

Virtual Classroom Walkthroughs

Practical Look-Fors for Online Classrooms

Adapted from the **National Standards for Quality Online Teaching**



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From addressing gaps in educator practice to providing individualized support, education teams must collect actionable data about instructional practice to fully understand what’s happening in the classroom.

As school districts grapple with the reality of teaching fully or partially online in the 2020-21 academic year, actionable data has taken on a new importance: a large-scale need to stop the COVID slide from widening. This new world means an increased focus on preparing teachers to address virtual learning-related challenges. But without traditional classroom visits — or physical classrooms to visit — how do school districts gauge their interventions’ effectiveness?

Virtual walkthroughs can provide clear, actionable feedback about how professional learning efforts are translating into practice. This booklet provides an overview of the methodology, and a table of practical look-fors adapted from the [National Standards for Quality Online Teaching](#).

“When real-time observation data are analyzed, used to support reflection and collaborative conversation, and, ultimately, when these data become the basis to drive professional learning, the results are clear. Program initiatives are actualized. Instructional strategies improve. Students become engaged and student success increases.”

-Kelly Gillespie, *Classroom Walkthrough Observation: Leading Edge Instructional Leadership*

Why Walkthroughs?

Self-Reflection

Walkthroughs that are implemented well promote self-reflection at multiple levels. Teachers ask themselves questions about why they made a particular decision, what effect their decision has on students, and how they can improve to better serve their students. Educators, coaches, building leaders and district administrators have much to gain by continually asking “Why does this happen?”

Identifying Gaps Between PD & Practice

Post-event and self-reflection data provide one perspective on learnings—but without implementation data, you’re working with a limited view. Observational data provides evidence that helps to better understand the current situation and needs, supports the development of a common language around instruction, and leads to community-based sharing of best practices (especially if teachers are involved in walkthroughs). It answers the question: “So what happened next?”, and tells us if PD supports are translating into the classroom.

Aligning a Remote Team

Walkthroughs help school leaders be more visible, engaged, and knowledgeable about the state of instruction in the school. With the knowledge gained from in-classroom observation, coaches can reinforce training

aligned to specific instructional practices while principals can understand needs and plan for additional support . The frequent presence of leaders in the classroom—and the use of data for improvement—can build a bond of trust between teacher and administration, helping all staff understand that walkthroughs are a non-evaluative tool intended to support their learning instead of a summative judgement.

How to Build A Successful Walkthrough Program

Build Community Buy-In

Clearly share the purpose and plan for classroom visits among all staff. Solicit feedback from teachers prior to observations as to what would be most helpful.

Is there something specific that they would like support with? Something to look for? At the same time, describe how this data will lead to action (i.e. additional coaching sessions). Communication goes a long way toward reassuring educators who may feel less confident about their newly-formed virtual instruction skills.

Emphasize Inter-Rater Reliability

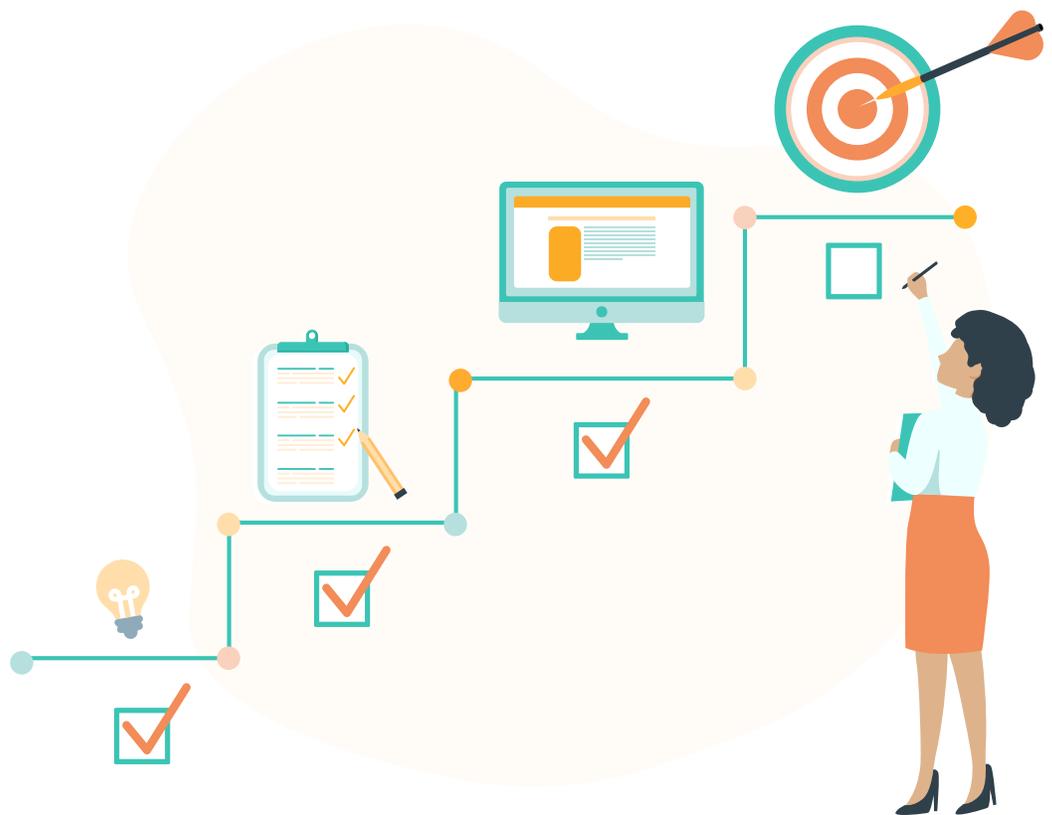
Make sure that observers are fully trained on the indicators and have internal consistency on what they look like. For example, observers could be asked to review a video of somebody teaching and rate the video using the tool. Responses could then be shared in a whole group and discussed, the objective being to norm on what a particular indicator looks like.

