

**The Classroom Walkthrough: The Perceptions of Elementary School Principals on its  
Impact on Student Achievement**

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Guy A. Rossi Ed.D.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to focus on elementary school principals using the walkthrough model and to evaluate how the walkthrough model improves student learning. The goal was to identify the key indicators of success from elementary principals that used the Walkthrough Observation Tool from the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania.

The research questions investigated elementary school principals' perceptions of the impact of the classroom walkthrough model. Participants were selected because of their involvement and experiences with the walkthrough model developed by Joseph Werlinich and Otto Graf, Co-directors of the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania. Methods of data collection were face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and content analysis was used to identify consensus, supported, and individual themes.

Key findings of this study indicate that the classroom walkthrough did affect instructional practices and student achievement from the perspective of the elementary school principals.

The study showed that teachers are sharing and more aware of best practices, principals are more aware of what is occurring in the classrooms, principals have meaningful data to share with teachers, and principals are better-informed instructional leaders.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>XIV</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 INITIATORS OF REFORM.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1.1 A Nation at Risk .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1.2 What Matters Most: Teaching and America’s Future.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1.3 The National Education Summit &amp; The Glenn Commission.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1.4 No Child left Behind Act of 2002.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.6 DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.2 A HISTORY OF TEACHER SUPERVISORY PRACTICES.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2.1 Colonial America through the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2.2 Nineteenth century.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2.3 Twentieth Century .....</b>	<b>13</b>

2.2.3.1	Scientific Management & the Business Age .....	14
2.2.3.2	Human Relations Supervision & Behavior Science Approach.....	15
2.2.3.3	Late 1960's and early 1970's: Clinical Supervision.....	16
2.2.3.4	Late Twentieth Century .....	16
2.3	PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TEACHER SUPERVISION .....	17
2.4	CHANGING TEACHER SUPERVISION.....	19
2.5	TEACHER SUPERVISORY MODELS.....	22
2.5.1	Clinical Supervision .....	22
2.6	BEYOND CLINICAL SUPERVISION.....	26
2.6.1	Danielson and McGreal: A Three-Track Model.....	26
2.6.1.1	Track I .....	26
2.6.1.2	Track II.....	27
2.6.1.3	Track III .....	27
2.6.2	Developmental Supervision.....	28
2.6.3	Differentiated Supervision .....	29
2.6.4	School Management by Wandering Around.....	30
2.7	VARIOUS APPROACHES TO THE WALKTHROUGH.....	32
2.7.1	The Downey Walkthrough Approach.....	33
2.7.2	The LearningWalk <sup>SM</sup> –The Institute for Learning .....	37
2.7.3	The Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy Walkthrough Protocol	
	38	
2.8	THE WALKTHROUGH AND TEACHER FLOW EXPERIENCE .....	41
2.9	THE WALKTHROUGH AND SELF-EFFICACY.....	43

2.10	THE WALKTHROUGH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....	44
2.11	THE WALKTHROUGH AND IMPROVED INSTRUCTION .....	44
2.12	THE WALKTHROUGH AND TEACHER ATTITUDE TOWARD APPRAISAL .....	46
2.13	THE WALKTHROUGH AND IMPROVED TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS .....	47
2.14	THE WALKTHROUGH AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP .....	48
2.15	THE WALKTHROUGH AND PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT .....	50
3.0	CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	52
3.1	INTRODUCTION .....	52
3.2	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	53
3.3	RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	53
3.4	METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES .....	54
3.5	SAMPLE .....	54
3.6	DATA COLLECTION .....	55
3.6.1	Interviews .....	55
3.6.2	Interview Questions-Principal .....	56
3.6.3	Interview Questions – Teacher .....	57
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS .....	57
4.0	CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....	59
4.1	DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR SCHOOLS REPRESENTED IN THE STUDY	59

<b>4.2</b>	<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY .</b>	<b>61</b>
4.2.1	Principals .....	61
4.2.2	Teachers.....	62
<b>4.3</b>	<b>ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>63</b>
4.3.1	Research Question 1: What are the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs identified by the elementary principals? .....	63
4.3.2	Research Question 2: What elements and procedures appear in the Principals Academy walkthrough protocol but do not appear in the elementary principals’ walkthrough? .....	74
4.3.3	Research Question 3: What are the indicators identified by the elementary principals of how the walkthroughs impacts student achievement?.	77
4.3.4	Research Question 4: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough impacts instruction?.....	80
4.3.5	Research Question 5: What is the congruence between the principals’ perspective and the teachers’ perspective with respect to the walkthroughs impact on teaching and learning?.....	84
4.3.6	Research Question 6: How has the walkthrough affected elementary principals as instructional leaders? .....	95
4.3.7	Research Question 7: What is the congruence between this study of elementary principals and Keruskin’s study of High School Principals? .....	98
4.3.7.1	A Comparison: The Walkthroughs Impact on Instruction .....	98
4.3.7.2	A Comparison: The Walkthroughs Impact on Student Achievement. ....	100

4.3.7.3	<b>A Comparison: The Walkthroughs Impact on Principals as Instructional Leaders. ....</b>	<b>101</b>
4.3.7.4	<b>A Comparison: The Most Important Steps of the Walkthrough for Successful Implementation. ....</b>	<b>103</b>
4.3.7.5	<b>A Comparison: The Look-fors. ....</b>	<b>104</b>
4.3.7.6	<b>A Comparison: Feedback Given to Teachers. ....</b>	<b>105</b>
4.3.7.7	<b>A Comparison: Time Spent in Classrooms ....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>CONCLUSIONS, PERSONAL REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>107</b>
5.1.1	<b>Addressing the First Research Question: What are the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs that are identified by the elementary school principals?.....</b>	<b>110</b>
5.1.2	<b>Addressing the Second Research Question: What elements and procedures appear in the Principals Academy walkthrough protocol but do not appear in the elementary principals' walkthrough?.....</b>	<b>112</b>
5.1.3	<b>Addressing the Third Research Question: What are the indicators identified by the elementary principals of how the walkthrough impacts student achievement? .....</b>	<b>114</b>
5.1.4	<b>Addressing the Fourth Research Question: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough impact instruction?.....</b>	<b>116</b>
5.1.5	<b>Addressing the Fifth Research Question: What is the congruence between the principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective with respect to the walkthroughs impact on teaching and learning?.....</b>	<b>119</b>

5.1.6	Addressing the Sixth Research Question: How has the walkthrough affected elementary principals as instructional leaders? .....	121
5.1.7	Addressing the Seventh Research Question: What is the congruence between the perceptions of high school principals (Keruskin’s study) and the perceptions of elementary principals? .....	123
5.1.8	Concluding Remarks .....	128
5.1.9	Personal Reflection & Lessons Learned .....	129
5.1.10	Recommendations for Elementary School Principals .....	130
5.1.11	Recommendations for Further Research.....	131
APPENDIX A	.....	132
APPENDIX B	.....	135
BIBLIOGRAPHY	.....	136

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Schools Represented. ....	60
Table 2: Demographic Data of the Principals Represented in the Study.....	61
Table 3: Demographic Data of the Teachers who Participated in the Study.....	62
Table 4: Identified Themes for Research Question 2 .....	76
Table 5: A Comparison of the Indicators of How the Walkthrough Affects Instruction. ....	92
Table 6: A Comparison of Similar Themes .....	93
Table 7: A Comparison of Individual Themes of How the Walkthrough Affects Instruction. ....	94

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Research Question 1: Key elements and procedures of the walkthrough as identified by the elementary principals. ....	73
Figure 2: Research Question 3: Indicators of how the walkthrough impacts student achievement?.....	79
Figure 3: Research Question 4: Indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted instruction. ...	83
Figure 4: Research Question 5A: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted your teaching?.....	85
Figure 5: Research Question 5B: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted student achievement? .....	87
Figure 6: Research Question 5C: What advice would you give to an administrator that was about to implement the walkthrough? .....	88
Figure 7: Research Question 5D: In your own words, what does the walkthrough mean to you?90	
Figure 8: Research Question 5E: What type of feedback do you receive from the principal?.....	91
Figure 9: Research Question 6-Impact of the walkthrough on elementary principals. ....	97
Figure 10: A comparison of the perceptions of high school and elementary principals on the walkthrough's impact on instruction. ....	99

Figure 11: A comparison of the perceptions of high school and elementary principals on the walkthrough's impact on student achievement. ....	101
Figure 12: A comparison of the perceptions of high school and elementary principals on the walkthrough's impact on principals as instructional leaders. ....	102
Figure 13: A comparison of the most important steps for successful implementation.....	103
Figure 14: A comparison of the high school and elementary principals' look-fors. ....	104
Figure 15: Type of feedback given to teachers. ....	105
Figure 16: Time spent in classrooms with each walkthrough.....	106
Figure A17: Research Question 1B: Were there any internal barriers when implementing the walkthrough model?.....	132
Figure A18: Research Question 1D: How much time do you spend in each walkthrough? .....	132
Figure A19: Research Question 1C:What are the most important procedures for successful implementation?.....	133
Figure A20: Research Question 1E: What are you looking for during your walkthroughs?.....	134
Figure A21: What kind of feedback do you give to teachers?.....	134

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

School districts across America are being held to unprecedented levels of accountability for student achievement. Schools are faced with increasing demands from the state and federal departments of education to ensure that students are meeting standards. Hence, the desire for renewing education continues to be at the forefront in the minds of policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, and citizens throughout the country (Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon, 2004). As accountability for student achievement intensifies, educational reform movements over the past several decades have focused on teacher quality. In fact, as Darling-Hammond reports (1990), improving the quality of teachers was the most frequent response from a 1979 Gallup poll that asked what public schools could do to earn an “A” letter grade. Public opinion on the importance of teacher quality out scored such changes as lowering class size, making curriculum updates, improving school leadership, and emphasizing the basics (Darling-Hammond, 1990). More specifically, doubts about the quality of American education began to emerge. These doubts prompted several reports over the past twenty-five years and have helped shape current educational policy and public perception. -

## 1.1 INITIATORS OF REFORM

### 1.1.1 A Nation at Risk

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation At Risk*. This document called for substantial changes to assist schools in improving the quality of education and warned of the “rising tide of mediocrity” invading our schools (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). This report got the attention of lawmakers and prompted action by raising standards for students and teachers, raising course requirement for graduation, increasing student assessments, and tightening teacher certification requirements (Fuhrman, 2003). Moreover, several specific recommendations for the teaching profession were stipulated:

- Teachers should meet high educational standards and demonstrate an aptitude for teaching.
- Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated.
- School boards, administrators, and teachers should cooperate to develop career ladders for teachers that distinguish among the beginning instructor, the experienced teacher, and the master teacher.
- Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years. (A Nation At Risk, April 1983, Recommendation D).

### **1.1.2 What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future**

In September of 1996, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future published *What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future*. After two years of research, this report concluded that reform of public education depends on overhauling its foundation, the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 1996). The report is based upon three principles:

- What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn.
- Recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our schools.
- School reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach, and teach well. (National Commission on Teaching & Americas Future; Executive Summary)

Keeping these principles in mind, the commission proposed five recommendations to improve schools. First, the commission recommended that standards be at the forefront for teachers and students. It encouraged each state to establish professional standards, accreditation for schools of education, closing poor performing schools, tightening teacher licensing procedures, and using the National Board standards as the standard for quality teaching (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996). The second recommendation cited teacher preparation institutions and professional development. It urged teacher education institutions to focus their programs around standards for students, create professional development schools for teacher candidates to serve in a yearlong internship, establish mentoring programs, and institute high-quality professional development (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future,

1996). Third, the commission recognized the value in teacher recruitment and having qualified teachers in classrooms. Its recommendation included giving poor districts assistance to pay for qualified teachers, revamping hiring practices at the district level, and significantly reducing teacher mobility (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996). A fourth recommendation was written to address teacher knowledge and skill. The commission set a lofty goal that called for each state and district to provide incentives for National Board Certification. Moreover, the commission called for the removal of incompetent teachers and the development of a career ladder for teachers that was linked to assessment and compensation systems. Ideally, this would reward exemplary teaching (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996).

Finally, the commission recognized the importance of school organization. It calls for the reallocation of resources and more of an investment in teachers and technology. Additionally, it recommended hiring and retaining principals who understand the teaching and learning process. (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996).

### **1.1.3 The National Education Summit & The Glenn Commission**

Three years later in 1999, the National Education Summit was convened. Business, government, industry, and education leaders collaborated and pledged to set priorities to assure that high academic standards were a part of every classroom. Each state agreed to focus on three issues: "improving teacher quality, providing all students a fair opportunity to meet higher standards, and holding schools accountable for results" (National Education Summit, 1999, p.2). Co-Vice Chair of the Summit, Governor James Hunt of North Carolina, remarked, "Every child has a birthright to a good teacher" (p.5).

Then, in 2000, the Glenn Commission published *Before It's Too Late: A Report to the Nation from The National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The Commission recommended the improvement of the quality of science and mathematics instruction in our nation's public schools.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, The National Education Summit, and the Glenn Commission paved the way for the most comprehensive and far-reaching legislation to date, the No Child Left Behind Act.

#### **1.1.4 No Child left Behind Act of 2002**

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 is the latest initiative by the federal government to help reform the educational system in the United States. The federal government now has a greater role in public education across America. It stresses the importance of providing all students the opportunity to achieve and excel (Estacion, McMahon, & Quint, 2004). As Elmore (2004) reports, NCLB requires states to "...adhere to a narrow set of design criteria for accountability systems-annual testing of all students between grades 3-8" (p. 2). Additionally, it requires states to ensure that teachers are considered "highly qualified" by the year 2006. NCLB gives the federal government more authority over holding states and districts accountable for student achievement.

In summary, each of these reports has called attention to the importance of teacher quality and its impact on student achievement. The role of the teacher is essential to school improvement. For schools to improve, teachers must be at the core of any reform effort (Strong, 1997.) Additionally, English (2005) posits that having skilled teachers is the most important

factor in the education of students. Research suggests that the key to improving student learning relates directly to classroom practices of the teacher (Hoy & Hoy 2006; Bickers, 1988; Stufflebeam, 1994). Therefore, enhancing teacher quality has become the touchstone in this era of accountability.

## 1.2 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION

In this era of accountability, principals must demonstrate proficient skills in providing instructional leadership to teachers. Mentoring, coaching, and collaborating with teachers is now an expectation for principals. In addition, instructional leaders must support, guide, and foster reflective teaching (Schon, 1988). Consequently, instructional leadership is a critical component of changing any supervision model (Iwanicki, 2001). Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004) suggest that effective leadership plays a significant role on student achievement. In fact, the authors posit that, “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p.5). If teaching is the most important element in student learning, then principals need to be instructional leaders who spend considerable amounts of time in classrooms. When principals spend more time in classrooms coaching and conferencing with teachers, teacher performance will be enhanced (Frase, Downey, & Canciamilla, 1999). Moreover, Blasé and Blasé (2004) report that teachers have a positive view of principals who spend time in their classrooms. In order to understand the school and the classroom, Eisner (2002) suggests that principals need to spend a third of their time in classrooms, reporting that in the business community this is called *Management By Wandering Around*.

In summary, for teacher quality to improve, Sergiovanni (2005) asserts, “virtually every variable that affects student achievement in school is itself likely to be affected by leadership” (p. 133). Hence, instructional leadership is a critical component for principals in the improvement of teaching and learning.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is a replication of Todd Keruskin’s Dissertation entitled, *The Perceptions of High School Principals on Student Achievement by Conducting Walkthroughs* (University of Pittsburgh, 2005). The purpose of this study is to focus on elementary principals using the walkthrough model and to evaluate how the walkthrough model improves student learning. The goal is to identify the key indicators of success from elementary school principals that use the Walkthrough Observation Tool from the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania (Keruskin, 2005). According to Best & Kahn (2003), “Replication, a combination of terms, repetition, and duplication, is an important method of challenging or verifying the conclusions of previous studies” (p. 137).

## **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

What is the impact of the walkthrough conducted by elementary principals on student achievement?

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs that are identified by the elementary principals?
2. What elements and procedures appear in the Principals Academy Walkthrough protocol but do not appear in the elementary principals' walkthroughs?
3. What are the indicators identified by elementary principals of how the walkthroughs impact student achievement?
4. What are the indicators identified by elementary principals of how the walkthroughs impact instruction?
5. What is the congruence between the principals' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives with respect to the walkthroughs impact on teaching and learning?
6. How has the walkthrough impacted elementary principals as instructional leaders?
7. What is the congruence between this study of elementary principals and Keruskin's study of high school principals?

## **1.6 DEFINITIONS**

### **Classroom walkthrough-**

Frequent, focused, brief visits to classrooms that allow principals to observe first hand the teaching and learning that are occurring in the classroom.

### **Look-fors-**

A precise indicator of teaching strategies that tell the observer what the strategy looks like when applied in the classroom (Graf 2004, p. 202).

### **Flow Experience-**

Flow experience is a state of deep and passionate involvement in an endeavor that pushes oneself without overwhelming the person's capacity to complete the activity (Basom & Frase, 2004).

### **Self-efficacy-**

People who have high levels of self-efficacy believe they can make a difference and have confidence in their abilities to positively manage and shape events that occur in their lives (Bandura, 1994).

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

“Behind every successful school is an effective supervision program”

(Glickman, 1990, p. 4).

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the literature relevant to the research questions of this study.

The first section explains the history of teacher supervisory practices, past attitudes towards supervision, and problems associated with teacher supervision. The second section describes specific teacher supervision models including, clinical supervision, Danielson and McGreal’s three-track model, developmental supervision, differentiated supervision, management by wandering around, and the classroom walkthrough. The third section provides a literature review relevant to the impact of the walkthrough on the following: teacher flow experience, self-efficacy, professional development, improved instruction, teacher attitude towards appraisal, perceived principal effectiveness, and the perceptions of high school principals on student achievement.

## **2.2 A HISTORY OF TEACHER SUPERVISORY PRACTICES**

It is important to understand the history of teacher supervisory practices to appreciate how current attitudes towards supervision have been developed over time. There has been much discontent surrounding the term supervision in the education field. Perhaps it is only natural then that the history of teacher supervision has been rife with criticism. Supervision models have been described as poor, chaotic, inadequate, and lacking merit in supporting teachers in improving their instructional practice (Haeefele, 1993; Soar, et al., 1983; Scriven, 1988). Consequently, supervisory practices have been developed around the themes of inspection, authority, and scrutiny. The following paragraphs will provide a description of supervision from colonial days to the present. However, it is important to point out that Ayer (1954) posits that the history of teacher supervision never actually has been precisely described or reported "...in accurate detail" (p. 8). Glanz (1994) concurs that teacher supervision has not been adequately documented as a field of study, thus, making it challenging to examine its history.

### **2.2.1 Colonial America through the 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

Early American colonists were concerned with educational opportunities for their citizens. In fact, New England's Calvinistic followers insisted that citizens be literate in order to read and understand the Bible (Alfonso, Firth, & Neville, 1981). The New England Puritans were so intensely focused on furthering the beliefs of the Calvinistic principles that educational matters soon shifted from a religious concern, to a civil government one. (Alfonso, Firth, & Neville, 1981). The Old Deluder Law of 1647 was passed by the Massachusetts legislature to require communities to support educational opportunities for its citizens in reading, writing, and

grammar. The premise behind this law was that an educated person would more likely adhere to the moral principles set forth in their religion. (Olivia & Pawlas, 2004). As a result, over time schools began to establish, thus creating a need for supervisors. During the colonial period, laypersons performed supervisory visits to schools to ensure that teachers were keeping up with the standards in the community (Anderson, 1993). The teachers' instructional skills were not the focus of the supervisors' visits. Instead, teachers' personal lives were often under scrutiny. Supervision was limited to the teachers' adherence to strict moral and religious values, and loyalty to the government (Anderson, 1993; Alfonso, Firth, & Neville, 1981). Olivia and Pawlas (2004) point out, "In an authoritarian mode, early supervisors set strict requirements for their teachers and visited classrooms to observe how closely the teachers complied with stipulated instruction (p.5)." In sum, colonial period supervisory practices were primarily carried out by laypeople to inspect and to look for deficiencies in teachers. Through early colonial America and the 18th century, authority and control were the pervasive themes regarding teacher supervision.

