idea of “management by wandering around” (MBWA), a practice that effective leaders have practiced for ages. They did not call it MBWA, but they did wander throughout their organizations because they knew that was where the real work took place. This is an approach that many leaders from Abraham Lincoln (he spent time among the troops) to managers at Hewlett-Packard practiced. It was formally introduced as an educational management theory in 1990, and since then, the research base on the topic has become expansive and deep. Below are 10 results of MBWA practices from 25 years of research:

1. Enhanced teacher satisfaction. One study showed this is connected to increased student cognition levels.
2. Improved teacher self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy has a strong predictive link to student achievement.
3. Improved teacher attitudes toward professional development. Professional development to improve a teacher’s ability is crucial to school success.
4. Improved teacher attitudes toward teacher appraisal.
5. Increased perceived teacher efficacy of other teachers. Collective teacher efficacy is positively associated with student achievement in math and reading.
6. Improved classroom instruction. Higher-quality instruction results in higher levels of student achievement.
7. Improved teacher perception of principal effectiveness.
8. Improved student discipline. When the principal is more visible, that is positively related to improved discipline.
9. Improved teacher-perceived effectiveness of the school. Teachers perceive the school is more effective when principals are in their classrooms more frequently.
10. Increased student learning across socioeconomic and cultural lines. In fact, MBWA behaviors have the greatest impact on those who need it most – those from low-socioeconomic status homes.

9. Teacher Growth and the Walk-Through Process

The Walk-Through Process as a Differentiated Professional Development Tool
The reflective walk-through process serves as a form of differentiated professional development. In traditional professional development models, there is one approach that is supposed to work for all teachers. However, the needs of the novice teacher differ greatly from the needs of a professional one. The walk-through process addresses these differing needs. The model is developmental in that it unfolds through interactions between individuals in an identifiable and sequential pattern, acknowledging that individuals move along the continuum at different rates. Research suggests that there are six phases of development in the life cycle of a teacher: Novice, Apprentice, Professional, Expert, Distinguished, and Emeritus. It is at the Expert level that teachers consistently achieve at high levels no matter what achievement measure is used. Principals tend not to visit these classrooms as frequently, and this is a mistake. All teachers, as they move from the Novice to Expert levels, need critical reflection to propel them forward. The premise of the walk-through model is that reflection leads to growth which leads to renewal and this becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. The more teachers reflect, the more they grow. In fact, the opposite can also occur. For some teachers who do not communicate with the principal, this can lead to disengagement or withdrawal which can become a downward spiral in the opposite direction of growth.

There is a growing body of literature on learning organizations, and reflection is a key part of this literature. In schools, the role of reflection has been one concept thought to connect to improved teacher competence over time, which in turn, links to student learning. Newer teachers are the most willing to reflect. However, without the engagement of the principal, newer teachers get so caught up in the daily planning and delivery of lessons, that they spend less time reflecting. It is the principal who needs to set the tone and culture that the school is a learning environment that encourages active reflection on the part of everyone. Without this focus, reflection becomes an idiosyncratic practice rather than something woven into the daily routine of teaching. It is this regular reflective practice that is key to the walk-through process and which can serve as a catalyst to create an environment in which teachers are all learning at their own levels and moving forward in their growth.
The Main Idea’s Professional Development Extension: A workshop to introduce the walk-through process to teachers

I. Have teachers take a few minutes to think about observations by administrators – in what ways do these contribute to your professional growth? How might they be different to better contribute to your growth? Let them write for 3 minutes or discuss with a partner.

II. Introduce your own frustrations with the current way observations are done (Exs. you only get into classrooms once a semester; the follow-up conversations seem to be about the teacher proving him/herself instead of real learning; if you make suggestions you have no idea if the teacher follows through; you can’t talk to parents about what is happening in the classrooms because you don’t know; if you only visit once a semester, the class you observe might be on a particularly bad day and isn’t representative; etc.).

