

Driving System Wide Improvement Through Instructional Rounds



Cullman City Schools

Character/Citizenship/Scholarship



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Objectives

- Explore how instructional rounds can move the needle in your system.
- Share our implementation journey.
- Emphasize the importance of a collaborative culture.
- Offer practical resources for implementation.

Cullman City Schools

- 5 schools; approximately 3,200 students
- Over 20% National Board certified teachers
- State report card 2024: 95 (all 5 schools with A's; system and 3 schools achieved highest score ever)
- 2024 National Blue Ribbon School (East Elementary)



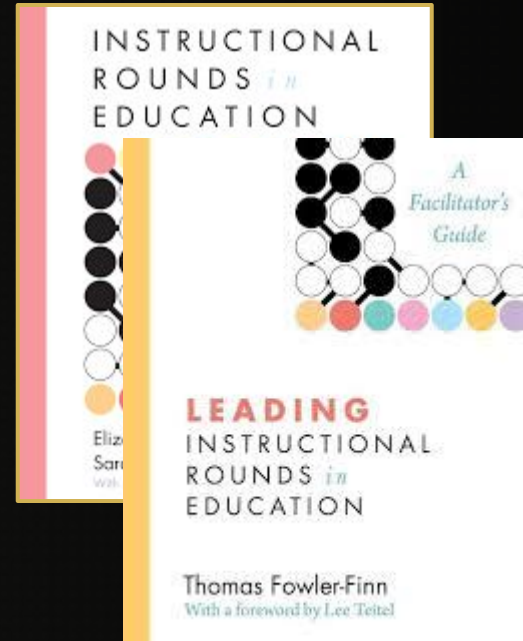
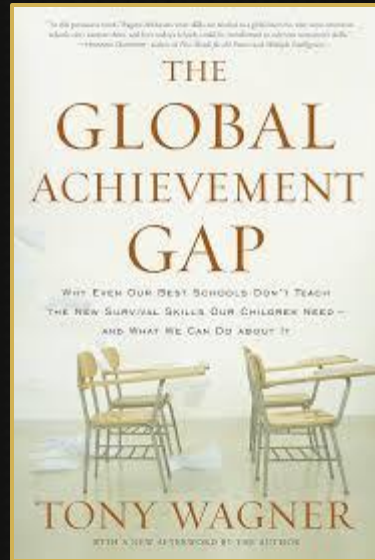
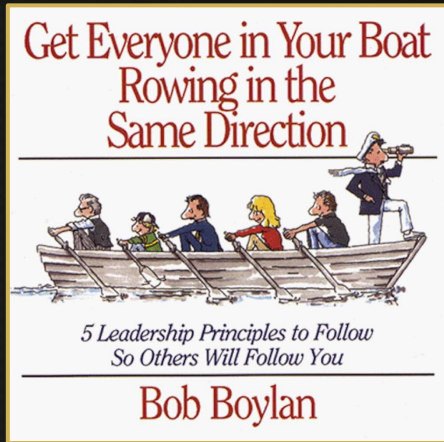
Character/Citizenship/Scholarship



If you could get everyone in your boat rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition at any time.

—Patrick Lencioni

Recommended Texts



Strategic Plan

III. Curriculum and Assessment

- A. Ensuring rigorous lessons are implemented that allows students to think critically, strategically, and creatively
 - 1. High Impact Instruction - Webb's Depth of Knowledge
 - 2. Authentic tasks that are relevant
 - 3. Inquiry-based learning
 - 4. Increased emphasis on STEM education
- B. Guaranteeing assessments are closely aligned to intended outcome
 - 1. Align classroom assessments with course of study objectives
 - 2. Cognizant of over testing
 - 3. Inform parents of summative and formative assessments
- C. Increasing academic and extra-curricular opportunities
 - 1. Expand STEM related opportunities at every school
 - 2. Expand academic clubs at every school (drama, debate, art, etc.)
 - 3. Align Career and Technical Education programs with industry needs

Instructional Rounds

A collaborative process where educators observe classrooms to gather insights that help improve teaching practices and enhance student learning

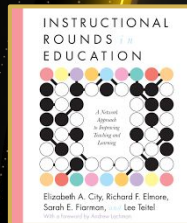
What they are

- Descriptive
- Observations based on evidence
- Focused on student's learning
- Collaborative learning process
- Focused on next steps and lasting impact

What they aren't

- Evaluative
- Observations based on judgments
- Focused on teacher's teaching
- Individualized process
- Isolated observations with no impact

Most educators are working, for better or for worse, at, or very near, the limit of their existing knowledge and skill. You don't improve schools by giving them bad news about their performance. You improve schools by using information about student learning, from multiple sources, to find the most promising instructional problems to work on, and then systematically developing with teachers and administrators the knowledge and skills necessary to solve those problems.