### **2.2.2 Nineteenth century**

During the first half of the nineteenth century, elementary schools began to grow rapidly. In fact, Horace Mann campaigned for public schools and created the first school in the United States for training teachers (Olivia & Pawlas, 2004). As the popularity of public education grew, schools began to look for alternative ways to supervise their teachers. The responsibility of supervision shifted from parents, clergy, and laypeople to superintendents and principals (Olivia & Pawlas, 2004). The role of the principal began to take shape within the organization of the educational system. Charles Spain et al. (1953), as cited in Alfonso, Firth, & Neville (1981) explains:

No definite date can be established for the emergence of the principalship, but evidently, by around 1800 responsibilities began to be centralized to some extent. Early reports of school systems contained references to the 'headmaster, head- teacher or principal teacher.' These early "principals" represented an administration convenience rather than positions of recognized leadership. Maintaining of discipline, administration of plant, regulation of classes, classification of pupils and establishment of rules and regulations were the primary duties of these principals (p. 24).

As a result, schools began to look for trained people to supervise teachers and to manage schools. Supervisors lacked trust in the teachers' ability to educate the students and essentially viewed them as incompetent and in need of direct monitoring (Glanz, 2000).

In summary, teachers were under strict control by supervisors who inspected schools but did little to expand the pedagogical skills of teachers (Anderson, 1993; Cooper, 1982). Principals were continuing to adhere to the directives of the laypeople. Thus, superintendents did not promote or support the promise of supervision by the principals.

### **2.2.3 Twentieth Century**

During the twentieth century, teacher supervisory practices evolved. The early part of the century was a time when school administrators began to espouse business values (Berman, 1983). Frederick Taylor and his scientific management theory were embraced by business and public education. There was a natural progression for public school administrations to adopt the business model of focusing on goals and objectives. During the mid-twentieth century, supervisory practices began to become more collaborative and cooperative. Human relation supervision began to gain acceptance with school administrators. Throughout the late twentieth century, supervisors began to view teaching differently. Clinical supervision became the latest supervisory technique to engage teachers in the supervisory process. Supervision developed throughout the twentieth century. It moved from focusing on the efficiency of the worker to

engaging teachers in the teaching and learning process. The following sections will explain the teacher supervisory practices that occurred in the early, mid, and late twentieth century.

### **2.2.3.1 Scientific Management & the Business Age**

The era of scientific management occurred between 1910-1930. Supervisors focused on “efficiency levels, standardized tests and scales, and the improvement of the teaching act through criticism of instruction” (Barr & Burton as cited in Glickman, 2004, p.6). Efficiency of the worker was the hallmark of this era. The idea of efficiency can be attributed to the work of Frederick Taylor. According to Rees (2001), Taylor was an “efficiency expert” and is known as the father of scientific management. In 1911, Taylor authored a book entitled, *Principles of Scientific Management*. Taylor, as cited in Hoy and Miskel (1987), outline this management theory:

- A Large Daily Task-each person in the establishment, high or low, should have a clearly defined daily task. The carefully circumscribed task should require a full day’s effort to complete.
- Standard Conditions- The worker should be given standardized conditions and appliances to accomplish the task with certainty.
- High Pay for Success-High pay should be tied to successful completion.
- Loss in Case of Failure- Failure should be personally costly.
- Expertise in Large Organizations- As organizations become increasingly sophisticated tasks should be made so difficult as to be accomplished only by a first-rate worker. (p. 9).

Furthermore, Kyte (1930) as cited in Alfonso et al. (1981) describes the purpose of supervision as, “...the maximum development of the teacher into the most professionally efficient person she is capable of becoming” (p. 32). Teaching began to be viewed as a science, thus, teachers were asked to follow a fixed set of rules for their instruction. Consequently,

supervisors began to monitor teachers' instructional practices to ensure compliance with the set of teaching principles that were developed.

The business age was a by-product of the scientific management theory. Wiles and Bondi (1980) report that the business age, which occurred from 1920-1930, ushered in bureaucratic supervision. Glanz (2000) posits that educational supervisors began associating goals, objectives, and specifications with teacher supervision. However, later in this era, supervision became unproductive in its role. Because teachers felt that the supervisor's role was one of inspection and authority, they began referring to the supervisors as "snoopervisors" (Wiles & Bondi, 1980).

### **2.2.3.2 Human Relations Supervision & Behavior Science Approach**

Glickman (2004) explains that human relations supervision emerged in the late 1930's to the late-1950's. Alfonso et al. (1987) describes the enhancement in supervisory practices as being more "cooperative and democratic." Schools began following the business model by adopting a more democratic style of leadership (Wiles & Bondi). As a result, researchers began paying more attention to instructional supervision and directives for change prevailed. The paradigm moved away from traditional supervisory practices of inspection and control. As an alternative, the personal connection with teachers became common practice as a means to improve classroom instruction. (Glickman, 2004). Supervisors began using their time to work with teachers in a collegial manner to improve instruction. Collaboration became more important to school supervisors and the inspection and control issues that were once prevalent began to diminish. Olivia and Pawlas (2004) point out that supervisors began focusing on the interpersonal skills for supervisors rather than the technical skills. In addition, the needs of teachers began to emerge as the purpose of supervision, not the needs of supervisors. During the mid twentieth century, supervision became more democratic and cooperative.

Throughout the human relations era, supervision for the improvement of instruction gained acceptance. Consequently, the 1960's brought yet another form of supervision; the behavior science approach (Glickman, 2004). External researchers and publishers came on the scene in public education. During this time, they prepared ready-to-use curricula and materials. Supervisors did not resort to the type of inspection of the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; however, there was careful monitoring and scrutiny of the implementation of the prescribed curriculum and resource materials (Glickman, 2004).

#### **2.2.3.3 Late 1960's and early 1970's: Clinical Supervision**

Glanz (2003) described supervision in the late 1960's and early 1970's as, "Lacking focus, a sound conceptual base, and purpose, supervision explored alternative notions to guide theory and practice in the field" (p.5). During this time, Morris Cogan, and later Robert Goldhammer, began to formulate the concept of clinical supervision. Supervisors began looking differently at the teaching and learning processes (Wiles, 1980). Clinical supervision formalized the process of teacher/supervisor collaboration and was more collegial than previous supervisory methods. The concept of clinical supervision is further explicated later in this chapter. During this time, supervisors began shifting their efforts from one of inspection and authority to more of a shared process where teachers and supervisors worked on instructional issues together (Alfonso, Firth, & Neville 1981).

#### **2.2.3.4 Late Twentieth Century**

The mid-1980's report *A Nation At Risk* (1983) got the attention of the American public and of lawmakers. Therefore, this decade witnessed the development of more specific teacher evaluation guidelines. Throughout the 1980's, there was a call for accountability and evaluation

of schools and programs. Teacher evaluation was part of the call and became the focal point of this accountability era (Ellet, 2003). Many of the supervisors began focusing on the evaluation of teaching performance and the measurement of teaching behavior (White & Daniel, 1996). In addition, White and Daniel (1996) assert that positivistic views dominated the field of research and evaluation during this era. Although teachers began to develop professionally, there was a lack of focus, which resulted in a lack of consistency in teacher professional growth (Iwanicki, 2001). Accountability and evaluation were the main tenets of this era.

Throughout 1990's and into the turn of the century, teacher supervision has continued to be a part of reform efforts. More specifically, supervision has been linked to accountability, professional development, and school improvement (Ellet, 2003). Because of this, administrators began to find alternative ways to supervise teachers. Glanz (2003) posits that contemporary supervision models can be described as follows: "Collaborative rather than hierarchical, dialogic versus didactic, descriptive rather than judgmental, supportive rather than punitive" (p. 7).

Over the past decade, the walkthrough model, differentiated supervision, and developmental supervision practices have gained acceptance. These methods of supervision are further explained later in this chapter.

### **2.3 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TEACHER SUPERVISION**

Historically, the primary purpose for supervision has been to evaluate the teachers' behaviors or teaching performance and neglect concern for student outcomes (Ellet & Teddlie, 2003). As a result, supervision implied rigidity, inspection, oversight, control, and judgment of teachers (Blasé and Blasé, 2004). Darling-Hammond (1990) reminds us that this type of teacher

supervision model can significantly influence teachers' motivation, satisfaction, communication, confidence, and trust with the principal. Teachers can become defensive about supervisory practices because they are typically born out of the supervisor's need and not the need of the teacher (Acheson & Gall, 1997). It is no surprise that teachers are often cautious about the supervisory process. Furthermore, Stiggins and Duke (1988) suggest that most teachers believe that supervision is superficial and that it does not occur often enough. Consequently, teacher supervision models have been under heavy scrutiny, especially the past quarter century. Danielson and McGreal outline several reasons for this heavy scrutiny:

- Shared values about teaching are missing
- Principals are inconsistent in evaluating performance
- Many supervision models are based on dichotomous scales
- Communication is usually initiated by the supervisor (top-down model)
- There is no apprenticeship time built into the teaching profession, therefore, there is no real differentiation between new and experienced teachers.

Frase (1992) concurs that teacher supervision models are of little value to teachers and principals for several reasons: teachers do not receive quality and accurate feedback, ratings of teachers are exaggerated, and the supervision process tends to be "ceremonial." Marshall (2005) agrees that teacher supervision models need restructured in order to improve teaching and learning. Marshall outlines several reasons why teacher supervision is unproductive: a small amount of teaching is observed, the lessons that principals observe are not the norm, the purpose of the observation rarely focuses on student learning, feedback is typically a top-down process, and evaluation instruments are often useless.

Because of the emphasis placed on teacher quality, supervision must begin to focus on student learning. Appraisal systems need to adapt and find ways to develop and enhance teacher efficiency to improve teaching and student learning (Iwanicki, 2001). Traditional supervision models are antiquated and rigid and do not support teacher growth and student learning. Danielson and McGreal (2000) point out that many of the supervision models used in public schools today were developed in the early 1970's. Consequently, these models do not meet the needs of contemporary teachers and principals because there has been significant research regarding the teaching and learning process. Hoy (2006) points out that the improvement of teaching should be a continuous process, "not merely a ritual observation that principals make once or twice a year" (p.2). Darling-Hammond (1995) agrees that it is no longer adequate for teachers to concentrate on a set, prescribed supervisory process. Instead, supervision must become a component of classroom life for teachers and administrators to grow professionally and to help children succeed. As we begin to pursue excellence in the quality of teachers, we cannot ignore the significance of teacher supervision in this process. Significant improvements will be realized only when teachers are placed at the core of attention and not at the "periphery" (Sergiovanni, 2005).

## **2.4 CHANGING TEACHER SUPERVISION**

Changing teacher supervision models will take a great deal of effort, time, and collaboration. If administrators and teachers want a system that is fair, growth oriented, and effective, they must work together in a collegial manner to create it (Hoy, 1986; McGreal, 1988; Sergiovanni 1991, and Glickman, Gordon, and Ross Gordon, 2004).

First, perceptions about supervision will need to change. For this to occur, administrators will need to collaborate with teachers to ensure that the process and model of supervision is one that helps teachers reach their primary goal of improving student achievement. To begin changing perceptions, McBride and Skau (1995) emphasize the importance of trust, empowerment, and reflection to any supervisory model. The authors studied the advisor/advisee relationship in a graduate program in the area of supervision and uncovered the advisees' needs for authentic relationships in the workplace (McBride and Skau, 1995). In addition, Schwahn and Spady (1998) describe authentic leaders as, "...masters of personal meaning and purpose" (p. 35). By creating personal connections with teachers about their daily work, administrators are establishing rapport and trust and thus focusing on "personal development" and not meaningless tasks (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 2002). Leithwood et al (2004), purport that developing people is an important component for school leaders to consider for improving student achievement. Paying attention to people's personal development increases their enthusiasm and optimism for their work, thus, decreasing frustration and increasing performance (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002).

Second, teachers and administrators need to understand the two distinct purposes of supervision in order for it to be an effective tool to help teachers improve their craft. As Popham (1988) points out, teacher supervision is both a formative and a summative endeavor. Formative supervision is improvement oriented and focuses on helping teachers modify and adapt their instructional practices in order to become more effective in the classroom. Formative supervision focuses on teacher growth (Iwanicki, 1990; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004) and professional development that assists teachers with their instruction (Sergiovanni, 1990). Conversely, summative evaluation is not improvement oriented. Its focus is making decisions

about teacher's employment status such as granting tenure and determining whether to retain or dismiss a teacher. The supervisor is responsible to monitor the teaching and learning process (Sergiovanni, 1991) and to ensure quality teaching continues (Iwanicki, 1990). The challenge for supervisors is that the same person often executes both the formative and summative evaluations. Consequently, Wiles and Bondi (1980) suggest that supervision is one of the most challenging and difficult tasks for administrators. Because of the dichotomy associated with formative and summative supervision, Sergiovanni (1991) asserts that principals need to be very clear about the purpose and goal of teacher supervision in order to lessen the negative feelings associated with it.

Third, it is important for principals to communicate the functions of the supervision model to teachers. Hoy and Forsyth (1986) outline several key factors for supervisors to consider:

- Clearly define improvement of instruction.
- Analyze and manage organizational limitations and possibilities.
- Promote a collaborative and cooperative relationship with teachers.
- Promote professionalism by allowing for some autonomy and self-direction.
- Focus on the intrinsic motivation of teachers based on the profession itself.

In order to accomplish this, supervision needs to be a collaborative effort among administrators and teachers that help them grow professionally (Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Sergiovanni, 1991). Glickman et al., (2004) agree and emphasize the importance of collegiality and teacher growth as functions of supervision.

Frase (2005) suggest that supervisory practices have transformed over the past several years but cautions educators not to lose focus of its chief purpose: student learning. Furthermore, supervision is essential for the advancement of educational programs (Wiles and Bondi, 1980)

and can have significant effects on the quality of teaching and learning (English, 2005). Supervisors need to build capacity within the organization by creating and sustaining professional learning communities that dialogue about teaching and learning (Leithwood et al, 2004). Hence, changing supervisory practices and attitudes will be a complex process that will require time, effort, and teamwork from principals and teachers.

## **2.5 TEACHER SUPERVISORY MODELS**

### **2.5.1 Clinical Supervision**

Clinical supervision has its origins in the 1950's, when Morris Cogan attempted to find new ways to supervise interns in the Masters of Arts program at Harvard University (Hoy and Forsyth, 1986). Robert Goldhammer was also a key player in the development of this model. He became acclimated to this model of supervision with Cogan in 1960 (Goldhammer, 1969). Supervisors were looking at better ways to provide evaluative feedback to the interns in order to improve their teaching (Cogan, 1972). Up to this point, the feedback the supervisors were receiving from the interns regarding their supervisory practices was not beneficial. As a result, the interns and supervisors began working together to create a better system of supervision. They began by extending their meeting times and by making the process more systematic. Planning, observation, and analysis became the sustained sequence of the meetings. Cogan (1972) describes clinical supervision as follows:

The rationale and practice is designed to improve the teachers' classroom performance. It takes its principal data from the events of the classroom. The analysis of these data and the relationships between teacher and supervisor form the basis, of the program,

procedures, and strategies designed to improve the students' learning by improving the teacher's classroom behavior (p. 54).

Cogan reports that over time this process was reviewed and revised and soon became adopted by public schools to use with teachers. Subsequently, clinical supervision began to root itself in the public schools. The state of Oregon sent educators to Harvard University and later to the University of Pittsburgh to learn more about the clinical supervision model (Cogan, 1972). Oregon, in 1963, adopted clinical supervision as its supervisory model for all of its state universities' Master of Arts programs.

The term "clinical" in clinical supervision stirred some controversy for Cogan and Goldhammer. Goldhammer (1969) defended the use of the term "clinical" by stating the following: "Given close observation, detailed observational data, face to face interaction between supervisor and teacher, and an intensity of focus that binds the two together in an intimate professional relationship, the meaning of 'clinical' is pretty well filled out" (p. 54).

Cogan's original clinical supervision sequence contained eight steps:

1. Establish teacher-supervisor relationship.
2. Plan with the teacher.
3. Plan the strategy of the observation.
4. Observe instruction.
5. Analyze the teaching-learning process.
6. Plan the strategy of the conference
7. Supervisor-teacher conference
8. Renewed planning.

However, most educators use a five-step process as explained by Goldhammer:

1. Pre-observation process.
2. Observation
3. Analysis and strategy
4. Supervision conference.
5. Post-conference analysis

The preobservation is the first step in the clinical supervision process. Goldhammer provides a framework for the supervisors as they attempt to build a relationship with the teacher in this first step:

- Do not criticize or undermine the teacher's lesson plan for the observation.
- If, from the meeting, the supervisor gleans that the teacher is not ready to teach the lesson or feels that it will fail, encourage the teacher not to teach the lesson.
- Do not introduce new goals and objectives. The teacher is unlikely to have enough time to plan for new material.
- Frame the preobservation in the teacher's terms, not the supervisor's.
- Do not make the teacher feel uneasy or anxious.
- Ensure that communication is clear.

The actual observation is the second step in the clinical supervision model. The ultimate goal is for the supervisor to encapsulate the lesson as accurately as possible to allow the teacher and supervisor to have meaningful dialogue about the lesson. To accomplish this goal, Goldhammer suggests that the supervisor take copious notes regarding what is actually happening in the classroom and not to write about his/her feelings.

The third stage in the clinical model is analysis and strategy. To begin, Goldhammer advocates that the supervisor look for patterns and categories of the teaching behavior that

occurred during the observation. After analyzing the notes and identifying patterns, the supervisor must decide which topics to select for the conference.

The conference is the next stage of the clinical cycle. Acheson and Gall (1997) suggest that supervisors focus on four key points as they work through the conference. First, the supervisor should provide the teacher with objective feedback based on the observation data. When sharing information with the teacher, the supervisor should be non-judgmental and refrain from giving evaluative feedback. Second, the supervisor should get the teacher to reflect on the lesson in order to elicit their opinions and thoughts of the lesson. The third point is to facilitate a discussion regarding alternative objectives, goals, and methods. The purpose is for the teacher to arrive at viable alternatives and to select the best approach for future lessons. The final point from Acheson and Gall is to give the teacher an opportunity to practice and compare methods. This can include the teacher observing a reading specialist teach a lesson to the class or the teacher visiting other teachers who are considered distinguished teachers.

The clinical supervision model transformed teacher supervisory practices. In sum, the hallmark of clinical supervision is the analysis of the data and the teacher-supervisor relationship (Cogan, 1972; Goldhammer, 1969; Acheson & Gall, 1997). In addition, there is a focus on professional development, with the primary emphasis of helping teachers improve their instruction (Acheson and Gall, 1997).

## **2.6 BEYOND CLINICAL SUPERVISION**

Teachers bring different experiences, backgrounds, and philosophies to the classroom. Some educators have called for differentiated supervisory practices that meet the varying needs of the teachers. Sergiovanni (1991) contends that supervisory practices should focus on the individual needs of the teachers because they bring a variety of needs, skills, and competencies to the classroom. Thus, one-size-fits-all models of supervision are unlikely to meet the needs of all teachers. The following section will describe various approaches to supervision, which include the following: The Danielson and McGreal Model, the developmental supervision model, the differentiated supervision model, the Management By Wandering Around approach, and the walkthrough model.

### **2.6.1 Danielson and McGreal: A Three-Track Model**

Danielson and McGreal (2000) propose a three track supervisory model that includes the following tracks for teachers: 1.) novice teachers 2.) experienced teachers and 3.) teachers needing intensive assistance.

#### **2.6.1.1 Track I**

Track I is used for beginning teachers. The goal is for supervisors to collect data that will allow them to make a decision about retaining the teacher and offering a permanent contract. Supervisors can collect this data in three ways. First, similar to Cogan and Goldhammer's clinical model, novice teachers must participate in an intensive process that includes a preobservation conference, classroom observation, and a post conference with the supervisor.

Additionally, extended day observations can give the supervisors data beyond the typical 45-minute lesson observation. Supervisors can stay for a double period, a half-day, or a full day in order to collect data. The final activity used with novice teachers includes a collection of work samples or artifacts. Possible artifacts can include seating charts, copies of tests and handouts, examples of written feedback given to the students, logs of parent contacts, and samples of student work. The teacher and supervisor then conduct an artifact conference to review each piece (Danielson and McGreal, 2000).