III. Suggest that there are many ways to improve observations, but you would like to try one method of using observations not to evaluate teachers but to improve teacher practice. Make sure you emphasize this point and the difference between traditional evaluative observations and these walk-throughs which will lead to reflective conversations to improve teacher practice. Introduce the three-minute walk-through process by showing teachers the five key ideas. You can give them information in the box below as a handout or project this on a screen. First go over the five key ideas. Next have teachers turn to the person next to them and discuss possible benefits and drawbacks of this approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through Process Involves Five Key Ideas</th>
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<td>1. Two- to three-minute, focused, yet informal observation. The goal is not to evaluate a teacher, but rather to gather information about curriculum and pedagogy. It has been said that teachers make over 1,000 decisions a day; in 2 to 3 minutes principals are able to observe 5 to 10 decisions being made. If principals only have 30 minutes in a day to walk through classrooms, in a typical 10 to 15 minute walk-through he or she can only see 2 to 3 teachers. Instead, with frequent, short, observations, the principal gets to many more classes and with more frequency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Reflection – The goal is to enable all educators to become reflective thinkers responsible for their own growth and who continuously analyze their own practice. The brief observations trigger thoughts for the teacher to consider in his or her decision making about effective practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Curriculum and Pedagogy – In the classroom principals gather data about both curriculum and instructional decisions that impact the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Occasional Follow-Up – Follow-up conversations do not take place after every visit. They often occur only after about 8-10 visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Informal and Collaborative – There is no checklist and notes are not placed in a file after an observation. The approach is informal!</td>
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IV. Discuss the rationale behind choosing to implement this approach focusing on how it has the potential to benefit teachers and students. Teachers need to see that this new approach enhances their position in the school. Be careful not to simply explain the technical aspects of the walk-through process. Take time to talk about the rationale and benefits. Below are some benefits the teachers might come up with in their discussions in Step III above, if not, perhaps you can suggest these ideas:

- Frequent observations give the principal a more accurate picture of your class – you don’t have to worry about having an “off” day
- The more the principal observes, the more s/he will know about the school’s functioning and can make appropriate school decisions
- If administrators are in the classrooms more, it is more likely that staff development will be tailored to the needs of teachers rather than coming from the latest fads or what the administration arbitrarily decides is important
- If principals observe more, they become better instructional leaders and can share new strategies they learn with other teachers
- If principals call about a concern, principals will have their own first-hand data
- If principals observe more often, they may better understand the challenges of the school through the eyes of the teachers

Furthermore, 25 years of research on effective leaders who spend time wandering throughout an organization (similar to principals visiting classrooms frequently), has shown that these practices have benefits for schools. Below are some of the benefits found (you may want to have these already written out on large newsprint:

1. Enhanced teacher satisfaction.
2. Improved teacher self-efficacy.
3. Improved student discipline.
4. Improved classroom instruction.
5. Increased perceived teacher efficacy of other teachers.
6. Increased student learning across socioeconomic and cultural lines.

V. Logistics – If you have already decided to go ahead and start the walk-through process, you may want to provide some of the details to teachers such as when you will start, that you will not be as readily accessible in the office anymore, and that they should not stop instruction when you enter and let the students know that they, too, should continue with the lesson when you enter the room.

VI. Closure -- As with any new endeavor, some teachers will have concerns. Pass out notecards to everyone at the end of this workshop and ask teachers anonymously to write down a concern they have about the walk-through process. Have everyone turn in the notecards whether or not they have written a concern. This will keep all responses anonymous. Tell teachers you will look at the cards and continue to address concerns about the walk-through process.

The Main Idea’s Professional Development Extension: Practice the walk-through process with your leadership team

While it may be easy to visit a classroom for 2-3 minutes, it is not easy to implement this particular walk-through approach without practice. It will help if principals work together with other leaders in the school (assistant principals, department chairs, coaches, etc.) to practice this approach. The principal should practice this process with other leaders. Take 30 minutes to visit several classrooms and pause between each to ascertain the objectives being taught and what content or practice they might discuss with the teacher in a follow-up conversation. Before you start, for practice have your leadership team try the first three steps of the process (described in Chapter 2) using the 12th-grade scenario on p. 2 of the summary or there is a 6th grade Math scenario on p. 3 of the summary.