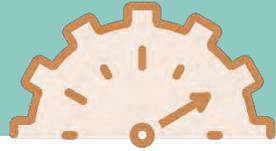


Using Learning Walks to Improve Feedback and Schoolwide Success

2021 Learning Acceleration Resources



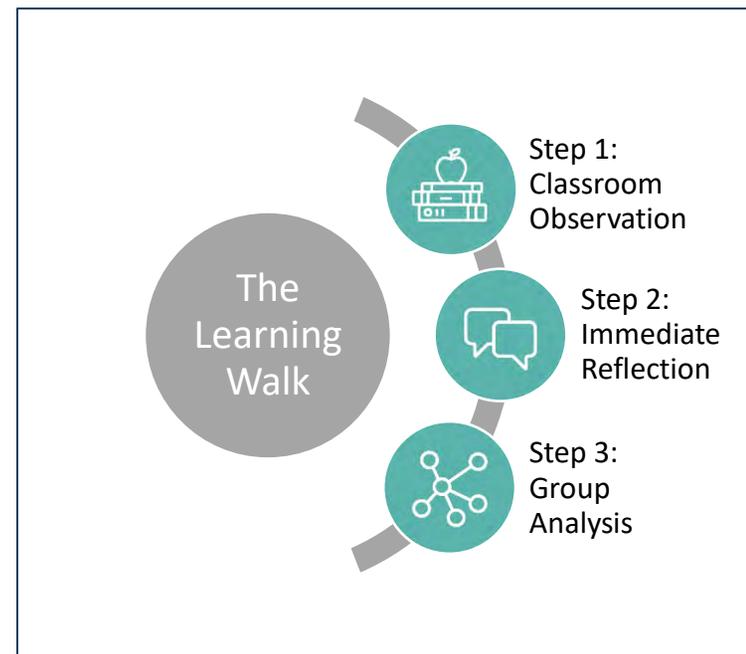
Educators are looking to support students in accelerating their learning and increasing momentum going into the 2021-22 school year, but they will need help from school leaders and coaches to target their instruction to the most important levers. Earlier this spring, NIET released [a step-by-step look at the Accelerated Learning Cycle](#) to help teachers and leaders address unfinished learning, as well as [additional resources](#) to help. This resource complements the cycle and helps leaders with identifying trends and strategies that can make educators' efforts more effective. Specifically, it is designed to **help guide leadership teams through the learning walk process and provide tips on how learning walks can improve the quality of feedback on instruction.**

What is a learning walk?

A learning walk is a process that can be used by school leadership teams to **observe instruction** and student learning in order to make informed decisions about **educator feedback, professional learning, and schoolwide instruction**. Learning walks are generally 10-20 minutes in length and, depending on what the instructional leadership team decides to focus on, multiple can be done in one day to help identify trends within the school.

Steps of the Learning Walk Process

- **Step 1:** The school leadership team visits classes to gather evidence of student learning and ownership of student learning.
- **Step 2:** The team immediately reflects on evidence gathered during the classroom visit(s), and strengths of student learning are identified.
- **Step 3:** The instructional leadership team debriefs to identify trends and their impact on student learning.

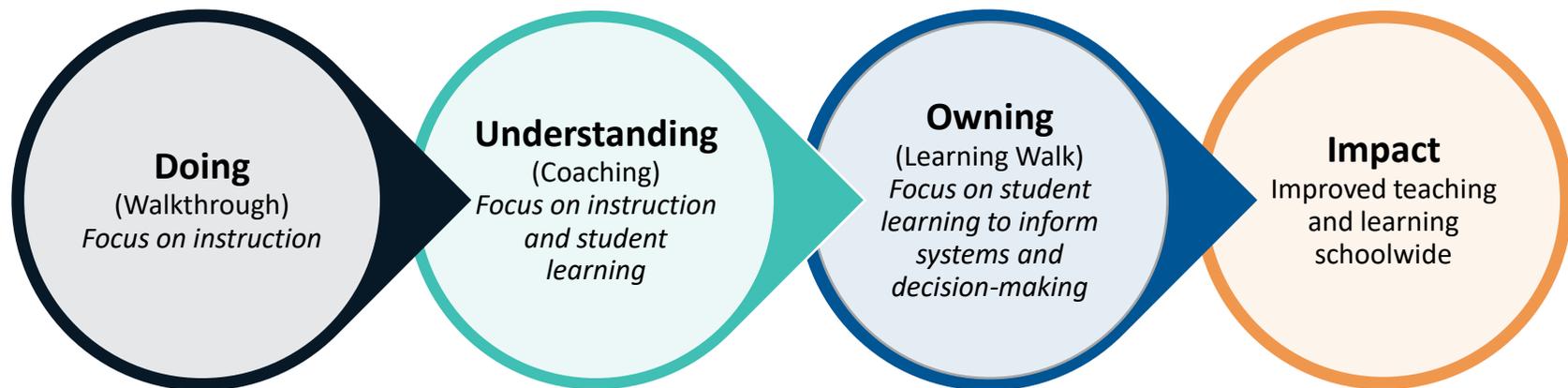


Strategic Practices That Lead to Impact

As leaders engage in the learning walks process, they will need to go through a similar process that students do in taking ownership over their learning. Walkthroughs can often become routine and another box to check. But when leaders take ownership, the learning walk can take on a transformative power.

In this case, the means leaders will likely move along this pathway:

- **Doing** the work, where the school leaders direct most of the adult learning and are mostly focused on teacher actions. This is often what happens in a traditional walkthrough.
- **Understanding** the work, where the leader facilitates learning alongside their teachers and shifts the focus to what students are doing. This happens in follow-up conversations and coaching.
- **Owning** the work, where the leader uses the learning walks primarily to focus on student learning and outcomes, and the information drives school and/or systemwide decisions. This is a true learning walk.



When leaders are able to not only do and understand our work but truly own it, they can move to having the most significant impact on student achievement throughout the school. Here are some questions that leadership teams may want to consider to turn walkthroughs into a learning walk.

Questions to Guide Leadership Team Analysis

1. What are the strengths we recognized in the visits today?
2. What evidence was collected that shows student ownership?
3. Where are we seeing increased student ownership?
4. Where are we seeing individual students hiding or missing from the learning?
5. What trends and instructional connections did we identify?
6. What are individual teacher strengths that we want to replicate with others?
7. Based on the evidence and our analysis, what might be a new learning need for the team?
8. What are our next steps to support the new learning need, and who will be responsible for each step?

Action Steps: Implementation of Learning Walks at Your School

1. Choose an ILT member to lead the process, share new learning, and brainstorm next steps.
2. Try a learning walk for the experience; talk about student learning.
3. As a leadership team, list key highlights and reflections from the experience. Consider what the evidence indicated the next steps would be using the questions above.
4. Continue to research and learn about student ownership of learning to understand what type of student actions to look for. (More resources on what student ownership looks like are available [here](#).)
5. Examine your current structures for gathering evidence to support student-driven leadership team decisions. Determine how learning walks complement those and if there are gaps.
6. Establish a plan and schedule for learning walks. Communicate with teachers about their purpose and how they fit into the larger work of the school.