#### **2.6.1.2 Track II**

Danielson and McGreal identify track two as the “professional development track.” Although districts can adapt the format of this track, the main purpose is to provide a collegial, structured approach to support professional growth. Certain activities should take place that will help teachers to reach this goal. Teachers and supervisors can engage in action research, curriculum development, implementation of instructional strategies, peer coaching, and structured professional dialogue such as study groups (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

#### **2.6.1.3 Track III**

Track III is the “teacher assistance track.” Danielson and McGreal assert that this track should be used for teachers who are not meeting district standards and expectations. Marginal tenured teachers would fall into this category, not probationary teachers. The ultimate goal of this track is not to move teachers one step closer to dismissal, but instead to get the teachers competencies and skills back to a level that meets the district’s expectations. Eventually it may lead to the dismissal of the teacher, but only after the district provides a structured, supportive, and focused plan to ensure that teachers are meeting or exceeding the district’s standards for quality teaching

(Danielson and McGreal). For instance, the authors advocate for an assistance phase as part of track III that includes the collaborative development of an action plan to improve performance.

### **2.6.2 Developmental Supervision**

The goal of developmental supervision is to fit the teacher's level of experience, skills, and expertise with the appropriate supervisory approach (Glickman et al., 2001). This model includes four supervisory behaviors: 1.) directive control 2.) directive informational behavior 3.) collaborative behaviors and 4.) non-directive behaviors.

The directive assistance mode involves a top-down approach, where the supervisor develops a plan or dictates what is to be accomplished. It is used with teachers who have a low conceptual understanding, lack of awareness and knowledge of best practices, and who display a lack of commitment to their teaching (Glickman et al. 2001). According to Glickman et al., directive assistance should be the last resort, not the norm.

The directive informational mode involves some of the same characteristics as the directive mode. However, in the directive informational mode, the teacher has some voice in selecting what practices to implement. Supervisors should consider using the directive informational mode when teachers have a low conceptual understanding, lack of knowledge about an issue, or are confused about a particular practice (Glickman et al., 2001).

The collaborative mode is based upon the premise that the supervisor and teacher will work as partners to develop a mutual plan of action (Glickman et al., 2001). Supervisors should use the collaborative mode under the following circumstances: 1.) teachers can function at moderate to high developmental levels 2.) teacher and supervisor have the same amount of expertise on the subject 3.) teacher and supervisor agree to be involved in the decision-making

process and 4.) teacher and supervisor have equally committed to the process (Glickman et al., 2001).

Nondirective supervision is the fourth supervisory behavior. In this mode, teachers have the knowledge, skills, and expertise to identify what needs to be changed and can act on it in an efficient manner (Glickman et al., 2001). Consequently, the action plan belongs to the teacher. Thus, the supervisor's role is to facilitate the process for the teacher and help them think through the action plan.

### **2.6.3 Differentiated Supervision**

Differentiated supervision is a teacher-driven supervisory approach that places teachers in different kinds of supervisory and evaluative modes (Glatthorn, 1997). The components of the differentiated model include an evaluative option and a developmental option.

The first evaluative option is intensive evaluation. This option is reserved for making decisions about employment, granting tenure, and renewing contracts. The intensive mode requires several observations and conferences regarding instructional practices and documented performance with non-instructional functions as well (Glatthorn, 1997). The second evaluative option is the standard option. The majority of teachers would fall into this category. When teachers are placed in this mode, they are expected to be competent and skillful. Supervisors in these cases conduct the minimum number of required formal observations set forth by district and state policies (Glatthorn, 1997).

Developmental options are used to give teachers a choice in the type of supervision they receive and to provide them with professional development opportunities that meet their

individual needs (Glatthorn, 1997). Glatthorn lists three types of developmental options that can be used with teachers: intensive development, cooperative development, and self-directed development.

Intensive development provides on-going support for all non-tenured teachers and for teachers who may be experiencing some difficulty. Glatthorn advocates using an approach similar to clinical supervision for all teachers in the intensive mode. Coaching, conferring, analyzing, and observing are ways the supervisor can work with teachers to improve student learning (Glatthorn, 1997).

Cooperative development is the second option in Glatthorn's developmental supervision model. In this option, groups of teachers work together in a collaborative, collegial manner to support their professional growth. Groups of teachers may work on action research, visit each other's classrooms, create lesson plans and curricular ideas, and engage in professional discourse (Glatthorn, 1997).

Self-directed development is the third option. In this mode, teachers set the growth plan and the supervisor is used as a resource. Teachers in this mode should be skilled, competent, and self-motivated. According to Glatthorn, teachers set the goal, plan the action, solicit feedback from the supervisor and students, and then report the results. The teacher can self-evaluate his/her performance by using videotapes of lessons, journals, and portfolios.

#### **2.6.4 School Management by Wandering Around**

Hewlett Packard executives introduced Management by Wandering Around (MBWA) in the 1970's as a means to get their managers out into the workplace of the organization. They wanted their managers to be close to the workers and engage them in communication about their work.

In their book, *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters and Robert Waterman popularized this management approach. They reported that the most highly successful companies were staying close to their employees and customers. These companies did not isolate their managers from where the work was being done. Instead, they were involved in the daily routines of their workers (Peters and Waterman, 1988). The underlying premise of MBWA is that managers should be out in the field and away from their desks at least 50% of the time. As a result, they can experience problems first hand and engage employees in formal and informal communication about their work. MBWA is an interactive, interpersonal approach to leadership. Leaders who practice MBWA create an environment of collegiality, participation, and involvement (Frase and Hetzel, 1990).

Frase and Hetzel assert that there are three fundamental values to MBWA applicable to its use in schools: caring, openness, and trust. Caring about people is the hallmark of this leadership approach. It is a pervasive value throughout schools. Principals and teachers put the organization above individual gain, reach out, and listen to each other (Frase & Hetzel, 1990). Second, openness is an important value for principals who want to implement MBWA in schools. It is the leader's responsibility to create an environment where the teachers' views and input are respected and truly valued (Frase and Hetzel, 1990). The third fundamental value of MBWA is trust. Dependability and supporting others is a critical value for MBWA school leaders. Teachers must have complete and unwavering confidence with their leader. Supervisors must understand that their words, actions, and promises can communicate an attitude of trust or one of mistrust (Frase and Hetzel, 1990).

Caring, openness, and trust are the key values in employing MBWA, but being visible in the workplace and communicating to workers is what drives this supervisory approach. Yet,

visibility alone will do little in improving an organization's productivity unless it is coupled with a "well-focused visit" (Frase and Hetzel p. 75). For educators, the classroom walkthrough addresses this component of MBWA.

## **2.7 VARIOUS APPROACHES TO THE WALKTHROUGH**

In education, a by-product of MBWA is the classroom walkthrough. Although there are several models of the classroom walkthrough, some commonalities exist. Walkthroughs are frequent, focused, brief visits that allow the principal to observe firsthand the teaching and learning that is occurring in the classroom. Walkthroughs provide principals with observational data that can affect what is happening in the classroom. Frequent visits to classrooms provide principals with valuable data that they can share with teachers in order to inform their instruction. The classroom walkthrough allows principals to serve as instructional leaders and to be active participants with teachers as they collaboratively look for ways to improve instruction.

There is much literature to support the concept of instructional leadership and the classroom walkthrough. For instance, Eisner (2002) suggest that teaching needs to become more of a public process rather than the isolated process it has become in many schools. In addition, conducting walkthroughs is one way to overcome the barrier of teacher isolation. Eisner (2002) suggest that principals should spend a third of their time in classrooms to engage teachers in the learning process. Elmore (2000) posits that principals need to become more directly involved with instruction if schools are going to make significant improvements with student achievement. Communicating effectively to teachers about the importance of continuous improvement about instruction is critical component for schools to advance student achievement.

Blasé and Blasé (2001) indicate that principals who support quality classroom instruction and learning “talk openly and freely with teachers about teaching and learning” (p. 71). In another study, Blasé and Blasé (2000) asked teachers to detail the behaviors of principals who had a positive impact on student learning. They found two themes: talking with teachers and promoting professional development. The following are the items that were described by the principals’ behaviors: provided feedback, modeled effective instructions, solicited opinions, supported collaboration, provided opportunities for professional development, and praised effective teaching (Blasé and Blasé, 2000). Furthermore, Stiggins and Duke’s (1988) case study reports that teachers desire principals to be more visible in classrooms. The authors found that teachers wanted more formal and informal observations that would provide constructive feedback to guide instructional practices.

The walkthrough can be used as a tool for instructional leaders to be more directly involved with teaching and learning and to engage teachers in substantive professional discourse for continuous improvement of practice (Frase, 1992). As Graf (2005) explains, the walkthrough, “...brings the teacher and the principal into the cultural center of instruction” (p. 201).

### **2.7.1 The Downey Walkthrough Approach**

Carolyn Downey, the developer of the Downey Walkthrough, was an administrator in the 1960’s and was asked by a colleague to start being more visible in classrooms. As a result, she began spending time in classrooms, hoping that this would send a message that she knew their jobs were important (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, 2004). These visits were well received by staff, which indicated to Downey the potential of these frequent visits to classrooms. However, Downey realized that these visits needed to be more than a symbolic message. A few

years later, she adopted the Madeline Hunter model for teacher evaluation (Downey et al., 2004). It was at this point that Downey began using Hunter's strategies with the walkthrough. Still not satisfied, Downey attended training with Sue Wells Welsh (1971). During this training, she learned of a self-analysis strategy that she later incorporated into her walkthrough model. It was at this point that Downey became an advocate of "reflective thought" (Downey et al., 2004, p.10). This strategy allowed Downey to add to her repertoire when having follow-up conferences with teachers. Her feedback to teachers became more insightful and reflective in nature. Downey's model certainly evolved over the years. "Her model was moving toward a more collaborative and interdependent practice in which reflection was the focus" (Downey, et al. p.10).

The Downey Walkthrough Model is comprised of five basic components: visits are brief and focused, reflections areas are identified, information is gathered about curriculum and instruction, follow-up conversations occur only on occasion, and the visits are informal and collaborative

First, observations are brief and focused. The Downey Walkthrough is intended to take 2-3 minutes for the observer to gain information about the curriculum and instructional practices, not to evaluate or judge the teacher (Downey, et al., 2004). The rationale for keeping these visits very brief is that principals could make 10 or more visits in about 30 minutes. Additionally, Downey et al., asserts that, through frequent, short observations, you become familiar with the teaching patterns and decisions teachers are making on a daily basis. Over time, you will obtain far more information about teachers and the school when you stay in each classroom for just a few minutes per visit (p. 2).

Second, the principal identifies possible areas for teacher reflection. The hallmark of the Downey Walkthrough is to encourage teachers to become reflective practitioners. Specifically, principals need to promote reflective thinking with teachers by asking the right questions. The goal is to get teachers to be “personally responsible for their growth” and continuously improve their craft (Downey, et al., 2004, p. 3).

The third characteristic of the Downey Walkthrough is gathering data about curriculum and instruction. Because the visits are brief, the observer will be unable to determine if the curriculum is being implemented as designed. Nevertheless, the aim is to gather specific data about curriculum and instruction and determine its impact on student achievement (Downey, et al, 2004).

The fourth step is the follow-up or feedback part of the walkthrough process. Downey, et al., espouses that follow-up conversations do not need to happen after every visit. Instead, the authors report that principals may want to observe a teacher several times in order to gather enough information to engage the teacher in substantive dialogue about teaching and learning.

Fifth, the Downey Walkthrough is informal and collaborative. The observer does not resort to providing feedback in terms of checklists and lesson summaries. Instead, “It’s about colleagues working together to help each other think about practice. It is not about judging a teacher’s effective use of a given teaching practice” (Downey, et al., 2004, p. 4). Nonetheless, the principal may use his/her notes in order to remember the salient points of the observation and refer to them as they engage teachers in reflective dialogue.

The goal of the Downey walkthrough is to collect data in a brief, focused, and informal manner. To accomplish this, Downey, et al. (2004), outline a five-step structure that suggests ways for principals to respond to the observation. Downey’s five-step observation structure is as

follows: Step 1 is student orientation to work and is completed within the first few seconds of the visit. As the principal enters the room, the goal is to identify “whether students appear to be oriented to the work” (p. 21). Student orientation to the activity is a key indicator of learning.

The second step to the Downey walkthrough is determining the curricular decision points. The principal spends the majority of his/her time in step two identifying the objectives the teacher has selected and determining how they align to the district’s adopted curriculum. Downey cautions the observer to refrain from focusing solely on the instructional practices of the teacher and paying little or no attention to the curricular objectives. The goal is to determine how the objectives of the lesson align with district or state standards.

Step three of the Downey model involves the observer identifying the instructional decision points teachers are using to assist students in meeting the objectives. Downey et al. explain, “Instructional practices are those practices a teacher uses to teach the objectives, such as questioning skills, use of nonlinguistic representations, grouping strategies, and informal assessment strategies” (p. 33). Moreover, the authors urge the observers not to judge the teaching practices, but instead, to focus on the instructional decisions of the teacher.

“Walking-the-walls” and looking at student work is step four of the Downey walkthrough. The purpose of this step is to look for evidence of past objectives that were taught and to determine the instructional practices the teachers used to teach the objective (Downey et al., 2004). Furthermore, the authors point out that walking-the-walls can also include looking at students’ portfolios and writing folders as well as looking at worksheets and graded papers the teacher may have on his/her desk. The goal is to look at all kinds of student work to identify the objectives and teaching practices.

Step five of the Downey walkthrough focuses on safety and health issues in the classroom. As the principal enters and exits the room, he/she can scan the room for any obvious health or safety issues in the classroom. These issues can include, but are not limited to the following, loose wires or cables, broken glass, background noise, arrangement of the room including student desks and adequate lighting.

The Downey walkthrough model is intended to be “collaborative” and “reflective” (p.125). As described above, the five characteristics of the Downey model and the five steps to the observation allow principals to facilitate the growth of teachers and to play a key role in improving teaching practices.

### **2.7.2 The LearningWalk<sup>SM</sup> –The Institute for Learning**

The Institute for Learning (IFL) is a subsidiary of the Learning and Research Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh. It offers a three-year program that focuses on instructional leadership skills. In year one, the IFL introduces its Principles of Learning practice (POL). The goal for the POL is for schools to examine effective instructional practices. The POL includes the following components:

Organizing the effort

Clear expectations

Fair and credible evaluations

Recognition of accomplishment

Academic rigor in a thinking curriculum

Accountable talk

Socializing intelligence

Self-management of learning

Learner as apprenticeship (Institute for Learning, 2005).

The second year of their program involves the implementation of the LearningWalk, which utilizes the POL as its focal point. District administration, building principals, and/or teachers can be involved with the LearningWalk. The participants make brief visits, 10-15 minutes in length, to classrooms analyzing student work, viewing classroom displays, and engaging students in dialogue about what they are learning. (Institute for Learning, 2005). Through these visits, the participants gather data about the teaching and learning that is occurring in the classroom. After visiting a class, the group may quickly debrief before moving to another class. The purpose of the debriefing is to synthesize the data that were gathered and to generate questions to ask teachers. Upon completion of the LearningWalk, administration facilitates a group debriefing session with the teachers to pose questions and to plan for subsequent visits (Institute for Learning, 2006).

In summary, the LearningWalk's main goal is not to evaluate a teacher's performance; instead, it is to be used as a professional development tool that allows teachers and administrators to examine the teaching and learning process (Institute for Learning, 2005).

### **2.7.3 The Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy Walkthrough Protocol**

Joseph Werlinich and Otto Graf direct the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy (WPPA) and have developed a walkthrough observation tool that puts instruction at the core of teacher supervision. According to Graf and Werlinich (2004), the walkthrough allows teachers to develop and revise their instruction. Principals can validate best practices and share strategies

that will allow the school to create a true learning environment. Graf and Werlinich, identify seven objectives of the walkthrough:

1. For principals and teachers to learn more about instruction and learning;
2. To focus teachers and the principal on student work and the learning process;
3. To validate effective teaching practice and ensure continued use;
4. To create a community of learners for adults and students;
5. To open the school and classroom to all staff;
6. To improve decision making about instruction and learning;
7. To design more useful professional growth opportunities (personal communication, August 4, 2004).

To be effective, principals must conduct walkthroughs on a consistent basis in order for it to become a part of the culture of the school (Graf, 2004). Additionally, when walkthroughs become part of the learning community, it allows principals to gather important data about instruction, curriculum, and performance of the students.

Graf and Werlinich recommend a 14-step process for implementing the walkthrough observation tool:

1. *Conduct a preliminary walkthrough to gather baseline data.* By doing this, principals can begin to learn more about the students and the instructional practices of the staff.
2. *Conduct a preliminary meeting with staff.* During this meeting, the principal must set clear expectations for the staff's participation with the walkthrough.
3. *Set guidelines for professional behavior.* Principals must set and reinforce the expectations of the staff. When teachers walkthrough other classrooms, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Additionally, teachers should be nonjudgmental and refrain from making negative comments to one another.
4. *Establish a focus for the walkthroughs.* Principals and teachers work together to identify best practices that are targeted for implementation. During this step,

principals and teachers collaboratively identify “look-fors.” Graf (2004) explains that a look for is “...a precise descriptor of teaching strategies that tell the observer what the strategy looks like when applied in the classroom” (p.202).

5. *Align the look-fors with standards.* By conducting walkthroughs, principals get a sense of how the look-fors connect with district and state standards. Furthermore, principals can begin to identify curriculum gaps.
6. *Create and agenda for the walkthrough and communicate it to the staff.* The look-fors should be explicitly identified and distributed to teachers in advance of the walkthrough.
7. *Identify the data that will be collected during the walkthrough.* Teachers must be aware that these data can include the following: student work, learner objectives, classroom management, materials and resources, and physical arrangement of the room.
8. *Data collection.* The principal collects the data and makes connections about the implementation of the look-fors.
9. *Observe student work and student behaviors.* The hallmark of the walkthrough observation tool is analyzing student work and behaviors that influence learning. Additionally, having a conversation with students about the learning process can provide valuable data about instructional practices.
10. *Validate effective teaching.* By validating effective practice, principals send a clear message that quality instruction is vitally important to student success.
11. *Debrief with teachers.* Providing feedback to teachers and students can be a powerful tool for validating effective practice and identifying areas of

improvement. Through reflective dialogue, principals and teachers can collaboratively strive for continuous improvement of instructional practices. Graf and Werlinich list several ways in which principals can debrief with teachers following a walkthrough: oral and written feedback, conduct a short faculty debriefing meeting, and group conferences.

12. *Debrief with staff.* Debriefing with the entire staff allows principals to foster a true learning community. Validating effective instructional practices is a key component of debriefing with the staff. During this step, the principal encourages teachers to share best practice and creates opportunities to for reflection and collaboration.

13. *Coach and engage teachers in discussion about effective teaching.* Coaching begins with the principal but after time can involve other teachers. The goal of this stage is to engage teachers with substantive dialogue about teaching and learning.

14. *Make the walkthrough part of the culture.* Consistency is critical to the success of the walkthrough observation tool. Principals must be vigilant, visit classrooms frequently, provide feedback, and establish a collaborative, collegial process.

## **2.8 THE WALKTHROUGH AND TEACHER FLOW EXPERIENCE**

As teachers and districts are being held to unprecedented levels of accountability for student achievement, morale, motivation, and job satisfaction of teachers are affected. Historically, administrative governance has not fostered collegiality with teachers. Basom & Frase (2004)

report that teachers have not been treated as the “schools internal clients” but more as “machines” (p. 242). As a result, the authors posit that schools must provide teachers with opportunities to succeed to enhance job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. Providing higher frequencies of flow experiences can affect teacher satisfaction and motivation. Flow experience is a state of deep and passionate involvement in an endeavor that pushes oneself without overwhelming the person’s capacity to complete the activity (Basom & Frase, 2004). Furthermore, Downey (2004) explicates flow as, “...the most satisfying and motivating experience a person can have” (p. 14). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) asserts that high levels of flow experiences are essential for the development of intrinsic motivation. The research indicates that teacher flow experiences affect teacher motivation and job satisfaction and are important factors for principals to consider.