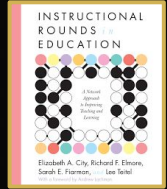
Instructional Rounds Process

- Problem of Practice
- Observation of Practice
- Debrief
- Next level of work

Problem of Practice

Educational leaders and practitioners develop a shared understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like and what schools and districts need to do to support it.

Once this has been established, teams develop a problem of practice based on instructional focus either at the school or district level.



Example:

If we increase the rigor of student tasks through increasing DOK level two and three instructional activities (deeper thinking, application, critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, etc...), then we are preparing students to meet the complex demands of the standards.

- **What** - Increase complexity/rigor
- **Vehicle** - DOK level 2 and 3
- **Outcome** - meet the complex demands of standards



RIGOR

1. Real-world meaning beyond the classroom
2. Requires 21st-century skills, such as complex communication, collaboration, and problem-solving
3. DOK 2, 3, and 4 tasks
4. Addresses essential learning content and standards

Evidence/Look-fors

- Remove Evaluation Goggles

Look with fresh eyes at what is going on in and around the classroom

- Decide in advance...

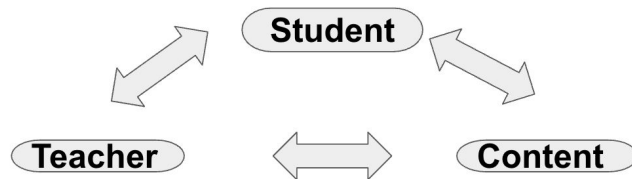
What to observe (student tasks and instructional activities)

How to observe (know what DOK level 2 and 3 tasks look like)

How to talk about what is seen (evidence not assumptions)

The Instructional Core

The Teacher and the Student in the presence of Content



Begin Process with 3 Instructional Core Questions

1. What are teachers doing and saying?
2. What are students doing and saying?
3. What is the task?

Classroom Visits

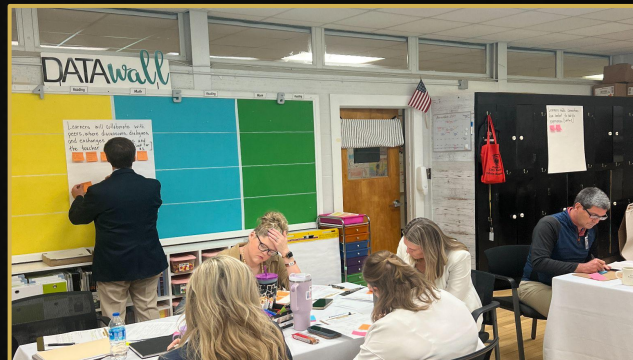
Protocol: Visit classrooms. Record all interactions between student, teacher, and content (instructional core) that relate to the Evidence/Look-Fors.



