



STAR LEARNING WALKS

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What is a STAR Learning Walk?

In general, there are two types of STAR Learning Walks, depending on the purpose and the number of participants.

Leadership Learning Walks (A.K.A. STAR Learning Walks for Reflection) are designed for administrators and teacher leaders to develop their own skills in recognizing the Essential Components of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the classroom.

Focused Feedback Learning Walks (A.K.A. STAR Learning Walks for Collection) are designed for groups of teachers and/or administrators to gather information and to discuss the information for the purpose of providing general feedback to staff in specific areas.

In both of these types of Learning Walks there are three basic steps:

1. First, establish the instructional focus of the Learning Walk (*Skills, Knowledge, Thinking, Application, Relationships*) and make sure it is understood in advance;
2. Second, conduct multiple, short (no more than 15 minutes) visits to many classrooms to look for evidence of the instructional focus; and
3. Third, provide a debriefing session to assimilate the evidence gathered in the multiple classrooms and to plan next steps.

Preparation Meeting (30 minutes)

- ▶ After reviewing the Essential Components of the STAR Protocol, the team selects an instructional focus question for the Learning Walk. If the school participated in an evaluation by The BERC Group, the focus could be determined based on the results of the evaluation. This needs to be very narrow. (Example: Essential Component *Knowledge*, Indicator 4: Are students developing conceptual understanding in math?)
- ▶ The facilitator distributes one copy of the STAR Protocol for reference and multiple copies of the individual *STAR Learning Walk Reflection Form* to each member. The facilitator asks the group to predict what they would expect teachers and students to be saying and doing if they could answer “yes” to the instructional focus question. For example, in order to push students’ conceptual understanding you may hear a teacher in a math classroom saying; “Is there another way to solve this problem?” “Does that solution work all the time?” “Prove it.” The students may be saying, “I know this is correct because....”
- ▶ For each classroom, the team takes notes on the evidence that supports the focus area. If applicable the facilitator may assign team members to ask students specific questions or look at students’ work.

Walk Through (10 - 15 minutes per classroom)

- ▶ All enter the classroom together and move quietly to the back of the room. Team members do not talk during the observation unless they have a specific assignment to talk to students or look at student work.
- ▶ Team members take notes on the *STAR Learning Walk Reflection Form*.
- ▶ All leave together.
- ▶ Huddle in the hall and briefly debrief the classroom observation before moving to the next classroom. This helps focus the observation in the next classroom and helps the group stay focused on instruction and not the instructor.
- ▶ Repeat process in each classroom.

Debriefing (at least 45 minutes) “Dumping” the Data

- ▶ Team gathers at the end of all the classroom visits.
- ▶ Each member reviews their reflection forms from each observation.
- ▶ The facilitator asks each member to share what they saw in the classroom around the focus question. They need to cite specific evidence. At this point, the process is designed to just record what each person saw without making inferences. The facilitator charts the responses.
- ▶ The participants look at the data and record what has surfaced for them in general. These generalities are recorded. For example, someone might say, “In most of the observations the dialogue was primarily from student to teacher. Students were seated in groups, but were not discussing their thinking with each other.”

Making Inferences

- ▶ Take three pieces of chart paper and place them side by side. Ask, “*Based upon what has surfaced in general, what do you think students need to help them develop deeper conceptual understanding?*” Record responses on the first piece of chart paper.
- ▶ Next ask, “*What instructional activities do teachers need to provide so they meet these student needs?*” Record on the second sheet of chart paper.
- ▶ Next ask, “*If these are the instructional activities teachers need to provide, what leadership decisions do we need to make to support teachers?*” Record on the third sheet.
- ▶ Have participants record what they learned and what they are personally going to do differently as a result of the learning walk.

Remember, the purpose of the learning walks is not to provide individual feedback, so resist the urge to do so. You merely want to thank the classroom teachers you observed. Have participants reflect on the process and plan for next steps depending on the purpose of the walk through.

STAR Learning Walk Reflection Form

Sample Item (#8)

Date:

Instructional Focus Question:

#8 Are students developing and/or demonstrating effective thinking processes either verbally or in writing?

Grade Level _____ Subject _____

Evidence that supports the Instructional Focus:

Student Evidence	Teacher Evidence

Adapted from: Pery, G. *What is a Walk Through?* Massachusetts, Pery and Associates, Inc. and Best Practices from Teacher's Development Group.

STAR Learning Walk Reflection Form

Date _____

Instructional Focus Question:

Grade Level _____ Subject _____

Evidence that supports the Instructional Focus:

Student Evidence	Teacher Evidence