The walkthrough can have a positive affect on teacher morale and satisfaction. Because teaching is an autonomous profession by nature, teachers can become isolated and feel that they are left to figure out things on their own. The walkthrough can be a tool to overcome these feelings. Frase (2001) reports that teachers flow experiences increased when principal’s visits to classrooms increased. Principals who spend time in classrooms are better able to assist teachers with their instructional practices and thus break down the barrier of isolation. Walkthroughs allow principals to assist teachers through providing feedback and engaging teachers in substantive dialogue about their work.

## 2.9 THE WALKTHROUGH AND SELF-EFFICACY

People who have high levels of self-efficacy believe they can make a difference and have confidence in their abilities to positively manage and shape events that occur in their lives (Bandura, 1994). As a result, teacher self-efficacy is beginning to gain some attention from educational researchers. The research indicates that self-efficacy is an important value for teachers to possess. DuFour and Berkey (1995) endorse the idea of teacher and organization self-efficacy as a critical component for school improvement. Downey (2004) asserts that teachers who possess high levels of self-efficacy believe strongly in the idea that they can carry out the required responsibilities for the students to learn. Ashton and Web (1986) assert that teacher self-efficacy can influence student achievement levels. They found that teachers who had high levels of self-efficacy had students who consistently performed better than students of teachers with low self-efficacy. In addition, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) report that the combined self-efficacy levels of teachers in a school can positively affect students' gains in reading and math.

The walkthrough can be utilized to increase teacher self-efficacy levels. Frase (2001) studied self-efficacy levels and found that increased principal visibility and frequent visits to classrooms are associated with increased self-efficacy levels. In another study, Chester and Beaudin (1996) studied new teachers' interactions with their principals. They found that when principals visited the new teachers' classrooms five times within the first semester that the new teachers' self-efficacy levels increased. Teacher morale, motivation, self-efficacy, and security are enhanced when principals conduct walkthroughs (Blasé and Blasé, 2004).

## **2.10 THE WALKTHROUGH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Professional development plans of schools have been under critical scrutiny for years. Continuous improvement and refinement of teaching should be at the forefront of the minds of administrators. The walkthrough can be a tool to improve teachers' attitudes toward professional development (Downey, 2004). Furthermore, Frase (2001) as cited in Downey (2004) asserts that teachers have a better attitude towards professional development when principals spend more time in classrooms. The walkthrough is a vehicle to get principals into classrooms where they can engage teachers with substantive dialogue about professional development. Research supports the effort of engaging individuals in their professional development. When people are involved and participate in the planning of their own learning processes, they are more compelled to work harder in an effort to achieve the desired outcomes (Ashkanasy & Gallois, 1987; Lefcourt, Hogg, Struthers, & Holmes, 1975; Millar & Irving, 1995, and Wilhite, 1990).

## **2.11 THE WALKTHROUGH AND IMPROVED INSTRUCTION**

During the past decade, there has been a great deal of attention devoted to teacher quality and its impact on student achievement. Research indicates that teacher effectiveness has a profound influence on student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty 2003; Frase, 2005; English, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005). Thus, teacher supervisory models need to support the notion that quality teaching plays a significant role in student achievement. Because quality instruction and student achievement are highly connected, continuous improvement of instruction should be the

aim of teacher supervision. The following paragraphs will highlight some of the research associated with quality teaching and student achievement.

Sanders and Rivers (1997) assert that nothing is more important to student achievement than the quality of the teacher. Their Tennessee Value-Added study found that elementary students who had three continuous years of ineffective teaching scored considerably lower on standardized tests compared to students who had effective teachers during the same period. Furthermore, they found that the least effective teachers produce gains of about 14 percentile points with low achieving students, whereas effective teachers demonstrated gains that averaged around 53 percentile points.

Bain and Company, as cited in Haycock (1988) investigated the impact of teacher effectiveness on student achievement in math and reading of Boston Public Schools tenth graders. Their study revealed that the students who were taught by the bottom third of the teachers practically made no academic progress. For instance, the math results showed that students who were taught by the district's top teachers scored a 14.6 exceeding the national median of 11. Conversely, students taught by the bottom third of the district's teachers showed no growth (-.06) (Haycock, 1998).

Ferguson and Ladd (1996) examined the effects of teacher proficiency with student test scores in Texas. They found that teachers accounted for nearly 40% of the "measured variance in students' reading and mathematics achievement at grades 1-11, more than any other single factor" (Darling-Hammond 1997, p.8). Additionally, they conducted a similar study in Alabama with 690 schools. These findings in Alabama supported the Texas study. They found that 31% of the differences in students scoring in reading and math were attributed by teacher qualifications and class size, whereas 29.5% was explained by race, poverty and parent education (Darling-

Hammond, 1997). Their findings indicate that teachers' competencies are essential to student achievement.

It is clear that quality teaching has a profound impact on student achievement, just as poor teaching has a detrimental impact. When principals conduct walkthroughs, they are communicating to the teachers that quality instruction is important. As Teddlie, Kirby, & Stringfield (1989) report, when principals focus on effective teaching practices, classroom instruction improves. The walkthrough allows principals to observe firsthand the instruction that is occurring in the classrooms, therefore, increasing the likelihood of teacher effectiveness.

## **2.12 THE WALKTHROUGH AND TEACHER ATTITUDE TOWARD APPRAISAL**

Teacher supervision can have far-reaching effects on the attitudes of teachers. Historically, supervision models have not been perceived as helpful. Teachers' attitudes toward supervision connote control, authority, inspection (Sergiovanni, 1991) oversight, and judgment (Blasé and Blasé, 2004). It is important for the principal to be clear about the purpose and intent of the appraisal system. Darling-Hammond (1990) points out that supervisory practices of principals can affect the following: teacher motivation, knowledge, satisfaction, communication, consensus, trust, confidence, and decision-making. These are all important factors for principals and districts to consider when developing and implementing a supervisory model.

Sergiovanni (1991) asserts that the "hallmark of good supervision" allows the principal to monitor teaching and learning, helps teachers develop their craft of teaching, and builds a commitment and motivation to teaching. Walkthroughs can affect teacher attitudes towards appraisal and accomplish what Sergiovanni described. In fact, teachers who have principals visit

their classrooms on a frequent basis and focus these visits on teaching and learning have teachers who possess better attitudes about the teacher appraisal process (Frase, 1998 & 2001, as cited in Downey, 2004).

### **2.13 THE WALKTHROUGH AND IMPROVED TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS**

The old adage, “Perception is reality,” rings true for principals. When teachers do not believe in the abilities of their leaders, it decreases the chances of the school realizing its full potential. This relates directly to the belief of teachers that their principals can make a difference. Therefore, principals must be cognizant of the perceptions or beliefs of teachers regarding their effectiveness as instructional leaders. Collective efficacy is a belief or perception of teachers that they can employ, as a group, the necessary actions to make a positive impact on students (Goddard, 2001). As Bandura (1993) found, school achievement is positively associated to collective efficacy. The perception of teachers regarding principal effectiveness is an important component for successful schools. Moreover, Andrews and Soder (1987) conducted a two-year study of the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. Their findings suggest that the perceived effectiveness of principals by classroom teachers is critical for gains in student achievement in math and reading.

## 2.14 THE WALKTHROUGH AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

In order for principals to be effective instructional leaders, they need to ensure quality instruction, model best practices, monitor the implementation of the curriculum, provide resources, and examine assessment data. Indeed, strong building leadership is the catalyst for improving student achievement (Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, & Koff, 2005). The walkthrough can be a valuable tool for principals who want to be effective instructional leaders. In fact, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) synthesized the research of 70 studies including 2,894 schools, 1.1 million students, and 14,000 teachers. Their findings suggest, "...a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement" (p.3). Additionally, they identified 21 leadership responsibilities related to student achievement. Several of these principal leadership responsibilities correspond with the classroom walkthrough: Situational awareness, intellectual stimulation, monitors and evaluates, input, visibility, and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty describe each as follows:

*Situational awareness*- the principal is insightful and aware of what is going on in the school and can address potential problems by being proactive.

*Intellectual stimulation*- the principal ensures that the staff is aware of current trends and best practices in teaching and learning and frequently engages staff in substantive discussions.

*Monitors/evaluates*- the principal is able to effectively monitor and supervise instructional practices and its impact on student achievement.

*Visibility*- the principal visits classroom on a regular basis. These interactions must be sincere and meaningful to teachers and students.

*Input*- the principal solicits and involves teachers in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and policies.

*Curriculum, instruction, and assessment*- the principal is an active participant in the design and implementation of programs.

Furthermore, Smith and Andrews (1989) identified four areas of instructional leadership that can affect student achievement: 1.) being a resource provider, 2.) being an instructional resource, 3.) being a communicator, and 4.) being a visible presence. First, a resource provider understands the strengths and weaknesses of his/her staff and can manage resources, materials, and information to meet the needs of not only individuals, but also the entire staff. Second, being an instructional resource means that principals validate effective teaching and continuously support the improvement of classroom instruction. Next, an effective leader communicates effectively to the staff and can articulate a clear vision and get teachers to support it. The effective communicator is able to send clear message that all children can learn and that good teaching matters. Finally, by having a visible presence in the school, principals are modeling behaviors that instruction is important. When principals employ these four instructional leadership beliefs, they can begin to shape teachers' perceptions of principal effectiveness.

Conducting walkthroughs and having a visible presence in the school will not be enough to assure quality instruction and does not make an effective principal. It is what the principal does with the observational data that will make the difference. When principals visit classrooms, they must structure it in a way that is meaningful and purposeful for the teachers (Whitaker, 1997). The observational data is part of the continuous improvement process and ongoing assessment of curriculum and instruction. Glatthorn (1984) suggest that walkthroughs should be learning centered and emphasize the teachers' purposes, the students' learning experiences, and classroom environment.

Perceptions are made by how principals act. Being a resources provider, being an instructional resource for teachers, being an effective communicator, and being a visible presence in the school helps shape teachers' perceptions of principal effectiveness. By conducting walkthroughs, principals are able to keep abreast of information and keep teachers informed about instructional programs.

## **2.15 THE WALKTHROUGH AND PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Since this study is a replication of Todd Keruskin's study entitled, *The Perceptions of High School Principals on Student Achievement by Conducting Walkthroughs*, the researcher will examine his findings. Keruskin's study involved five public high schools in the Newport News School District in Virginia. He interviewed school personnel that had been involved with the walkthrough process in the district's high schools. Keruskin's (2005) study found that the walkthrough was a positive influence on instruction and student achievement. He identified the following areas where the walkthrough influenced instruction and achievement:

- The focus (look-fors) of the principals' visits permeated the school. "The Look-fors improve instruction-walkthroughs area toll to make sure teachers are focusing on the look-fors" (p. 66).
- Increase in test scores.
- Teachers collaborated about instruction and then had the opportunity to observe other teachers using best practices.
- Students were more on task and engagement in the classroom increased.

In conclusion, the literature review indicates that supervision has undergone many changes and has been influenced by the political and social climate of the country. The research specific to the classroom walkthrough is limited, thus revealing the need for an in-depth study of the impact of the classroom walkthrough on student achievement.

### 3.0 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In light of the current era of accountability, principals are striving for ways to improve student achievement. Consequently, teacher supervisory practices have been one way that principals are bringing about change in the classroom. From the perspective of elementary principals, this study will describe the key indicators of how the walkthrough tool affected student achievement.

This study is a replication of Todd Keruskin's (2005) study entitled, *The Impact of the Walkthrough Conducted by High School Principals on Student Achievement*. The researcher will apply Keruskin's methodology to a different group of people to determine the consistency of results. According to Thomas, (2003) "A replication study is a project that repeats- either precisely or in large part- the same research methods that were used in an earlier project" (p. 199). Thomas explains four functions a study can be replicated around:

1. Assess the results of an earlier investigation in order to confirm or disconfirm the reported outcomes of that investigation.
2. Repeat an earlier investigation at a later date in order to judge how stable the results have remained with the passing of time and to estimate the causes of any changes that occurred.
3. Alter some aspect of the earlier methodology in order to discover what effect such alteration has on the outcome.
4. Apply the earlier method to a different group of people or different set of events in order to learn whether conclusions derived from the earlier study apply equally well to those different people or events (Thomas, p. 199).

### **3.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

What is the impact of the walkthrough conducted by elementary principals on student achievement?

### **3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs that are identified by the elementary principals?
2. What elements and procedures appear in the Principals Academy Walkthrough protocol but do not appear in the elementary principals' walkthroughs?
3. What are the indicators identified by elementary principals of how the walkthroughs impact student achievement?
4. What are the indicators identified by elementary principals of how the walkthroughs impact instruction?
5. What is the congruence between the principals' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives with respect to the walkthroughs impact on teaching and learning?
6. How has the walkthrough impacted elementary principals as instructional leaders?
7. What is the congruence between this study of elementary principals and Keruskin's study of high school principals?

### **3.4 METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

This descriptive, qualitative study will seek to explore the impact of the walkthrough conducted by elementary principals on student achievement. Qualitative research provides “depth” and “detail” because it is concerned with detailed descriptions of conditions, events, people, and interactions from the pragmatic world (Patton, 1980). Additionally, Denzin & Lincoln (1994) posit that qualitative research provides “rich insight into human behavior” (p. 106). The researcher will use a semi-structured interview to discover the perceptions of each principal and teacher’s experiences with the walkthrough model. Semi-structured interviews will provide the researcher with a guide to encompass a set of thematic areas in a flexible manner (Measer, 1988).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore and analyze individual and collective beliefs, values, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The principals and teachers’ responses will be coded and the researcher, using content analysis, will analyze the data.

### **3.5 SAMPLE**

The researcher contacted Joseph Werlinich and Otto Graf, Co-Directors of the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania, to select the principals. As a result, the researcher interviewed seven principals, and five teachers from the principals’ respective schools. Consideration was given to length of service of the principals and teachers. Best and Kahn (2003) describe sampling as, “A small proportion of a population selected for observation and

analysis. By observing the characteristics of the sample, one can make certain inferences about the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn” (p. 12).

## **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

### **3.6.1 Interviews**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the seven principals who have implemented the classroom walkthrough and the five teachers. According to Patton (1980), “The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone’s mind” (p. 196). Descriptive data was collected by the researcher to ascertain the perceptions and experiences of the principals and teachers. According to Bogden & Biklen (1998), descriptive data gathered from the respondent’s own word assists the researcher in developing insights on “how the subjects interpret some piece of the world” (p. 94).

A list of open-ended questions was developed to direct the interviewer. Patton (1980) explains, “The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories” (p. 28). These questions were used to assist the researcher in gathering descriptive data from the respondent’s perspective. Furthermore, Patton asserts that qualitative interviewing is used to depict the respondent’s perceptions and experiences about a phenomenon and to understand how the participants view the program.

### **3.6.2 Interview Questions-Principal**

1. Describe your teacher supervision model over the last several years.
2. How long ago did you implement the walkthrough model?
3. Describe your walkthrough model.
4. Describe the steps and procedures when you implemented the walkthrough model.
5. Were there any internal barriers when implementing the walkthrough model?
6. What are the most important procedures or steps for successful implementation?
7. What are the most important procedures of your walkthrough model?
8. How much time do you spend in each walkthrough?
9. How often do you conduct walkthroughs?
10. What are you looking for during your walkthroughs?
11. What are you seeing during your walkthroughs?
12. What kind of feedback do you give back to the teachers?
13. What methods do you use to share the feedback?
14. What is the connection between the walkthrough and your supervision model?
15. What are the indicators of how your walkthrough model has impacted instruction?
16. What are the indicators of how your walkthrough model has impacted student achievement?
17. How are walkthroughs impacting you as an instructional leader?

### **3.6.3 Interview Questions – Teacher**

The following questions, guided the teacher interviews:

1. How has your supervision model changed over the years?
2. Describe your supervision model today.
3. In your own words, what does the walkthrough tool mean to you?
4. What are the principals looking for when they conduct a walkthrough in your classroom?
5. What kind of feedback do you get from the principal after a walkthrough?
6. What are the indicators of how walkthroughs has impacted your teaching?
7. What are the indicators of how walkthroughs has impacted student achievement?
8. What advice would you give to an administrator that was about to implement the walkthrough tool?

## **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1998), “Analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what to tell others” (p. 157). For this study, the researcher used interviews to collect the data from the respondents. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data was coded and content analysis was used to identify the emerging themes. According to Creswell (2002), coding is the

process of labeling text and segmenting it to form broad themes. The themes are then “aggregated codes” and are used “to form a major idea in the database” (p. 267).

McMillan & Schumacher (2006) suggest, “Qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest” (p. 364). For this study, the data were organized according to the individual responses of the principals and teachers in order to identify themes representing the perceptions of elementary principals and teachers on the impact of the classroom walkthrough on student achievement. The data were coded and themes were identified according to three categories: consensus themes, supported themes, and individual themes. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), consensus themes are when the majority of the respondents state the same theme; supported themes are when approximately half of the respondents state the same theme; and individual themes are when one or two respondents state a theme. In order to report the data, the researcher identified each theme with the number of respondents who named the theme. As a result of the data analysis, the researcher then wrote a descriptive summary.

In summary, this descriptive, qualitative study sought to explore the impact of the walkthrough conducted by elementary principals on student achievement. The researcher interviewed principals and teachers who have experienced the Western Pennsylvania Walkthrough protocol. The interviews were tape-recorded, the data were coded, and content analysis was used to identify emerging themes.

## **4.0 CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to focus on elementary school principals using the walkthrough model and to evaluate how the walkthrough model improves student learning. The method of research was personal interviews of elementary school principals who have experience using the classroom walkthrough. The interviews occurred over a two-month period and were conducted at a location selected by the participant. Each face-to face interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The following sections of this chapter includes a profile of each school represented, demographic data of each participant, a discussion of each research question, results of the data analysis, and summary of the major and minor themes.

### **4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR SCHOOLS REPRESENTED IN THE STUDY**

Seven elementary principals from six Western Pennsylvania schools participated in this study. Two of the principals interviewed were from the same school district. The average student enrollment for the seven schools was 366, while the average percentage of economically disadvantaged students was 26%. All of the schools represented in this study can be described as a suburban community. In terms of academic achievement, each school met the adequately yearly progress targets for the 2005-2006 school year. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is used to measure student and school progress from year to year. Students

in grades 3-8 and 11 are administered the math and reading PSSA each spring. The PSSA scores correlate with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The target scores for the 2005-2006 school year were 54% proficient or higher in reading and 45% proficient or higher in math. Of the schools represented in this study, the average score of proficient and higher in reading was 82.7, while the average score of proficient or higher in math was 89. Disaggregated demographic data of the schools represented in this study are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Data of the Schools Represented.**

Principal	Reading Proficiency PSSA (%) 54% Required	Math Proficiency PSSA (%) 45% Required	Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged (%)	Grade Span
A	81	85	284	23.2	K-5
B	91	95	378	1.3	K-5
C	82	85	203	28.1	K-6
D	88	95	356	43.5	K-5
E	83	94	314	34.4	K-3
F	73	85	491	25.9	K-5
G	81	84	536	25.8	K-5

Note: 2005-2006 data

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

### 4.2.1 Principals

Seven elementary principals participated in this study. The researcher contacted Joseph Werlinich and Otto Graf, co-directors of the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy, for names of principals to consider for participation in this study. Five of the seven principals are current members of the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania. Each principal has conducted walkthroughs for an average of 3.2 years, while the range of administrative experience for the principals was 1 to 13 years. Disaggregated demographic data for the principals represented in the study are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Demographic Data of the Principals Represented in the Study.**

Principal	Total Administrative Experience	Number of Years as Building Principal	Number of years conducting walkthroughs
A	9	2.5	2.5
B	9	4	4
C	13	13	7
D	9	5	4
E	9	2	2
F	2	2	2
G	1	1	1

Note: 2006-2007 school year

#### 4.2.2 Teachers

The researcher asked each principal to identify teachers for consideration for being interviewed. Three of the principals were able to secure teachers for participation in this study. As a result, the researcher interviewed a total of five teachers. The range of teaching experience in years is 8-20, while the average years of experience is ten (Table 3).