Collecting Evidence

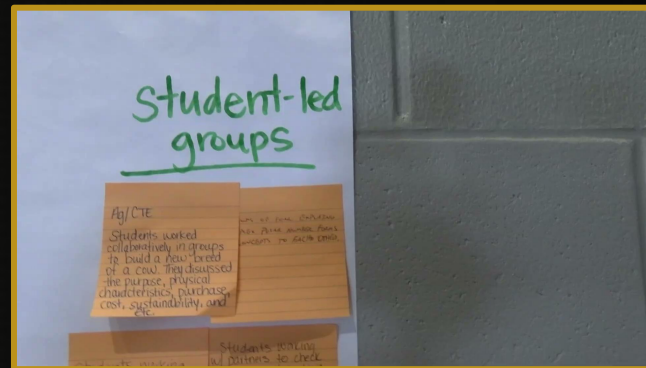
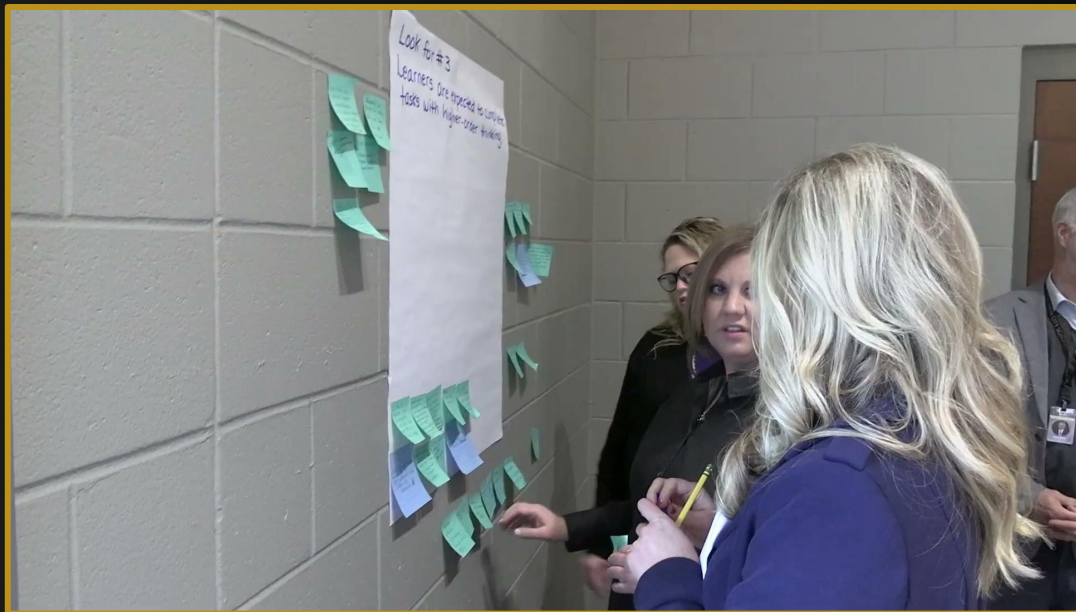
Protocol

1. Place chart paper on the wall in three separate locations. Individuals will place sticky notes on chart paper according to color.
2. When participants return from the rounds, they will silently put evidence on sticky notes. Each color represents a different focus number (Orange = 1; Pink = 2; and, Blue=3).



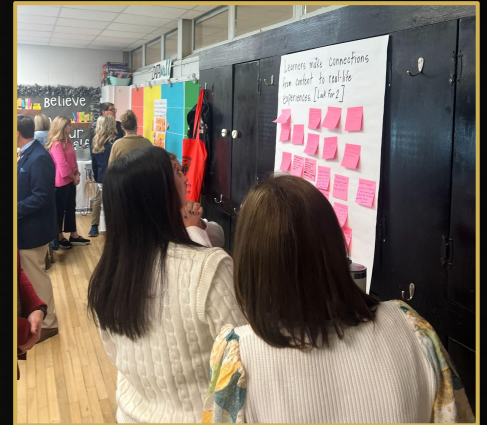
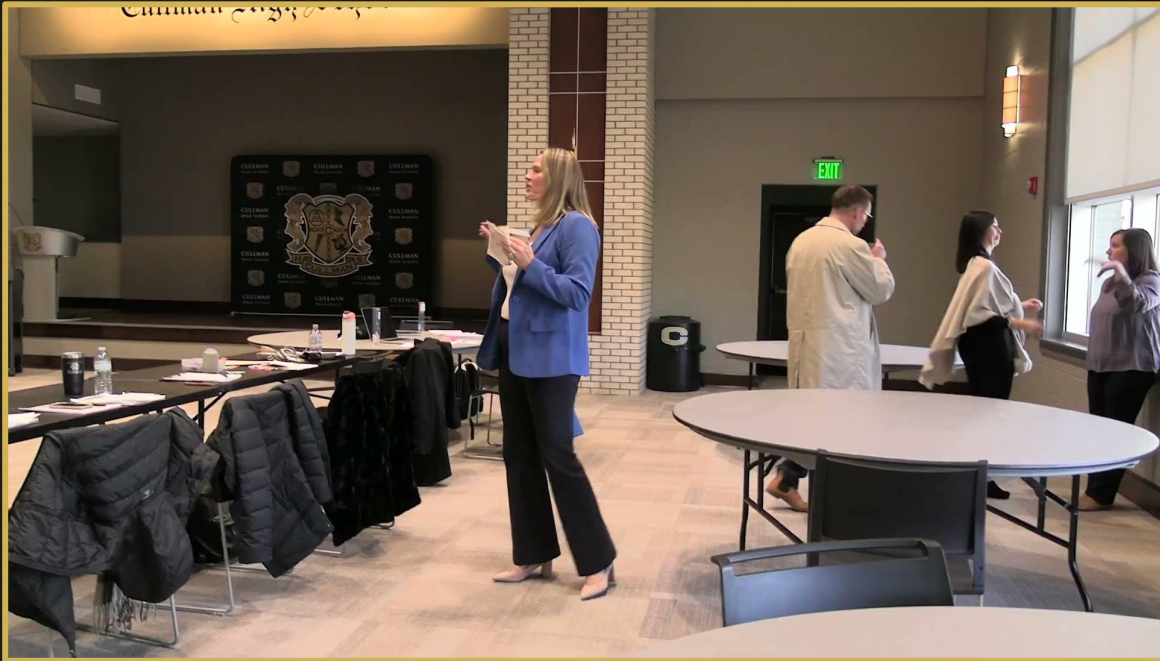
Sorting Evidence