Use a Protocol with Frequent Touchpoints

A major benefit of virtual walkthroughs is that they can happen both synchronously and asynchronously. Regular in-person visits demonstrate more visible, engaged and knowledgeable instructional leadership while reviewing classrooms or recorded sessions provides touchpoints without the interruption of additional faces. Either way, consider protocols that make walkthroughs manageable (e.g. dividing into teams of three focused on a single domain) so that you can collect a large body of data to debrief as a group.

Debrief Walkthroughs Using a Shared Dashboard

Close the feedback loop by sharing feedback with educators (e.g. automated KickUp email alerts) so they can reflect on practice or offer clarification to behaviors that weren't observed. As an instructional team, consolidate gathered data in a report shared with all instructional leaders to find trends, areas of needed support, and clear next steps.



The Look-Fors

The look-fors here are built to serve as broad-scale metrics that identify needed focus areas. Depending on your district's priorities, you may want to instruct teams to rotate their focus between the domains below, and/or drill in to more specific look-fors within a single section.

1. Digital Pedagogy Adapted From NSQ Online Teaching Standard B	Corresponding NSQOT Item
Pedagogical Tools: Using varied pedagogical tools that help learners access and interact with learning content (e.g. web-conferencing tools, learning management system, presentation and content delivery tools, etc.)	B1
Digital Content: Using discipline-specific content and learning activities that promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies	B2
Communication Tools: Using communication tools to interact in online courses in order to nurture learner relationships and encourage learner engagement (e.g. discussion tools, announcements, short personal videos)	B3
2. Community Building Adapted From NSQ Online Teaching Standard C	Corresponding NSQOT Item
Student Collaboration: Using learner-centered instructional strategies to facilitate active learning through online learner collaboration (e.g. discussion groups, small group projects)	C1
Collaboration Expectations: Communicating, modeling and reinforcing expectations for appropriate interaction among learners	C2
Diverse Learning Community: Developing a community among culturally diverse learners by providing opportunities for interaction that foster trusting relationships, inclusion and active learning	C3
Rigorous Group Learning: Facilitating learner collaboration in a way that promotes higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation (e.g. open-ended group projects, peer feedback, posing deeper questions in discussions)	C4
All Voices: Encouraging learner participation and respect for a variety of perspectives among all learners, regardless of cultural background and perspective (e.g. using intentional discussion guidelines, commenting, playing "devils advocate", taking turns)	C5
3. Learner Engagement Adapted From NSQ Online Teaching Standard D	Corresponding NSQOT Item
Personalization: Enabling a learner-customized pace and/or path through instruction aligned with learners' individual goals, learning trajectories, and interests	D3
Teacher Presence: Establishing relationships through timely and encouraging communication, using various formats	D4
Quality Feedback: Helping learners reach content mastery through actionable, specific, and timely feedback	D5
Family Communication: Facilitating communication with families regarding learner progress and strategies for supporting learner engagement	D7

<p>4. Digital Citizenship Adapted from NSQ Online Teaching Standard E</p>	<p>Corresponding NSQOT Item</p>
<p>Modeling Digital Citizenship: Facilitating learning experiences that model and promote digital citizenship (e.g. fair-use, netiquette, internet safety)</p>	<p>E1</p>
<p>Netiquette Expectations: Communicating expectations for learner behavior to ensure academic integrity and appropriate use of the Internet</p>	<p>E2</p>
<p>5. Diverse Instruction Adapted from NSQ Online Teaching Standard F</p>	<p>Corresponding NSQOT Item</p>
<p>Remediation: Providing small group or 1-1 instruction for learners who need additional support</p>	<p>F3</p>
<p>Alternative Materials: Creating alternative formats of course materials, if needed, in order to meet the needs of diverse learners and accommodate alternative means of access</p>	<p>F4</p>
<p>Enrichment: Providing additional opportunities for personalized learner growth or enrichment</p>	<p>F6</p>
<p>Highlighting Strengths: Providing opportunities for sharing the varied talents and interests that learners bring to the online environment (e.g. varied choices for demonstrating mastery)</p>	<p>F7</p>
<p>6. Assessment & Measurement Adapted from NSQ Online Teaching Standard G</p>	<p>Corresponding NSQOT Item</p>
<p>Assessments: Providing students with varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning (e.g., auto-graded quizzes, discussion prompts, exit tickets, portfolios, presentations, etc.)</p>	<p>G4</p>
<p>Data Driven Instruction: Customizing the learning experience based on assessment data and learner need</p>	<p>G7</p>
<p>Self-Assessment: Providing learners with opportunities to self-assess and reflect on their progress towards mastering learning objectives or competencies</p>	<p>G8</p>
<p>Success Criteria: Providing specific and descriptive criteria (e.g. rubrics, exemplars) for the evaluation of learners' work</p>	<p>CD-D5</p>



You've got the tools — now put them to work

Use the free educator self-reflection tool for 30 days

Get started collecting virtual walkthroughs