**Table 3: Demographic Data of the Teachers who Participated in the Study.**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Teaching Experience in Years</b>	<b>Current Grade or Subject Area</b>	<b>School Building</b>
A	20	Special Subject Area	Principal B
B	9	Kindergarten	Principal B
C	3	Fourth	Principal F
D	10	Fifth	Principal F
E	8	Third	Principal G

### **4.3 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following section addresses each research question identified in this study and specifies the interview questions that were asked of each participant. This section is organized in a sequential manner by each participant's response to the questions. Direct quotations and excerpts from the participants are used throughout this section in order for the reader to capture the essence of the interviewees' responses.

#### **4.3.1 Research Question 1: What are the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs identified by the elementary principals?**

The researcher asked the following questions of the principals to acquire the data to answer research question number one:

- Describe the steps and procedures when you implemented the walkthrough model.
- Were there any internal barriers when implementing the walkthrough model?
- What are the most important procedures or steps for successful implementation?
- How much time do you spend in each walkthrough?
- How often do you conduct walkthroughs?
- What are you looking for during your walkthroughs?
- What kind of feedback do you give back to the teachers?
- What methods do you use to share the feedback?

Upon analysis of the collected data several consensus themes arose that support the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy's Walkthrough model. The principals specifically used words from the Principals Academy's Walkthrough model to indicate the key elements of their model. These consensus indicators include the following: Focus on the positive, establish look-fors, be consistent, provide feedback, build trust, and establish guidelines and expectations.

Supported themes (2) included principals validating effective practices and being clear with the purpose of the walkthrough. Additionally, several noteworthy individual themes that support the Academy's model were reported as well. Principal D reported that he conducts a preliminary meeting with each grade level to discuss the data to be collected and to identify the look-fors for the year. Principal F reported that his goal is to build a cultural awareness for the walkthrough in the building. Additionally, Principal F found it to be extremely helpful to discuss the walkthrough process and model with the administrative staff. Principal G pointed out that principals must understand that the walkthrough is a process and to be very careful about making assumptions when only observing small parts of lessons.

The next section delineates each principal's responses to the interview questions listed above and is intended to provide an in-depth report of the participant's perspectives on the key elements of the walkthrough. The consensus, supported, and individual themes are shown in Figure 1.

### **Principal A**

Principal A began conducting walkthroughs in his first year as building principal. The walkthrough was used in addition to the district's policy of four formal observations per year for nontenured teachers and one formal observation per year for tenured teachers. Principal A stated his teachers were not used to the principal visiting classrooms on a regular basis, and that he had to begin the process slowly. Principal A reported that the district had a strong union, thus creating a minor barrier for implementation of the walkthrough.

Principal A stated,

The walkthrough model was like a transition. It is not something that you can just start doing. Being a new principal in that district, I had to get the staff behind me and make sure they understood the process. A lot of times, it was just that I was coming around to say good morning to the kids. I would do it right at the beginning of the day. I did a

gradual transition. The district had a very strong union and I can tell you that the first time I walked in, it was like a deer in the headlights look. So, the beginning of the walkthrough I really focused on the positive things that I would see in the classroom. I would give the teacher some positive feedback like, I really liked what you did with that assignments or what you were doing with the students. Word got out quickly that he's not in there to hammer us. He's looking at good things that we're doing. That takes time, to build a rapport with staff. It is a much better model than going in and focusing on the negative things right off the bat. At that point, the damage will be done and teachers will not be open to it. Once you get the walkthrough process up and running, the more you do it, the more open they feel. We had established look-fors and I always gave feedback to the teachers-written notes, emails, verbal, face to face. I think if you approach it in a non threatening manner, you get more out of it; teachers got a lot more out of it to the point where they would try to please me to do some of the things that I suggested, and I knew it was working when I would have teacher call me a week or so later and say, why don't you come down and take a look at this.

## **Principal B**

Principal B uses the walkthrough as part of the district's supervision model. She stated that the district's model is based on the Danielson model for supervision. Danielson's model is explained in Chapter 2. To develop this framework, the district convened a committee, which was inclusive of teachers and administrators. The model is based on a three-year cycle: assessments and planning, peer support, and reflection and assessment. Each year of the cycle involves specific activities from the supervisor and teacher. For instance, in year one, teachers complete a rubric and identify goals that focus on ways to improve their professional practice. In year two, the teachers work collaboratively and focus on similar topics for peer study. Year three includes a reflection and assessment of the progress made towards the goals. During this final stage, the teacher shares a professional portfolio with the supervisor.

Principal B stated,

The walkthrough was an outgrowth as one of the supervision techniques that can be used as part of the supervision model. Walkthroughs can take place to just indicate and show good practice and reinforce what teachers are doing well and give principals an idea of maybe something that someone might have an area of weakness in and that might be

something that someone might focus their goal on the next time they are coming up with their cohort goals.

Principal B's predecessor conducted walkthroughs as part of the supervision model of the district, but she reported that it was viewed negatively.

Principal B stated,

When I came here, of course, the walkthrough model had been described to the teachers through the supervision model but it was not favorable and so there had been some walkthroughs done prior to me coming here. A couple of principals would go to each other's buildings and do walkthroughs and do the conference afterwards but it was pretty distasteful. So, what I did was engage Dr. Graf from the University of Pittsburgh because I was in the Principals' Academy at that time and so I used that as my way of getting the walkthroughs in place. So, I did have Dr. Graf come here and do some real formal walkthroughs with the teachers, just to really reinforce positive practice and have then hear from someone at the university level. It was very helpful in getting the process in place.

Principal B indicated that the walkthrough protocol is about "a change of thinking about supervision." She indicated that there were some internal barriers that needed addressed.

Specifically, teachers were accustomed to the old model of supervision, "The old model, the principal came in once or twice a year, did a formal observation, did a conference, and the teacher walked out the door. Nothing was really specifically discussed. So people were just not comfortable." After involving Dr. Graf, building trust, and focusing on the positive, the teachers began to feel more comfortable about the walkthrough. Principal B explained,

I think building trust is the most important part. When you first begin the walkthrough process you must constantly reinforce the good things that are happening and let people hear about it. Focus on the positive because the reason why it becomes distasteful to them is because they are afraid that you are going to say something publicly about a practice that is not desirable. They don't want to be embarrassed in front of their colleagues. It can be very personal.

Principal B reported several things to consider for successful implementation of the walkthrough: "build trust, reinforce the good things, be positive, be clear, communicate to staff, and let people know up front."

## Principal C

Principal C indicated that the walkthrough model is not a part of the district's supervision model. The district uses a differentiated supervision model that was adopted in 2001. Non-tenured teachers are formally observed six times per year and tenured teachers at least one time per year. Principal C explains, "We don't really have the walkthrough identified in our contract. So, the walkthrough is something I use. It's my own version. Our contract doesn't specify." In fact, Principal C calls them quick visits, not walkthroughs. Principal C indicated that she did not want to make it an issue with the association, thus the name, "quick visits." For the purpose of the interview, "quick visits" were meant to be defined as "walkthroughs."

Principal C explains how she began using the walkthrough:

Several years ago we outlined what we wanted to accomplish as a building. We called it a Blueprint for Learning. We tried to pick out what we thought were the most important things. Those were the things that I focused on in the observations. In a quick visit or a walkthrough they knew those were the things that I'm looking for. So, that's a big part of what we do, a big part of what I talk about

Principal C stated that she kept the walkthrough process as informal as possible. She indicated that she believes this is why she did not experience any internal barriers with the walkthrough process. Principal C comments on the most important procedures of the implementation of the walkthrough protocol,

I think the trust level between the principal and the staff is most important. The teachers must have confidence that they understand what they are doing...So, there is really a lot of communication all the way around. There really isn't anything that's a surprise to anybody and I think that makes it easier all the way around.

## **Principal D**

Principal D began using the walkthrough model in 2002. He indicated that it was a district initiative and that administrators were trained by Dr. Otto Graf. Principal D reported that the walkthrough is used in conjunction with the district's supervision model and the requirements set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

To begin the walkthrough process, Principal D explains that conducting an initial meeting with staff is top priority. Principal D stated,

The first thing I do is conduct walkthrough meetings with grade level staff. That's usually at the beginning of the year and we, again, establish guidelines for everybody involved. Those guidelines provide some kind of focus for the building and for the grade level and from there, as we move on, we try to establish standards by looking at what we call look-fors. Then, we schedule walkthroughs for the grade level. I usually do it in grade levels and try to have a pre-meeting with grade level teachers. At this meeting, we identify the data to be collected. The walkthroughs are conducted and then I debrief with the teacher.

Principal D reported teacher anxiety was the biggest internal barrier at the start of the walkthrough process. However, he explained that this lasted for just a little while. In order to get past the teacher anxiety issue, Principal D explains the procedures for successful implementation:

To have successful implementation, I had to make sure to get beyond those barriers. I had to definitely build trust in the process. After fostering trust and establishing myself as a visible presence in the classroom, teacher anxiety diminished. Also, building a focus and establishing look-fors for the walkthrough was important for successful implementation.

Principal D reported that he tries to get into classrooms weekly and stays in each classroom for about ten to fifteen minutes. During the walkthrough, Principal D stated that his major focus is to observe the establish look-fors. Principal D stated,

Probably the first major thing I'm looking for is the components of our instructional model. I'm checking for understanding, the teachers' expectations, and beyond that, increased use of research based teaching practices, varying instructional strategies. I also look for how the teacher is using academic learning time, transitions, student engagement, and academic rigor.

Principal D attempts to provide specific feedback to teachers after each walkthrough. He does this via email, written notes, and face to face. In addition to the individual feedback, he also schedules grade level meetings. During these feedback sessions, he indicated that the most important thing for him to do is to “validate effective practices” and sharing the input with the grade level. Principal D believes it is important for teachers to share strategies and discuss teaching practices in order to move forward with increasing the use of best practices.

### **Principal E**

Principal E reports that her district began introducing the walkthrough model during the 1999-2000 school year. She states that the walkthrough model began under the direction of two central administrators who came out of the University of Pittsburgh’s leadership program. Principal E recalls that Joe Werlinich, Associate Professor at the University, worked with the administrative team on the walkthrough model. She indicated that the administrative staff met monthly to review the walkthrough process and to begin talking about district-wide look-fors. To begin the process with teachers, Principal E recalled that several meetings were held with teachers to share the district developed look-fors. Teachers had the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions about the look-fors and the walkthrough process. Principal E reported that there were some minor internal barriers to overcome with the walkthrough process. Principal E stated,

The natural age-old resistance to change and teacher understanding were the biggest barriers. I taught then to understand the role of the walkthrough and that it is equally important that I be informed about what’s happening in the classroom.

Principal E also explained that effective feedback and knowing how to give feedback aides in the implementation of the walkthrough and can alleviate many of the internal barriers.

Principal E commented that she spends about 20 minutes in each classroom observing the look-fors and another 10 minutes providing written feedback to teachers. Additionally, Principal E conducts grade level meetings that last between 40-50 minutes on a weekly basis to engage the teachers and provide feedback.

### **Principal F**

Principal F describes the walkthrough process as part of the district's supervision model that is based on Charlotte Danielson's model. Danielson's model is explained in Chapter 2. The district supervision model allows teachers to select cohorts where they select goals the first year and then are required to do certain things to achieve those goals over a three-year period, which includes peer observation, parent feedback, and two conferences per year with the principals.

The walkthrough also is used to provide feedback to teachers on their individual goals.

Principal F reports that the look-fors of the walkthrough are based on Danielson's four domains: planning and preparation, classroom instruction, classroom environment, and professionalism. In addition to the four domains, Principal F explained that the district, in collaboration with the teacher's association, created continuous improvement goals, which are also part of the look-fors. In addition, Principal F explains that he is looking-for the objective of the lesson to be visible with the Pennsylvania Standards being addressed. Principal E reports that there were no internal barriers to deal with as he implemented the walkthrough. He explained that the administrative team worked extremely hard with the union to work out all of the details.

To begin the walkthrough process, Principal F stated,

Well, first we discussed it as an administrative team. We took it back and reviewed it ourselves. The union took it back and took it to the executive board and they reviewed it. I laid it out during a professional development meeting. I explained the process and the look-fors. It wasn't a quick fix. Everyone had their own ideas of really how we wanted to put this together but everyone was very satisfied at the end with the way it turned out....with the building, it's first of all explaining it in detail to the staff and trying to

answer any questions they may have. Then I think it's immediately just going through the process...They saw a lot of positives in it. It gives them more validation of what they do. I try to point out things they are doing well...I am trying to build a cultural awareness to foster growth... I have taken a positive approach to it.

Principal F believes that the most important procedures for successful implementation are validation and being open with the staff. He points out that consistency is important as well. Principal F conducts 20-25 walkthroughs per month and spends about 20 minutes per visit. To provide teachers with feedback, Principal F sends, via email, a district walkthrough form. In addition, he states, "I always touch base with them no matter what. I meet informally with them in the halls or in their rooms."

### **Principal G**

Principal G reported that the district utilizes a differentiated supervision model based on the number of years of service. Tenured teachers have the flexibility in selecting which type of appraisal mode they would like to use. These modes can include formal observations and/or personal options. Examples of personal option include the following: peer observation, collaboration, and mentoring. Principal G remarked that teachers have flexibility with selecting the goals of the personal option, however, principals must approve the goals and the options. The goal is to show personal growth. Principal G reported that the district and the association agreed to permit principals to conduct walkthroughs in place of the formal clinical observation. If the principal and teacher choose to do this, six walkthroughs will equal one formal observation.

The 2006-2007 school year was the first year that Principal G has conducted walkthroughs. Principal G believes that being positive and consistent are the two most important procedures or steps for successful implementation of the walkthrough and that she spends 10-15 minutes in each classroom per visit. The Principal reported that the first semester was used to build relationships with the staff and that the second semester was used to the implement the walkthrough.

To begin the walkthrough process Principal G stated,

The first semester I just did little things...faculty meetings, having an open door policy with staff, those types of things so that when I started coming in it wasn't viewed as a negative. I began asking teachers if there were things that they were doing that I could stop by and see...Right now I am letting them know, not the exact days, but that I will be walking through.

Principal G reported that she did not encounter any major barriers with the walkthrough process. However, she did state that "being new to the building" was a barrier to overcome because the expectations with the walkthrough process were different from previous years.

### Identified Themes for Research Question 1

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the positive.</li> <li>• Establish Look Fors.</li> <li>• Consistency.</li> <li>• Provide feedback.</li> <li>• Build trust.</li> <li>• Establish expectations and guidelines for the walkthrough process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validate effective teaching.</li> <li>• Be clear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonthreatening manner.</li> <li>• Build rapport.</li> <li>• Conduct walkthrough meetings with grade levels.</li> <li>• Look at the data.</li> <li>• Discuss the walkthrough process with the union.</li> <li>• Discuss walkthrough process as an administrative team.</li> <li>• Don't make assumptions about teachers based on a couple of walkthroughs.</li> </ul>

**Figure 1: Research Question 1: Key elements and procedures of the walkthrough as identified by the elementary principals.**

### **4.3.2 Research Question 2: What elements and procedures appear in the Principals Academy walkthrough protocol but do not appear in the elementary principals' walkthrough?**

As explicated in Chapter 2, Graf and Werlinich advocate a 14-step process for implementing the walkthrough observation tool. They identify the following as the key elements and procedures of their walkthrough protocol.

1. *Conduct a preliminary walkthrough to gather baseline data.* By doing this, principals can begin to learn more about the students and the instructional practices of the staff.

2. *Conduct a preliminary meeting with staff.* During this meeting, the principal must set clear expectations for the staff's participation with the walkthrough.

3. *Set guidelines for professional behavior.* Principals must set and reinforce the expectations of the staff. When teachers walkthrough other classrooms, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Additionally, teachers should be nonjudgmental and refrain from making negative comments to one another.

4. *Establish a focus for the walkthroughs.* Principals and teachers work together to identify best practices that are targeted for implementation. During this step, principals and teachers collaboratively identify "look-fors." Graf (2004) explains that a look for is "...a precise descriptor of teaching strategies that tell the observer what the strategy looks like when applied in the classroom" (p.202).

5. *Align the look-fors with standards.* By conducting walkthroughs, principals get a sense of how the look-fors connect with district and state standards. Furthermore, principals can begin to identify curriculum gaps.

6. *Create an agenda for the walkthrough and communicate it to the staff.* The look-fors should be explicitly identified and distributed to teachers in advance of the walkthrough.

7. *Identify the data that will be collected during the walkthrough.* Teachers must be aware that these data can include the following: student work, learner objectives, classroom management, materials and resources, and physical arrangement of the room.

8. *Data collection.* The principal collects the data and makes connections about the implementation of the look-fors.

9. *Observe student work and student behaviors.* The hallmark of the walkthrough observation tool is analyzing student work and behaviors that impact learning. Additionally, having a conversation with students about the learning process can provide valuable data about instructional practices.

10. *Validate effective teaching.* By validating effective practice, principals send a clear message that quality instruction is vitally important to student success.

11. *Debrief with teachers.* Providing feedback to teachers and students can be a powerful tool for validating effective practice and identifying areas of improvement. Through reflective dialogue, principals and teachers can collaboratively strive for continuous improvement of instructional practices. Graf and Werlinich list several ways in which principals can debrief with teachers following a walkthrough: oral and written feedback, conduct a short faculty debriefing meeting, and group conferences.

12. *Debrief with staff.* Debriefing with the entire staff allows principals to foster a true learning community. Validating effective instructional practices is a key component of debriefing with the staff. During this step, the principal encourages teachers to share best practice and creates opportunities to for reflection and collaboration.

13. *Coach and engage teachers in discussion about effective teaching.* Coaching begins with the principal but after time can involve other teachers. The goal of this stage is to engage teachers with substantive dialogue about teaching and learning.

14. *Make the walkthrough part of the culture.* Consistency is critical to the success of the walkthrough observation tool. Principals must be vigilant, visit classrooms frequently, provide feedback, and establish a collaborative, collegial process.

Upon analysis of the collected data, themes emerged that support the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania’s Walkthrough protocol. Of the Academy’s 14-steps, seven were identified by the principals as consensus themes, and seven were identified as supported themes. No individual themes emerged (Table 4). None of the principals explicitly cited all of Graf and Werlinich’s 14 steps, however, all of the principals, implicitly in some cases, mentioned that the walkthrough is a process that involves careful consideration when implementing.

Table 4: Identified Themes for Research Question 2

<b>14 Step Process for Implementing the Walkthrough</b>	<b>Type of Theme (Principals’ responses)</b>
1.) Conduct a preliminary walkthrough	Supported
2.) Conduct a walkthrough meeting with staff.	Supported
3.) Establish guidelines for all participants.	Supported
4.) Establish a focus for subsequent visits.	Consensus
5.) Connect the look-fors with established standards.	Consensus
6.) Schedule the walkthrough	Supported
7.) Identify the type of data to be collected.	Consensus
8.) Collect the data.	Consensus
9.) Observe student behaviors.	Consensus
10.) Validate effective practices.	Consensus
11.) Debrief with teachers.	Supported
12.) Utilize a variety of strategies to debrief.	Supported
13.) Coach each other.	Supported
14.) Create a culture embedded in improving teaching and learning.	Consensus

### **4.3.3 Research Question 3: What are the indicators identified by the elementary principals of how the walkthroughs impacts student achievement?**

To acquire the data to answer Research Question three, the researcher asked the following question: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough model has impacted student achievement?

Upon analysis of the collected data, there were no consensus, seven supported, and five individual themes (Figure 2). Supported themes included the following: teachers are more focused on best practices, an increase on student time on task, quality of student work, teachers are more focused on best practices, an improvement in teacher practices, and more dialogue between the principals and teachers. The closest response to consensus was an increase in PSSA scores. Four of the seven principals cited an improvement of test scores as an indicator of the impact of the walkthrough on student achievement.

There were several noteworthy individual themes as well: teachers began showing the principal student accomplishments (Principal A), staff focused on change efforts (Principal C), Middle school teachers reported that the elementary students had a better foundation and were better prepared (Principal D).

The following excerpts reveal the principals' responses to the impact of the walkthrough on student achievement:

Principal A stated,

You know it's impacting students when you are seeing the look-fors being implemented...Our test scores rose dramatically in two years...The walkthrough gives me some different approaches to improve achievement in the building and to develop a rapport with the staff.