Protocol: Group 1 will report to the chart with orange sticky notes (evidence look-for # 1). Group 2 will report to the chart with pink sticky notes (evidence look-for # 2). Group 3 will report to the chart with blue sticky notes (evidence look-for # 3). Collaboratively, team members will sort and group sticky notes into patterns and label each pattern.



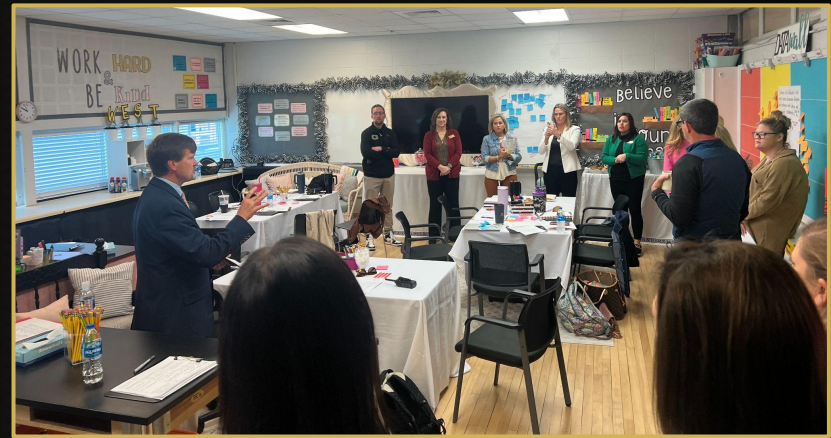
Gallery Walk

Protocol: Complete a gallery walk so that each group can view the other two charts and talk about the patterns and findings.



Whole Group Discussion

Protocol: Make predictions. Ask, “If you were a student at this school and you did everything you were expected to do, what would you know and be able to do?” This step predicts what students would know and be able to do as a result of attending CHS given how the patterns describe the interactions around the school’s instructional core.



Benefits of Instructional Rounds

- ❑ Supports continuous improvement
- ❑ Centers on common instructional goals that support the strategic plan
- ❑ Fosters a collaborative culture
- ❑ Builds a shared understanding of quality instruction
- ❑ Identifies school-wide patterns in instruction
- ❑ Promotes reflective practice
- ❑ Creates a feedback loop so educators can see if their efforts are helping students
- ❑ Strengthens a multi-tiered system of supports for all students

Importance of a Collaborative Culture

Creating an instructional rounds network is a lot more than gathering people to “do rounds” .

Coming from traditions of isolated and autonomous practice, many teachers and administrators are unfamiliar with visiting classrooms, talking about teaching and learning, devising systematic strategies for improvement, and refining theories of action over time. (City et al, 62).

Must develop common:

- Purpose
- Goals
- Language

Common Language: Student Engagement

- **Individual Reflection:**
Participants reflect on the meaning of *Student Engagement* and write their thoughts on a sticky note.
- **Partner Share:**
Pair up with someone nearby, share definitions, and identify common ideas.
- **Joint Definition:**
Create a new sticky note together with a shared or refined definition.
- **Group Display:**
Place joint sticky notes on a poster labeled *Student Engagement*.
- **Whole Group Discussion:**
As a group, review the sticky notes, identify patterns, highlight key ideas, and collaboratively develop a unified definition.

Schools don't need more things to do. In fact, they need to do less with greater focus. They need a more powerful, coherent culture of instructional practice.

Resources