Principal B stated,

...good teacher practices directly relates to higher student achievement. I feel confident in knowing that the things we are doing are right and the strategies we are using directly related to student achievement. Our PSSA scores, for the most part, have gone up a little bit each year.

Principal C stated,

I think what's happened is the walkthrough in part has helped us to focus on some things that we wanted to change and that we wanted to improve

Principal D stated,

...what we have found is definitely through our PSSA scores as well as our holistic assessments, our DRA scores, we've shown great achievement...there have been definitely growth in reading and mathematics...the quality of work we are seeing; what the upper elementary grades are telling us; what the high school teachers are telling us, what they are seeing is a better foundation.

Principal E stated,

I think that for one thing we have seen improvement in writing...we see the results in students, for example, PSSA scores...For example, we saw weaknesses in the open ended response of the PSSA.

Principal F stated,

It is difficult for me to say whether the walkthrough has or hasn't improved student achievement. You would think with everything that we are doing with the walkthroughs, the conversations we are having, my hope is optimistically, yes, it is having an impact.

Principal G stated,

...you're working through the teacher to impact achievement. I am not sure about this question. Hopefully, by working through the teacher it will have an impact on achievement.

### Identified Themes for Research Question 3

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores have improved.</li> <li>• Teachers are more focused on best practices.</li> <li>• Student time on task increased.</li> <li>• Quality of student work has improved.</li> <li>• Teachers are more focused on the look-fors.</li> <li>• More dialogue between teachers and principals regarding instruction and student achievement.</li> <li>• Improved teacher practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers began coming to the principal to show accomplishments.</li> <li>• Made the staff focus on change efforts.</li> <li>• Middle school and high school teachers feel students are better prepared.</li> <li>• Saw weaknesses in student achievement data and was able to address them through the walkthrough.</li> <li>• Better planning and preparation from teachers. Teachers more aware that the principal can walk in at any time.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2: Research Question 3: Indicators of how the walkthrough impacts student achievement.**

#### **4.3.4 Research Question 4: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough impacts instruction?**

To acquire the data to answer Research Questions four, the researcher asked the following question: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough model has impacted instruction?

Upon analysis of the collected data, there were two consensus, six supported, and five individual themes (Figure 3).

When asked about how the walkthrough has impacted instruction, two consensus themes arose: teachers are more apt to share best practices, and principals are more aware of what is happening in the classrooms. Principal F reported that the walkthrough allowed him to make some instructional changes with a particular grade level. He noted that there were inconsistencies in the way the teachers were teaching writing. As a result, he created a team to collect data to make sure there was consistency with the writing vocabulary and the way it was taught across the grade levels.

Several supported themes emerged from the data analysis. Principals reported that they began to observe an increase in teacher and student time on task. Teachers began to be more aware of the importance of academic learning time. Another supported theme that principals reported was that a common language around instruction was developed. The principals stated that this was helpful in bringing consistency to the grade levels. In terms of professional development, a supported theme emerged. Principals reported that they have a better understanding of the professional development needs in the building and have observational data

to support it. Another noteworthy supported theme was that the quality of conversations that principals have with teachers has improved.

The principals reported several notable individual themes. Principal A purported that he observed more differentiated lessons and saw more technology being integrated into the lessons. Principal B stated that she was better able to identify teachers for mentoring and coaching opportunities. Better follow through of building initiatives such as four block writing and flexible grouping was reported by Principal D. Finally, Principal F stated that the Pennsylvania Standards are more obvious in the classrooms.

The following excerpts reveal the principals' responses to the impact of the walkthrough on instruction:

Principal A stated,

They would always see that I would give feedback to them. ...Teachers began to come to me and show me their accomplishments. They became more focused on instruction and time on task. As time went on, there was not as much down time.

Principal B stated,

...when teachers have a chance to talk with each other, to share practice, to help support each other-those are the indicators- people are talking more about instruction, they are talking more about good practice, they are sharing across grade levels, the collegiality has improved. I think those are all indicators. None of that is hard data, I know, but I think that it is pretty powerful...It has given me a lot of information to talk with teachers about and when they have that opportunity to talk and share and bring people together, that's the power in improving education....

Principal C stated,

...there is more of an openness from staff to talk with me about the challenges they are having in the classroom. The walkthrough makes you more visible and so it becomes more real, it's not just talk, it's action. I think it's one of those deals where you have a more common language... that makes it easier to talk about things. I think the quality of the conversations we have about instruction is probably better, more to the point...the walkthrough helped create kind of a pattern of how to go about working to make instructional changes.

Principal D stated,

The walkthrough has impacted instruction in a number of ways...expectations grow with the initiatives that we have been doing...the walkthrough allows me to follow-up on these initiatives...The data is important...when you see best practices in the classroom, you know it's impacting instruction.

Principal E stated,

We came up with a plan and then began talking with teachers about how to implement some changes in instruction, and then going in and looking at those changes and then looking at the student work.

Principal F stated,

I saw inconsistencies in the way we were teaching our writing...I would have never picked up on it, no question about it, if I didn't conduct walkthroughs...

Principal G stated,

I think what the walkthrough is going to do for me and for the teachers is if I see people doing great things, I'm going to ask them if they are willing to share that with their colleagues...validating what they do and spreading the word to the other teachers...

### Identified Themes for Research Question 4

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are sharing best practices</li> <li>• Principals are more aware of what is happening in the classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher time on task has increased.</li> <li>• Principal has a better understanding of curricular gaps and inconsistencies.</li> <li>• Principal has a better understanding do professional development needs.</li> <li>• Improvement in the quality of student work.</li> <li>• Better quality of conversations about instruction.</li> <li>• Developed a common language around instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More differentiated lessons.</li> <li>• More integration of technology.</li> <li>• Principal is better able to pair teacher for coaching and mentoring opportunities.</li> <li>• Better follow through with building initiatives.</li> <li>• PA standards are more obvious in the classroom.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3: Research Question 4: Indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted instruction.**

**4.3.5 Research Question 5: What is the congruence between the principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective with respect to the walkthroughs impact on teaching and learning?**

The specific interview questions asked of the teachers to acquire the data to answer research question 4 were:

- What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted your teaching?
- What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted student achievement?
- What advice would you give to an administrator that was about to implement the walkthrough?
- In your own words, what does the walkthrough tool mean to you?
- What kind of feedback do you get from the principals after a walkthrough?

In addressing the congruence between the principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective, the researcher asked the teachers to respond to the following question: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted your teaching? Upon analysis of the data, there were no consensus themes and two supported themes (Figure 4) – *More accountability for teaching and learning and principals are more aware of what is happening in the classroom.*

The following excerpts reveal the teachers' perceptions:

Teacher A stated,

...I really can't say that it has changed what I've done...I really can't say that it has changed me at all.

Teacher B stated,

I am more aware of what I'm doing. I am more aware because of the goals and expectations. ...the walkthrough just heightens the awareness and it is more specific.

Teacher C stated,

I think it helps teachers get their acts together...I'm more prepared now. I think I get better prepared for my lessons. I am more aware of the standards and the anchor assessments... I think overall it makes you a better teacher because you have to be on your toes...you feel like at any moment he can come in.

Teacher D stated,

I feel more accountable for what I am doing. In the past, the previous principal was never in our classrooms so I never really had any feedback. So, I am more aware of what I am doing.

Teacher E stated,

The walkthrough made us focus more on the curriculum. It stood out to us that we were aligned and in tune and we worked to keep it that way. So, we worked harder at that.

#### Identified Themes for Research Question 5A

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More accountability for teaching and learning.</li><li>• Principal is more aware of what is occurring in the classroom.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More focused on curricular issues.</li><li>• Better understanding of the PA standards and the PSSA.</li><li>• Time on task increased</li><li>• Better prepared for lessons.</li></ul>

**Figure 4: Research Question 5A: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted your teaching?**

In addressing the congruence between the principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective, the researcher asked the teachers to respond to the following question: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted student achievement? Upon analysis of the data,

no consensus theme emerged. Being more aware of the standards was the only supported theme that emerged, however, four individual themes surfaced (Figure 5).

The following excerpts reveal the teachers' perceptions:

Teacher A stated,

From what I do now, I'm in a special area...I am not a classroom teacher. I can't honestly say that it has impacted achievement. I'll give you an example of an indicator. Otto walked in...He didn't come to ask me what I was doing. He walked over to a student. He started asking him questions about what they were doing and why they were doing what they were doing. So, for me, it confirmed that my process was working.

Teacher B stated,

I feel that I'm addressing more specific things probably better because I have more awareness...It's not vague anymore.

Teacher C stated,

That's a tough question. I don't have a strong answer for that because I feel like I care just as much now as I did when the old principal didn't conduct walkthroughs...I guess there would be an impact because I am more aware of the standards...I'm more goal oriented...now I stick to the standards. I think the students are more organized because I am...So, there has to be an improvement in student achievement.

Teacher D stated,

The only thing I can really say about student achievement, that I have noticed, is that, he has become more visible with the walkthrough...more visible in all of the classrooms than the students were ever used to before and they know that they need to behave more.

Teacher E stated,

That's a tough one. I don't know that I ever thought of it from that way. Certainly, if we were, as teachers, are looking more closely at the curriculum, that would carry over into what the kids were doing.

### Identified Themes for Research Question 5B

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More awareness of Pennsylvania Standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No impact on student achievement.</li> <li>• Validation of effective teaching.</li> <li>• Principal is more visible so student behavior has improved.</li> <li>• Looking more closely at the curriculum.</li> </ul>

**Figure 5: Research Question 5B: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted student achievement?**

In addressing the congruence between the principals’ perspective and the teachers’ perspective, the researcher asked the teachers to respond to the following question: What advice would you give to an administrator that was about to implement the walkthrough? Upon analysis of the data, one consensus theme emerged: *the walkthrough is only a snapshot of the lesson and a small part of the day*. Four out of the five teachers cited this response. The only supported theme that emerged from the teachers’ responses was to keep the walkthrough positive. Additionally, there were two individual themes: *Don’t over do it* and *Give a day’s notice* (Figure 6).

The following excerpts reveal the teachers’ perceptions:

Teacher A stated,

Make sure they are aware and their faculty is aware that it’s just a snapshot of those few minutes that they are in the room and they need to be aware that they may have missed what the objective was; they may have missed the instruction so that they are just focusing on that and not making any assumptions...sometimes a full understanding of

what took place was not there...don't write it up as a full observation because you were really can't give them a fair evaluation if you were there for ten minutes.

Teacher B stated,

Keep the positives and emphasize the positive attitude that I'm coming to see what you are doing. It relaxes the teachers. Most teachers are doing good things but when you feel you're being observed for a negative, it makes you more nervous.

Teacher C stated,

If the teacher is not all together in that one class, it doesn't mean that they are not all together any other time during the day. I think it's hard to judge a teacher just by a ten minute walkthrough. Everybody has their off days...give a day's notice of the walkthrough.

Teacher D stated,

I would make sure that when you discuss it with your teachers as a group that they know it's more of a casual walkthrough. They are not going to be able to see everything in ten minutes or so...Make it more of a casual type of a walkthrough, as a friendly advice type of thing.

Teacher E stated,

Don't over do it because I think that makes people not want you there. We've had people who have over done it and the message is negative and once you have that with the walkthrough, you're digging yourself out of a hole to try to make it something positive again. Look for those good things. Don't make them up if they are not there, but try to build someone up when you're doing the walkthroughs and then , if there are serious things, address those in different kinds of ways.

**Identified Themes for Research Question 5C**

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The walkthrough is only a snapshot of the lesson and a small part of the day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't over do it.</li> <li>• Give a day's notice</li> </ul>

**Figure 6: Research Question 5C: What advice would you give to an administrator that was about to implement the walkthrough?**

In addressing the congruence between the principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective, the researcher asked the teachers to respond to the following question: In your own words, what does the walkthrough mean to you? Upon analysis of the data, one consensus theme emerged: *the principal is more aware of what is occurring in classrooms*. Additionally, principal visibility and principal feedback were identified as supported themes. One individual theme arose from the data-*validation of effective teaching practices* (Figure 7). The following excerpts reveal the teachers' perceptions:

Teacher A stated,

To me it's just a snapshot of what is happening in the classroom. It's a snapshot of what you're doing... a brief glimpse of what is happening at that time in your room

Teacher B stated,

It is nice that the principal is aware of what is going on in the building. The principal is very visible and it means that she is a visitor in my classroom and is coming in to see what is going on which is good for her to know, to be aware, but also she can offer constructive criticism or notice things that I'm doing or add to, give suggestions.

Teacher C stated,

The walkthrough allows the principal to come into the classroom, take a look at the objectives, make sure the kids are on task...he wants the kids to see his face in the room...visibility is the big thing.

Teacher D stated,

When the walkthrough occurs, the principal walks in and starts to take notes on what he's observing the children doing and what you as the teacher are doing. He has given us a list of things that he's looking for and he usually is looking for one specific thing at a time...I like the walkthroughs because I feel that I am able to get more feedback and that the principal is more aware of what's going on in the classroom and how things are being taught...He is always up to date with what is going on in the classroom.

Teacher E stated,

For me it meant validation. It made you feel good about what you were doing. I think the walkthrough is excellent.

**Identified Themes for Research Question 5D**

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal is more aware of what is happening in the classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal visibility.</li> <li>• Principal feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation of effective practice.</li> </ul>

**Figure 7: Research Question 5D: In your own words, what does the walkthrough mean to you?**

In addressing the congruence between the principals’ perspective and the teachers’ perspective, the researcher asked the teachers to respond to the following question: What kind of feedback do you get from the principal after a walkthrough? Upon analysis of the teachers’ responses, one consensus theme emerged-*principals provide written feedback to teachers*. Two supported themes emerged as well-*principals provide verbal feedback and remain positive with the comments*. No individual themes emerged (Figure 8). The following excerpts reveal the teachers’ responses:

Teacher A stated,

You usually get a brief write-up, nothing very specific...the principal gives a positive comment.

Teacher B stated,

We get an email. She writes up her report so we see it and if we want to discuss anything with her, we can, but it’s not like a formal observation form...she is open to talking.

Teacher C stated,

The principal sends the form by email. We know exactly what it looks like

Teacher D stated,

We sit down with him and have a one-on-one meeting and he will give us a paper of any notes that he has taken and most of it is positive with a little bit of constructive criticism that he might offer.

Teacher E stated,

We get a lot of verbal feedback and notes in our mailboxes.

**Identified Themes for Research Question 5E**

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal</li> <li>• Positive feedback</li> </ul>	

**Figure 8: Research Question 5E: What type of feedback do you receive from the principal?**

In addressing the congruence between the principals’ perspectives and teachers’ perspectives on the walkthroughs impact on student achievement, the participants were asked to identify indicators of how the walkthrough has affected student achievement. The principals and teachers mentioned several indicators; however, they did not use the same words to describe the impact. The teachers had one supported theme, an awareness of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards, whereas, the principals identified seven supported themes. None of the principals specifically mentioned the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in response to the question on the walkthroughs impact on student achievement. None of the principal’s consensus or supported themes matched the teachers’ themes. Table 5 illustrates the congruence between the principals and teachers’ perspectives of the impact of the walkthrough on student achievement.

**Table 5: A Comparison of the Indicators of How the Walkthrough Affects Instruction.**

<b>All Supported Themes</b>	<b>Principals' Responses</b>	<b>Teachers' Responses</b>
Test scores have improved	Supported	Not Identified
Focused on best practices.	Supported	Not Identified
Student time on task increased.	Supported	Not Identified
Quality of student work	Supported	Not Identified
Focused on look-fors.	Supported	Not Identified
More dialogue between teachers and principals.	Supported	Not Identified
Improved teacher practices.	Supported	Not Identified
More aware of the Pennsylvania Standards	Not Identified	Supported

Note: Research Question 5F: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough affects student achievement?

In addressing the congruence between the principals and teachers' perspectives about the walkthroughs impact on instruction, the participants were asked to identify indicators of how the walkthrough has affected instruction. Upon analysis of the principals and teachers' responses, three similar themes emerged: *better handle on curricular issues*, *student time on task increased*, and *principals are more aware of classroom practices*. Both curriculum and time on task were supported themes from the perspectives of the principals and teachers. The principals being more aware of classroom practices was identified as a consensus theme by the principals and a supported theme by the teachers. Table 6 shows the congruence between the principals and teachers' perspectives of the impact of the walkthrough on instruction.

**Table 6: A Comparison of Similar Themes**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Principals' Indicators</b>	<b>Teachers' Indicators</b>
Curriculum	Supported	Supported
Time on task	Supported	Supported
Principal is more aware of classroom practices.	Consensus	Supported

Note: Research Question 5G- Principal and teacher's responses: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough affects instruction?

Upon further analysis of the data regarding the walkthroughs impact on instruction, the researcher identified several individual noteworthy themes that emerged from the interviews of the principals and teachers. These individual themes are outlined in Table 7. The indicators that were stated by the participants can be found in the first column. The principals' identified themes are listed in column two, while the teachers' identified themes are listed in column three.

**Table 7: A Comparison of Individual Themes of How the Walkthrough Affects Instruction.**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Principals' Indicators</b>	<b>Teachers' Indicators</b>
Understanding of Pennsylvania Standards	Not identified	Individual
Better prepared to teach	Supported	Individual
Teachers share best practices	Supported	Not Identified
More accountability	Not identified	Supported
Principal has better understanding of professional development needs.	Supported	Not Identified
Student work has improved	Supported	Not Identified
Quality of conversations around instruction has improved	Supported	Not Identified
Common language around instructional practices.	Supported	Not Identified

Note: Research Question 5E- A comparison of the indicators from the principals and teachers' responses: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough affects instruction?

#### **4.3.6 Research Question 6: How has the walkthrough affected elementary principals as instructional leaders?**

To acquire the data to answer research question five, the researcher asked the following question: How are walkthroughs impacting you as an instructional leader?

Upon analysis of the collected data, there were two consensus, six supported, and six individual themes (Figure 9). All of the principals cited that the walkthrough has allowed them to know what is happening in the classrooms and that they have more data to share with teachers. Several supported themes emerged from the principals' responses. Many of the themes dealt with the principals' ability to know and understand curricular and instructional issues. The following are the supported themes from the principals: the walkthrough demonstrates to teachers that the principals want to work in a collaborative manner, the walkthrough assist principals with understanding what teachers go through on a daily basis, the walkthrough allows principals to have a better understanding of the professional development needs in the building, the walkthrough enables teachers to have a better grasp of the curriculum, and the walkthrough allows principals to have more meaningful conversations with teachers.

Several individual themes emerged as well: can identify which teachers need supported (Principal G); can identify master teachers (Principal G); better rapport with teachers (Principal A); visibility made it real (Principal C); can collectively research best practices (Principal B); and principal is viewed as a teacher too (Principal B).

The following excerpts reveal the principals' perceptions,

Principal A stated,

It has given me different approaches to improve achievement in the building and to develop a better rapport with the staff to the point that they are working with me to fix some of the problems with achievement in the building.

Principal B stated,

The more opportunities I have to get into the classrooms, the more information I have to talk with teachers about and the more that we collectively research good practice and talk about good practice and tap in on each others' experiences and practices ...They just don't come to talk with me about discipline problems, they come to talk about instruction.

Principal C stated,

I think, probably, it helped me look at how I organize things differently-I think we have always tried to work from the standpoint of we have to do this together; we have to do it collaboratively. I think the walkthrough makes you more visible to staff and so that whole idea of it isn't just you, it's us, becomes a little bit more real. It's not just walk, it's action...

Principal D stated,

Well, definitely it's shown staff that being a principal is not just being a manager. It's being an instructional leader. It's giving them the confidence to know that as the principal, I know what they go through everyday and what their needs are and the resources they need. I think when they see it start with the principal, it just sends a message to staff.

Principal E stated,

It has caused me to focus more on instruction. I have a better focus... My conversation with the teachers is the important thing.

Principal F stated,

Oh, it definitely makes me more aware of what is going on in the classroom. I think that it helps me understand what is going on instructionally with the teachers, what we need to do with professional development; how the kids are learning and what we can do to increase these areas.

Principal G stated,

It definitely gets me into the rooms to see what’s going on. It helped me to learn the curriculum because I only taught second and third grade. It’s helped me to see who needs help and to share during our professional development time the great things that are happening in the classrooms.

**Identified Themes for Research Question 6**

<b>Consensus Themes</b>	<b>Supported Themes</b>	<b>Individual Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals are more aware of what is occurring in the classrooms.</li> <li>• Principals have more data to share with teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The walkthrough shows the teachers that the principal wants to work collaboratively.</li> <li>• Walkthrough helps principals understand what teachers go through on a daily basis.</li> <li>• Better understanding of teacher’s needs.</li> <li>• Better understanding of professional development needs at the building level.</li> <li>• More meaningful conversations with teachers.</li> <li>• Know the curriculum better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can identify which teachers need support</li> <li>• Can identify master teachers.</li> <li>• Developed a better rapport with staff.</li> <li>• Visibility made it real. Not just talk.</li> <li>• Collectively research best practices with staff.</li> <li>• Viewed as a teacher</li> </ul>

**Figure 9: Research Question 6-Impact of the walkthrough on elementary principals.**

### **4.3.7 Research Question 7: What is the congruence between this study of elementary principals and Keruskin’s study of High School Principals?**

The researcher applied Keruskin’s methodology to this study and asked the same interview questions of the participants. Keruskin’s focus was on the perceptions of high school principals, whereas the researcher of this study focused on the perceptions of elementary school principals. The following sections will delineate themes between the high school principals’ perceptions and the elementary principals’ perceptions. The researcher addressed the following topics in comparing Keruskin’s study: the walkthroughs impact on instruction, the walkthroughs impact on student achievement, the walkthroughs impact on principals as instructional leaders, the most important steps or procedures for successful implementation, the look-fors, the feedback given to teachers, and the amount of time spent in classrooms.

#### **4.3.7.1 A Comparison: The Walkthroughs Impact on Instruction**

The high school principals in Keruskin’s study primarily focused on the importance of the look-fors and its impact on instruction. A consensus theme for the high school principals was, “Look fors improve instruction--walkthroughs are a tool to make sure teachers are focusing on the look-fors” (Keruskin, 2006, p. 66). The elementary principals in this study had two supported themes: Teachers share best practices and principals are more aware of what is happening in the classroom.

There were two similar themes from high school principals and the elementary principals. The first similar theme dealt with professional development. Keruskin reported a supported theme that data collected during the walkthrough provides a focus on professional development

days. Similarly, the elementary principals indicated that they have a better understanding of professional development needs (supported theme).

The second similar theme between the high school and elementary principals was collaboration around best practices. Keruskin reported, “There is a collaboration of best practices and observing those practices throughout the school” (p. 67). The elementary principals reported that teachers share best practices with one another (consensus theme). Refer to Figure 12 for a delineation of the similarities and differences between the high school and elementary principals’ perceptions of the impact of the walkthrough on instruction.

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS		ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Look-fors improve instruction” (p. 66).</li> <li>• The habit (look-fors) starts to permeate throughout the classrooms and the school” (p. 66).</li> <li>• “Teachers are practicing the look-fors defined at the beginning of the year” (p. 66).</li> <li>• “Last years look-fors are old news; they are simply a habit” (p. 66).</li> </ul> <p>Keruskin (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected data from the walkthroughs assist principals with professional development needs.</li> <li>• Collaboration and sharing of best practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher time on task has increased.</li> <li>• Principal has a better understanding of curricular gaps and inconsistencies.</li> <li>• Improvement in the quality of student work.</li> <li>• Developed a common language around instruction.</li> </ul>

**Figure 10: Research Question 7 A: A comparison of the perceptions of high school and elementary principals on the walkthrough’s impact on instruction.**

#### **4.3.7.2 A Comparison: The Walkthroughs Impact on Student Achievement.**

Keruskina found an increase in test scores as a consensus theme from the high school principals. Similarly, the elementary principals' responses indicated a supported theme in regards to an improvement in test scores (Figure 11). This was the extent of the similarities between the high school principals and elementary principals. The high school principals reported an increase in SAT scores and less students failing courses, thus reflecting secondary education issues. Refer to Figure 15 for a delineation of the similarities and differences between the high school and elementary principals' perceptions on the impact of the walkthrough on student achievement.

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS		ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Fully accredited by the Virginia Department of education” (p. 68).</li> <li>• “Increase in SOL scores” (p. 68).</li> <li>• “Less students being recycled” (p. 68).</li> <li>• “Less students failing courses” (p. 68).</li> <li>• “Increase of students attending 2 or 4 year colleges” (p. 68).</li> <li>• “Increase in SAT scores” (p. 68).</li> </ul> <p>Keruskin (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in test scores.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores have improved.</li> <li>• Teachers are more focused on best practices.</li> <li>• Student time on task increased.</li> <li>• Quality of student work has improved.</li> <li>• Teachers are more focused on the look-fors.</li> <li>• More dialogue between teachers and principals regarding instruction and student achievement.</li> <li>• Improved teacher practices.</li> </ul>

**Figure 11: Research Question 7B: A comparison of the perceptions of high school and elementary principals on the walkthrough's impact on student achievement.**

#### **4.3.7.3 A Comparison: The Walkthroughs Impact on Principals as Instructional Leaders.**

The high school principals and the elementary principals each had one consensus theme; however, the themes were not similar (Figure 12). The high school principals in Keruskin’s study indicated that the walkthrough forces them to get into classrooms, whereas, the

elementary principals in this study reported that the walkthrough allows them to have a better understanding of what is occurring in the classroom (consensus theme).

The researcher noted an implicit theme between the two studies. Keruskin found that the walkthroughs enabled the high school principals to gather data and use it to assist teachers (supported theme). The elementary principals indicated that the walkthrough enables them to have a better understanding of the teacher’s needs (supported theme) and a better understanding of the professional development needs in the building (supported theme).

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS		ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It forces or pressures you to get into classrooms” (p. 70).</li> <li>• “The look-fors help me focus on the school’s needs which puts me into an instructional leader position” (p. 70).</li> <li>• Listening to debriefing sessions results in more tools in my box to assist teachers” (p. 70).</li> </ul> <p>Keruskin (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The walkthrough enables principals to use <i>data</i> to assist teachers with informing their instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The walkthrough shows the teachers that the principal wants to work collaboratively.</li> <li>• Walkthrough helps principals understand what teachers go through on a daily basis.</li> <li>• Better understanding of teacher’s needs.</li> <li>• Better understanding of professional development needs at the building level.</li> <li>• More meaningful conversations with teachers.</li> <li>• Know the curriculum better.</li> </ul>

**Figure 12: Research Question 7C: A comparison of the perceptions of high school and elementary principals on the walkthrough’s impact on principals as instructional leaders.**

**4.3.7.4 A Comparison: The Most Important Steps of the Walkthrough for Successful Implementation.**

The researcher analyzed Keruskin’s themes with the themes that emerged from this study (Figure 13). No themes were explicitly determined, however, there was some correlation around look-fors and dealing with staff, and educating staff about the walkthrough process. In Keruskin’s study, the high school principals indicated that the teachers collectively create the look-fors for the walkthrough (consensus theme). The elementary principals in this study reported that having a focus, the look-fors, is vitally important for successful implementation (supported theme). Keruskin’s second theme reported that principals must educate the staff about the walkthrough (supported). Similarly, in this study, the elementary principals indicated three supported themes that implicitly correlate with Keruskin’s findings: consistency, trust, and communication.

<b>HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS</b>		<b>ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS</b>
<b>DIFFERENCES</b>	<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>DIFFERENCES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Teachers collectively create the look-fors for the walkthrough too” (p. 56).</li> </ul> <p>Keruskin (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look-fors are important.</li> <li>• Educate and establish a walkthrough protocol.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the positive.</li> <li>• Establish look fors.</li> <li>• Consistency.</li> <li>• Provide feedback.</li> <li>• Build trust</li> <li>• Validate effective teaching.</li> <li>• Be clear.</li> </ul>

**Figure 13: Research Question 7D: A comparison of the most important steps for successful implementation.**

#### 4.3.7.5 A Comparison: The Look-fors.

Upon analysis of Keruskin’s themes and the themes that emerged from this study, two similarities were revealed: clear expectations and student engagement. These themes were labeled as supported themes in both studies (Figure 14). Additionally, Keruskin reported no consensus themes, whereas, the researcher in this study reported one consensus theme—classroom management.

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS		ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Written objective or measurable goal” (p. 59).</li> <li>• “Higher order thinking skills” (p. 59).</li> </ul> <p>Keruskin (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student engagement.</li> <li>• Clear expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time on task</li> <li>• Instructional strategies</li> <li>• Curriculum issues.</li> <li>• Academic rigor.</li> <li>• Classroom management.</li> </ul>

**Figure 14: Research Question 7E: A comparison of the high school and elementary principals’ look-fors.**

#### 4.3.7.6 A Comparison: Feedback Given to Teachers.

After analyzing the consensus and supported themes from Keruskin’s study and this study, the researcher found similarities in the way principals provide feedback (Figure 15). Keruskin identified two consensus themes. Principals distribute a look-for sheet to each teacher upon completion of the walkthrough, and secondly, debriefing round table discussions are held. The elementary principals collectively provide written and verbal feedback to teachers (consensus theme). Keruskin reported that the high school teachers also email, debrief with lead teachers, distribute the results of the walkthrough in the weekly newsletter, and conduct walkthroughs and debriefings with new teachers.

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS		ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Debriefing roundtable discussion” (p. 61).</li> <li>• “Results of the walkthroughs posted on weekly newsletter” (p. 61).</li> <li>• “New teachers’ walkthroughs and debriefings” (p. 61).</li> <li>• “Debriefing by lead teachers on what was observed in their visits” (p. 61).</li> </ul> <p>Keruskin (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal</li> <li>• Written-Look-for sheet</li> <li>• Email</li> </ul>	<p>*Note-Elementary principals responded verbal, written, and email.</p>

**Figure 15: Research Question 7F: Type of feedback given to teachers.**

#### 4.3.7.7 A Comparison: Time Spent in Classrooms

Upon analysis of the Keruskin’s study involving high school principals and the elementary principals in this study, some similarities exist. Neither study reported a consensus theme and most responses consisted of a time range, not a specific amount of time (Figure 16). For instance, Keruskin indicated the high school principals spend 5-10 minutes and 10 minutes in each classroom (supported themes). The elementary principals reported that they spend 10-15 minutes in each classroom (supported theme). However, several individual themes emerged from the elementary principals: 20 minutes, 5-10 minutes, 15-20 minutes, 20-25 minutes, and 20 minutes.

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS		ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS
DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 minutes.</li> <li>• 5-10 minutes</li> </ul> Keruskin (2005)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10-15 minutes</li> </ul>

**Figure 16: Research Question 7G: Time spent in classrooms with each walkthrough.**

## **5.0 CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS, PERSONAL REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapter Five of this dissertation restates the problem statement and reviews the major methods used in the study. Subsequent sections will summarize the results of each research question, discuss the results, include a personal reflection from the researcher, provide recommendations for elementary principals, and include recommendations for further research.

The researcher contacted Joseph Werlinich and Otto Graf, Co-directors of the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy for names of principals to invite for participation in this study. Werlinich and Graf had firsthand knowledge of principals who conduct walkthrough in Western Pennsylvania. The researcher has been a member of the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy since 2002. The researcher has attended several walkthrough seminars facilitated by Joseph Werlinich and Otto Graf. As a result, the researcher was able to participate in a group walkthrough and a debriefing in a suburban Western Pennsylvania School. Additionally, the researcher participated in a yearlong group walkthrough facilitated by Joseph Werlinich and the superintendent of the researcher's district. Finally, in order to prepare for this study, the researcher participated in a walkthrough with one of the participants of this study.

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to focus on elementary principals using the walkthrough model and to evaluate how the walkthrough model improves student learning. The goal was to identify the key indicators of success from elementary school

principals that use the Walkthrough Observation Tool from the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania. This study was a replication of Todd Keruskin's 2006 study entitled, *The Perceptions of High School Principals on Student Achievement by Conducting Walkthroughs*. According to Best & Kahn (2003), "Replication, a combination of terms, repetition, and duplication, is an important method of challenging or verifying the conclusions of previous studies" (p. 137).

For this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative design. Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore and analyze individual and collective beliefs, values, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews because it was the most appropriate way to analyze the beliefs, values, and perceptions of the participants.

To acquire the data, the study relied on face-to-face interviews of principals and teachers. The researcher interviewed seven principals and five teachers over a three-month period. The principals and teachers' responses were taped, transcribed, and then were coded. The researcher used content analysis to analyze the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify three ways to code themes: consensus themes- when the majority of the participants state the same theme, supported themes- when approximately half of the participants state a theme, and individual themes- when only one or two participants state a theme.

The following section addresses each research question with regard to the elementary principal interviews and the related literature. The literature, Keruskin's study, and similar studies support the findings of this study.

## **5.1 The Walkthrough**

Although there are various approaches to the classroom walkthrough, the literature review reveals that commonalities exist. Essentially, walkthroughs are frequent, brief, focused visits that allow the principal to gather observational data about curricular issues, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. The walkthrough enables principals to promote teaching and learning and to become instructional leaders within their respective schools. The walkthrough is collaborative in nature and reduces isolation of teachers by actively engaging them in the process. In fact, Blasé and Blasé (2000) asked teachers to describe principals who have had a positive impact on student learning. They identified two themes: talking with teachers and promoting professional development, as the behaviors that support student learning. In addition, Stiggins & Duke's (2000) case study indicated that teachers want their principals to be more visible in the classrooms, conducting informal and formal observations and providing feedback to the staff.

As explained in Chapter 2 of this study, different walkthrough models exist, however, several common elements can be identified between them: visits are brief and focused, observations examine effective instructional practices, observers gather data about teaching and learning, and debriefings or follow-ups occur. This study focused on the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy's Walkthrough model designed by Otto Graf and Joseph Werlinich of the University of Pittsburgh. The following section will address each research question.

### **5.1.1 Addressing the First Research Question: What are the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs that are identified by the elementary school principals?**

The classroom walkthrough is a tool principals can use to gather important data about instruction, curriculum, and the performance of the students. However, there needs to be a process in place to implement the walkthrough to ensure understanding of the purpose and to create a collaborative learning community. Without proper planning and lack of teacher understanding, the walkthroughs full potential will not be realized. The principal may just become more visible, thus not taking full advantage of the power of the walkthrough. To avoid this pitfall, Graf and Werlinich (2004) insist on a 14-step process for implementation. They contend that principals must conduct walkthroughs on a consistent basis in order for it to be truly effective. Furthermore, Graf and Werlinich posit that validating effective practice, establishing look-fors, communicating to staff, setting guidelines and expectations, and collecting data are key elements and procedures of walkthroughs.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the interviewed principals support the key points of Graf and Werlinich's walkthrough process. The principals identified six consensus, two supported, and seven individual themes that are congruent with the Principals Academy's model.

Consensus themes included:

- Focus on the positive
- Establish look-fors
- Be consistent
- Build trust
- Establish expectations and guidelines for the walkthrough

Supported themes included:

- Validate effective teaching
- Be clear

Individual themes included:

- Conduct in a non-threatening manner
- Build rapport
- Conduct walkthrough meetings
- Look at the data
- Discuss the walkthrough process with the union
- Discuss the walkthrough process as an administrative team
- Don't make assumptions

It was evident that all of the elementary principals understood the key elements and procedures of the walkthrough. The five consensus and two supported themes substantiate this assertion. Additionally, the researcher conducted separate interviews and yet the elementary principals used the same language when they were describing their walkthrough process.

Upon reflecting on research question 1 and the key elements and procedures of walkthroughs, the researcher asserts that the walkthrough is a process that requires collaboration and collegiality from its participants. Each theme listed above, whether consensus, supported, or individual, made sense to me. Any principal wanting to implement the classroom walkthrough could learn a great deal of information by reading the themes that were identified by the elementary principals.

### **5.1.2 Addressing the Second Research Question: What elements and procedures appear in the Principals Academy walkthrough protocol but do not appear in the elementary principals' walkthrough?**

Graf and Werlinich advocate a 14-step process for implementing their walkthrough model. These steps are explained in detail in Chapter 2. In addition to the 14 steps, Graf and Werlinich also established seven objectives of the walkthrough:

1. To learn more about instruction and learning.
2. To validate effective practice.
3. To create a community of learners.
4. To open the school and classroom to all staff.
5. To focus teachers and the principal on student work and the learning process.
6. To improve decision-making about instruction and learning.
7. To design more useful professional growth opportunities.

These seven objectives pave the way for the implementation of the 14 steps and clearly articulate the purpose for the walkthrough.

The elementary principals' implementation of the walkthrough varied little from Graf and Werlinich's process. All of the 14-steps either were a consensus or a supported theme, indicating to the researcher that the elementary principals did stay true to the process for implementation. However, certain principals did have more well-established and formal procedures than others. For instance, Principal D conducts focused walkthrough grade level meetings to establish procedures and look-fors, while Principal E's district established look-for meetings with staff. Conversely, Principal C keeps the walkthrough as informal as possible.

The following steps were identified by the elementary principals as consensus themes:

- Establish a focus for subsequent visits (step 4)
- Connect the look-fors with established standards (step 5)
- Identify the type of data to be collected (step 7)
- Collect the data (step 8)
- Observe student behaviors (step 9)
- Validate effective practice (step 10)
- Create a culture embedded in improving teaching and learning (step 14)

The following steps were identified as supported themes :

- Conduct a preliminary walkthrough (step 1)
- Conduct a walkthrough meeting with staff (step 2)
- Establish guidelines for all participants (step 3)
- Schedule the walkthrough (step 6)
- Debrief with teachers (step 11)
- Utilize a variety of strategies to debrief (step 12)
- Coach each other (step 13)

No individual themes emerged.

In summary, the Western Pennsylvania Principals Academy advocates using a 14-step process to implement the classroom walkthrough. Upon analysis of the data, it was clear that the elementary principals support the Academy's process for implementation of the walkthrough. The consensus and supported themes outlined above corroborate the academy's process.

As I reflect on research question 2 and the 14-step process identified by the Principals Academy of Western Pennsylvania, I realized that principals adapted the Academy's process to

meet their individual school and district needs. Not one of the principals used the entire 14-step process and there are at least three reasons for this: time, teachers' union, and district supervision model. This researcher feels that principals should try to maintain the spirit of the Academy's process to try to avoid the many pitfalls and obstacles that can accompany any new initiative.

### **5.1.3 Addressing the Third Research Question: What are the indicators identified by the elementary principals of how the walkthrough impacts student achievement?**

There is not much literature regarding the impact of the walkthrough on student achievement. However, there is relevant literature on the walkthroughs impact on things that can affect student achievement. For instance, Cambron-McCabe, et al, (2005) assert that strong building leadership is the catalyst for improving student achievement. Furthermore, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found a relationship between leadership and student achievement. The authors describe several leadership qualities that promote student learning. Of the twenty-one leadership qualities they report, six of them correspond to the classroom walkthrough:

1. *Situational awareness*-principal is aware of what is happening in the classroom; insightful, proactive.
2. *Intellectual stimulation*- principal engages teachers in substantive dialogue around current trends and best practices.
3. *Monitors and Evaluates*- principal can effectively monitor and supervise instructional practices and its impact on student achievement.
4. *Visibility*- principals visit classrooms regularly and maintain sincere and meaningful interactions with staff.

5. *Input*-principals solicit and involve teachers in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs.
6. *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*- principals are actively engaged in the teaching and learning process.

While there were no consensus themes found in this research question, seven supported themes emerged: test scores have improved, teachers are more aware of best practices, student time on task increased, quality of student work improved, teachers are more focused on the look-fors, more dialogue between teachers and principals, and improved teacher practices. The majority of the principals supported the idea that teacher practices affect student achievement. Principal B stated that, “good teacher practices directly relates to higher student achievement.” Principals E, F, and G reported that the walkthrough enables them to work through and with the teachers to impact student achievement. Although an improvement in test scores was a supported theme, the principals could not unequivocally conclude if the walkthrough was the sole reason for this improvement.

In summary, the data analysis reveals, implicitly in some case, that the walkthrough can have a positive impact on student learning. The seven supported themes listed above substantiate this assertion.

After reflecting upon the walkthroughs impact on student achievement, this researcher realizes that the walkthrough makes a difference. Although “hard data” was not available to the researcher from the principals, they all felt that the walkthrough impacted student achievement. This particular research question kept me thinking about Waters, Marzano, and McNulty’s 2003 study of leadership qualities and student achievement. To me, the walkthrough is a natural

complement to the aforementioned study. For instance, when principals conduct walkthroughs, they have situational awareness, they can create an environment of intellectual stimulation, they can effectively monitor and supervise instructional practices, they are more visible and maintain meaningful interaction with teachers, they solicit input and involve teachers, and finally, they are engaged in the teaching and learning process.

#### **5.1.4 Addressing the Fourth Research Question: What are the indicators of how the walkthrough impact instruction?**

The research indicates that teacher effectiveness has a profound impact on student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty 2003; Frase, 2005; English, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005). More specifically, Sanders and Rivers (1997) contend that nothing is more important to student achievement than the quality of the teacher. Many research studies support the belief that the quality of instruction and student achievement are highly connected (Ferguson and Ladd, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sanders and Rivers, 1997, and Haycock, 1998). The classroom walkthrough serves as a means for principals to observe firsthand the instruction that is occurring in the classrooms. By visiting classrooms consistently and in a structured manner, principals are communicating to staff that instruction is important.

In terms of addressing this research question and the walkthroughs impact on instruction, the data suggest that principals are more aware of the actual teaching that is occurring in the classrooms and that teachers are sharing best practices with one another. Both were identified as consensus themes. Principal B adamantly reported that the walkthrough does impact instruction. "...teachers have a chance to talk with one another, to share best practices, to help support each other-those are indicators, people are talking more about instruction, they are talking more about

good practice.” The principal went on to remark that the walkthrough provides her with specific information that she can talk with teachers about and that the collegiality with the staff has improved. Principal C asserts that the walkthrough has improved her ability to communicate with staff because it has given her a common language around instruction. She reports that the quality of conversation about instructional has improved because of the walkthrough. Principal E provides an example of how the walkthrough made a positive impact on a teacher. The principal reported that during her walkthrough she noticed that one of her novice teachers was not effectively teaching the writing process to the students. Principal E reported that the teacher was, “way, way, way off target.” Through the debriefing, the principal was able to share some strategies for teaching writing and to have her observe other teachers . Principal E reported that after a month of coaching and dialoguing, the teacher’s approach to teaching writing improved dramatically. Principal E stated that the walkthrough enabled her to have firsthand information to share with this teacher. Principal F had similar things to share in regards to the walkthroughs impact on instruction. Through the walkthroughs, he observed inconsistencies in the way the teachers were using the school’s writing framework. He was able to create grade level teams to address this issue. Principal F ardently reported, “I would have never picked up on it, on the writing especially. There is no question about it. I would never have been able to pick up on it.”

The following steps were identified by the elementary principals as consensus themes:

- Teachers are sharing best practices.
- Principals are more aware of what is happening in the classroom.

The following steps were identified by the elementary principals as supported themes:

- Teacher time on task has increased.
- Principals have a better understanding of curriculum gaps and inconsistencies.
- Principals have a better understanding of professional development needs.
- Improvement in the quality of student work.
- Better quality of conversations about instruction.
- Developed a common language around instruction.

The following steps were identified by the elementary principals as individual themes:

- More differentiated lessons.
- More integration of technology.
- Principals are better able to pair teachers for coaching and mentoring opportunities.
- Better follow through with building initiatives.
- Pennsylvania Academic Standards are more obvious in the classroom.

In summary, the walkthroughs impact on instruction is apparent. Teachers are sharing best practices and principals are definitely more aware of what is happening in the classrooms. In addition, the walkthrough has enabled principals to have better conversations with teachers, professional development needs have been addressed, time on task has increased, and principals are better suited to identify curricular inconsistencies.

Upon reflection of research question 4, this researcher wonders why more principals do not conduct walkthroughs, and why more school districts do not adopt a differentiated supervision models that includes the classroom walkthrough. This researcher realizes that more and more school districts are moving towards a differentiated model of supervision and that the

walkthrough is gaining popularity. Is there a better way to observe teaching and learning? Team meetings, formal classroom observations, and individual teacher conferences are all worthwhile endeavors, but this researcher contends that they cannot substitute for firsthand observational data that the walkthrough provides.

#### **5.1.5 Addressing the Fifth Research Question: What is the congruence between the principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective with respect to the walkthroughs impact on teaching and learning?**

The congruence between the principals' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives with respect to the walkthroughs impact on student achievement was limited. The principals identified seven supported themes while the teachers identified one supported theme. None of the themes were congruent.

The principals identified the following supported themes:

- Test scores improved
- Teachers focused on best practices
- Student time on task increased
- Quality of student work
- Teachers focused on the look-fors
- More dialogue between principals and teachers
- Improved teacher practices

The teachers identified the following supported theme:

- More aware of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards

Three noteworthy individual themes emerged from the teachers:

- Validation of effective practices
- Student behavior has improved
- Principals and teachers are looking more closely at the curriculum

It is interesting to note the differences in the principals and teachers' perceptions of the walkthroughs impact on student achievement. The data indicate that principals place more credence on the classroom walkthroughs impact on student learning than do the teachers.

In addressing the research question in regards to the congruence of the principals and teachers' perspectives of the walkthroughs impact on instruction, three themes emerged: curriculum, time on task, and principal awareness of classroom practices. The teachers and principals agreed that *curriculum* and *time on task* were outcomes of the walkthrough and impacted instruction. Both were identified as supported themes. In regards to the third theme, *principals are more aware of classroom practice*, principals indicated it as a consensus theme, while the teachers identified it as a supported theme.

In summary, the impact of the classroom walkthrough on student achievement and instruction was limited when the data were compared and contrasted to the responses from principals and teachers. Although some commonalities exist, the principals identified several more themes than the teachers did. The teachers' responses were limited.

Upon reflection of research question 5, the researcher would have liked to have had more of a broad based sample of teachers. Since the principals selected the teachers, the researcher really had no input into the selection process. The researcher sensed that the teachers' understanding of the walkthrough differed from that of the principals. The principals used term like "best practices," "increase in test scores," "increase in time on task," "improvement in the

quality of student work,” and “more dialogue.” This researcher wonders why the teachers did not indicate any of these. From the researcher’s perspective, it seems like the teachers were intensely focused on the Pennsylvania Academic Standards and being better prepared for lessons.

### **5.1.6 Addressing the Sixth Research Question: How has the walkthrough affected elementary principals as instructional leaders?**

Instructional leaders need to ensure that high quality instruction is taking place in classrooms. Principals can accomplish this by modeling best practices, monitoring the implementation of the curriculum, providing resources to teachers, examining data, and being visible in classrooms. More specifically, Smith and Andrews (1989) assert that there are four areas of instructional leadership that can impact student achievement:

1. Principals being a resources provider
2. Principal being an instructional resources
3. Principals being a communicator
4. Principals being a visible presence in the classroom

The data suggest that the walkthrough impacts principals as instructional leaders. A total of 14 themes emerged: 2 consensus, 6 supported, and 6 individual.

The two consensus themes identified by the principals included:

- Principals are more aware of what is occurring in the classrooms
- Principals have more specific data to share with teachers.

Principal B passionately remarked,

The more opportunities I have to get into classrooms, the more information I have to talk with teachers about, the more that we collectively research good practices and talk about good practice and tap into each other's experiences... They see me as a teacher. I'll always be a teacher...when people see you as a teacher too... that impacts your role as an instructional leader.

The six consensus themes identified by the principals included:

- Shows the teachers that the principal wants to work collaboratively.
- Helps the principal understand what teachers go through on a daily basis.
- The principal has a better understanding of teachers' needs.
- The principal has a better understanding of professional development needs.
- The principal has better and more meaningful conversations with teachers.
- The principal knows the curriculum better.

Principal E stated that it was about the conversations that she was having with teachers that made the biggest impact on her as an instructional leader. Principal C commented that the walkthrough made it real for her faculty. She identified that the walkthrough forced her to reexamine how she was organizing things and worked from the standpoint of, "...we are in this together, we have to do it collaboratively... it's just not you, it's us.

Finally, six significant individual themes emerged from the data:

- Principals were able to identify which teachers needed support.
- Principals were able to identify master teachers.
- Principals were able to develop a better rapport with staff
- Principals were able to be more visible which made it real for the teachers.
- Principals were able to research best practices with staff.
- Principals were able to be viewed as a teacher too

Upon reflection of research question 6, the researcher understands the importance of the walkthrough on instructional leadership. The researcher wonders how principals can be seen as instructional leaders if they are not visiting classrooms on a regular basis and providing meaningful feedback to teachers. During the interviews, each principal provided a specific example of how the walkthrough allowed them to see things that they otherwise would have missed. The researcher wonders how principals can accurately determine instructional inconsistencies and curriculum gaps if they do not conduct walkthroughs.

#### **5.1.7 Addressing the Seventh Research Question: What is the congruence between the perceptions of high school principals (Keruskin’s study) and the perceptions of elementary principals?**

Since this is a replication of Keruskin’s study, the researcher analyzed the results of his study with the results of this study. Keruskin focused on high school principals using the walkthrough, while the researcher of this study focused on elementary principals using the walkthrough. Keruskin interviewed five principals and the Assistant Superintendent from the Newport News Public Schools in Virginia. The researcher of this study interviewed seven principals from six school districts in Western Pennsylvania. Two of the elementary principals interviewed were from the same school district, but were principals of different schools.

The researcher analyzed seven topics to determine the congruence between the high school principals and elementary principals. The seven topics included:

1. The walkthroughs impact on student achievement
2. The walkthroughs impact on instruction
3. The walkthroughs impact on principals as instructional leader
4. The most important steps or procedures for successful implementation
5. The look-fors identified by the principals
6. The type of feedback given to teachers
7. The amount of time spent in classrooms

The researcher identified one similarity between the high school principals and elementary principals regarding the walkthroughs impact on student achievement: an increase in test scores. The remaining themes from the high school principals focused primarily on secondary issues such as, fewer students being recycled, less students failing, an increase of students attending 2 or 4 year colleges, and an increase in SAT scores. Conversely, the elementary principals identified more classroom specific items such as: teachers are more focused on best practices, student time on task increased, quality of student work improved, teachers are more focused on the look fors, more dialogue between teachers and principals, and improved teacher practices.

The second topic analyzed was the walkthroughs impact on instruction. The researcher identified two similarities between the high school principals and the elementary principals:

1. Collected data from the walkthrough assist principals with professional development needs.
2. Collaboration between principals and teachers and the sharing of best practices.

There were several differences between the high school principals and elementary principals. The high school principals focused primarily on the impact of the look-fors. They identified four themes: Look-fors improve instruction, the look-fors permeate throughout the school, teachers are practicing the look-fors defined at the beginning of the year, and the previous year's look-fors are habit. The elementary principals identified four themes as well: teacher time on task increased, principal has a better understanding of curriculum, student work has improved, and a common language around instruction was developed.

The third topic analyzed by the researcher was the walkthroughs impact on principals as instructional leaders. The data suggest one similar theme between the high school and elementary principals: the walkthrough enables principals to use data to assist teachers with informing their instruction. There were several dissimilar themes as well:

The high school principal themes:

- It forces principals to get into the classrooms.
- The look-fors help focus on the school's needs.
- Debriefing sessions result in more tools to assist staff.

The elementary principals themes:

- Walkthroughs show teachers that the principals want to work collaboratively.
- Walkthroughs help principals understand what teachers go through.
- Principals have a better understanding of teacher needs.
- Principals have a better understanding of professional development needs.
- Principals are having more meaningful conversations with teachers.
- Principals know the curriculum better.

The fourth topic analyzed by the researcher was a comparison of the principals' perceptions regarding the most important steps for successful implementation of the walkthrough. The data indicate that both the elementary principals and high school principals agree that the look-fors are critical for successful implementation. In addition, the principals concur that it is vitally important to educate staff and establish a walkthrough protocol before implementation. The dissimilar themes identified by the high school principals was that teachers need to collectively create the look fors, whereas, the elementary principals indicated that principals should focus on the positive, remain consistent, provide feedback, build trust, validate effective teaching, and be clear with the expectations.

The fifth topic analyzed what the principals were looking for during their walkthroughs. The data suggest two similar themes: student engagement and clear expectations. The high school principals were also looking for a written objective and higher order thinking skills. The elementary principals focused their look-fors on time on task, instructional strategies, curriculum issues, academic rigor, and classroom management.

Type of feedback given to teacher was the sixth topic analyzed by the researcher. Three common themes were found: verbal, written look-for sheet, and email. The high school

principals seemed to take it a step further than the elementary principals did. The high school principals' data indicated that they use a variety of ways to provide feedback to teachers: debriefing round table sessions, weekly newsletters, new teacher walkthrough debriefings, and debriefings with lead teachers.

The final topic analyzed the time spent in classrooms. No similar themes emerged. Many of the principals responded within a range of time, therefore, identifying themes became difficult to accomplish. The high school principals had two themes: 10 minutes and 5-10 minutes. The elementary principals' theme was 10-15 minutes.

After reflecting upon research question 7, the researcher realizes that the walkthrough has an impact on high school and elementary school principals. Although the principals indicated themes specific to their level, secondary and elementary, the researcher realizes that the walkthrough has made a significant impact on student achievement, instruction, and leadership. The researcher wonders about the impact the walkthrough could have on a single school district if it were implemented K-12. This researcher cannot help wondering how this type of initiative would affect curriculum, instruction, assessment, student achievement, and leadership practices.

### **5.1.8 Concluding Remarks**

The results of this study reveal that the walkthrough has made a significant impact on elementary principals. The principals reported that the walkthrough positively influenced student achievement, instruction, and leadership.

This study revealed that the walkthrough did impact student achievement. The principals believed the walkthrough has influenced test scores, improved teacher practices, and increased time on task. Additionally, principals posited that the walkthrough encouraged teachers to focus more on best practices and that the quality of student work improved. The teachers appreciate that the walkthrough has made them focus more on the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in reading and math, which they attribute to an improvement in student achievement.

This study revealed that the walkthrough impacted instruction. The principals and teachers believed the walkthrough has played a significant role in improving instructional practices. The principals stated that the walkthrough allows them to be more aware of what is happening in the classrooms. Principals also believed that the walkthrough could be used as a vehicle to promote the sharing of best practices among teachers. As a result of the walkthrough, principals believed that the walkthroughs have allowed them to develop a common language around instruction and that they are having more meaningful conversation with teachers. Consequently, principals have a better understanding of the professional development needs of the staff.

This study revealed that the walkthrough has had an impact on principals as instructional leaders. The principals identified two significant themes: principals are more aware of what is happening in the classroom and they have better data to share with teachers. Additionally, the principals identified a number of indicators of how the walkthrough has impacted them as

instructional leaders. Principals understand the curriculum better, know the needs of teachers, have better conversations, and create and foster an environment of collegiality and collaboration.

### **5.1.9 Personal Reflection & Lessons Learned**

In preparation for identifying a topic for this dissertation, I reflected on my career as a teacher and administrator. I knew that I wanted this study to have an impact on me professionally. I wanted it to be meaningful and useful. Because I kept coming back to the topics of teaching and learning, the walkthrough was the answer for me. The research supports my belief that quality teaching is one of the most important things we can do to improve student achievement. If quality teaching is essential for student learning, then it deserves my full attention. The walkthrough allows principals to focus their efforts with what matters most: quality instruction.

I admire the principals in this study who have made it their business to visit classrooms on a regular basis. These principals have proven to me that the walkthrough works. The lessons they learned by conducting walkthroughs was insightful. Each principal had a keen sense of what was happening in classrooms. If it were not for the walkthrough, this would not be the case. Inconsistencies would remain, curriculum gaps would widen, best practices would not be shared as effectively, and teachers would remain isolated from their principals.

In summary, listed below are the valuable lessons that the researcher learned from conducting this study:

- Teacher supervisory practices need to be reviewed and revised to meet the needs of teachers.
- The walkthrough is a process; not an isolated, single event.
- The walkthrough is embedded professional development for principals and teachers.
- Time does not have to be an issue; schedule it.
- The walkthrough is collaborative.
- Because of the walkthrough, principals gain valuable information about teaching and learning. If not for the walkthrough, many issues would go unnoticed.

#### **5.1.10 Recommendations for Elementary School Principals**

- Validate effective practices.
- Do not use the walkthrough as an “I Gotcha.”
- Be consistent and provide feedback.
- Schedule your walkthroughs in your calendar.
- Identify the look-fors collaboratively and make sure they are congruent with your school’s mission and vision.

### **5.1.11 Recommendations for Further Research**

- Initiate a study that depicts the affect of the walkthrough on students.
- Conduct a similar study of elementary principals that is specific to the impact of the walkthrough on instruction.
- Use quantitative measures to identify the affect of the walkthrough on instructional improvements.
- Replicate this study with Middle School Principals.
- Conduct a study of elementary principals and teachers that is specific to the walkthroughs impact on professional development.
- Conduct a study of a district that has implemented the walkthrough K-12.
- Conduct a similar study of elementary principals that is specific to the walkthroughs impact on instructional leadership,
- Conduct a similar study where the principal engages the teachers in the walkthrough process and creates a learning community within the school.

I found that replicating a study gave me insights into the walkthrough I would not have experienced otherwise. It allowed me to examine the walkthrough from a K-12 perspective. Prior to this study, I thought the walkthrough was a beneficial tool for school administrators to use with their teachers. However, upon conclusion of this replicated study, I now know that the walkthrough is a powerful tool for principals to promote quality teaching and improve student learning.

**APPENDIX A**

**RESEARCH QUESTION 1: INTERVIEW DATA TABLES**

<b>Consensus Themes</b>	<b>Supported Themes</b>	<b>Individual Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Barriers-kept it informal.</li> </ul>

**Figure A17: Research Question 1B: Were there any internal barriers when implementing the walkthrough model?**

<b>Consensus Themes</b>	<b>Supported Themes</b>	<b>Individual Themes</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 -15 minutes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 minutes</li> <li>• 5-10 minutes</li> <li>• 15-20 minutes</li> <li>• 20-25 minutes</li> <li>• 20 minutes</li> </ul>

**Figure A18: Research Question 1D: How much time do you spend in each walkthrough?**

Consensus Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency</li> <li>• Build trust</li> <li>• Communicate effectively.</li> <li>• Have a focus (look-fors).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher understanding</li> <li>• Bring in experts to assist with planning and implementation.</li> <li>• No surprises to staff.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to staff.</li> </ul>

**Figure A19: Research Question 1C: What are the most important procedures for successful implementation?**

<b>Consensus Themes</b>	<b>Supported Themes</b>	<b>Individual Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student time on task.</li> <li>• Clear expectations.</li> <li>• Instructional strategies.</li> <li>• Curriculum issues.</li> <li>• Academic rigor.</li> <li>• Student engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Evidence of planning and preparation.</li> <li>• Professionalism</li> <li>• Dialogue between student and teacher.</li> <li>• Student work.</li> <li>• Closure to a lesson.</li> <li>• Clear objectives.</li> <li>• Pennsylvania Standards in lessons.</li> </ul>

**Figure A20: Research Question 1E: What are you looking for during your walkthroughs?**

<b>Consensus Themes</b>	<b>Supported Themes</b>	<b>Individual Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal</li> <li>• Written (includes hard copy and email).</li> </ul>		

**Figure A21: What kind of feedback do you give to teachers?**

## **APPENDIX B**

September 15, 2006

Dear Educator:

I am graduate student under the direction of Joseph Werlinich at the University of Pittsburgh. I am conducting a research study to focus on elementary principals using the classroom walkthrough model and its influences on student achievement.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a face-to-face interview. Interviews will be scheduled sometime during the next 6 weeks and will be arranged around your schedule. The interview will last no longer than one hour and will be tape-recorded; however, it will not be recorded without your permission. You have the right not to answer any questions, and to stop the interview at any time.

The information obtained from the taped interviews will be strictly confidential and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. If you participate in this study, you will not be identified by name or school building.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Participating or withdrawing from this study will not have an influence on your employment. Upon completion of the study, I will share the findings with you at your request. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Sincerely,

Guy A. Rossi

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