



Facilitating Instructional Rounds

The primary purpose of instructional rounds is for educators to make observations and compare their practices with those observed in the classrooms they visit. Their chief benefit is the discussion at the end of the instructional rounds and the subsequent self-reflection by observer teachers. Instructional rounds stimulate excitement and energy among colleagues and help scale inclusive practices. They are a great structure for ongoing professional learning and increased collective efficacy.

Step 1: Review Tips for Scheduling Instructional Rounds

5 minutes

- If data meetings or co-planning meetings are scheduled, consider collaborating with the union to use some of the time for instructional rounds.
- Create small teams for instructional rounds and have administrators in the district cover classes for teams to complete the rounds and share the process at faculty meetings.
- Build-in sub-costs to release small teams of teachers for a period of time to observe colleagues at short intervals. In one hour, a team could rotate to watch four other teachers.

However, we recognize that traditional rounds may not be possible. As a result, the section that follows provides alternative options for utilizing instructional rounds.

- Consider videotaping teacher practices and creating a compilation for teachers to observe at a PLC or faculty meeting.
- Facilitate “slow” instructional rounds where teachers provide mini-lessons within the faculty meeting structure so teachers can observe best practices from each other throughout the school year without the need for sub coverage.



Step 2: Identify Problems of Practice and Focus Questions

10 minutes

Before you facilitate the rounds, anyone participating will meet for 15-30 minutes to identify a problem of practice and a corresponding focus question to drive the observations. Samples are provided below.

Table 1: Common Problems of Practice and Focus Questions

Problem of Practice	Focus Question for Observation
Not all students have the skills to comprehend grade-level text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the teacher doing to scaffold instruction to ensure all students can access grade-level text?
Not all students are motivated, nor do they have personalized learning goals to meet grade-level standards in an accessible way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What opportunities do students have to create their personalized learning experience while accessing grade-level standards?
Not all students are held to the same high expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the teacher doing to communicate high expectations to all students?• How does the teacher heighten the salience of grade-level standards for the lesson and remind students about the goal throughout?
Student collaboration is not as meaningful as it could be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the teacher foster collaboration and community in the classroom as students work with diverse partners?• What techniques does the teacher use to ensure student collaboration and conversations are meaningful?• How does the teacher create accountability for student collaboration?

Step 3: Put it into practice

Time varies

Step 1

The observation group makes the “rounds” to collect data related to the identified “problem of practice” (10-15 minutes per classroom) while observers make detailed, low-inference notes



regarding the focus question(s). Note that the questions highlight effective practices that help to address the problem of practice.

Along with trying to observe what is occurring during specific classroom segments, observers should record their perceptions immediately.

Step 2

The final debrief will be at the end of the observations for 20-30 minutes to reflect on the best practices observed during the instructional rounds. Note: Do not offer suggestions to the observed teachers unless they explicitly ask for feedback. Use inquiry-based prompts like, “I noticed...” and “Tell me more about how...”

Step 3

Have teachers create goals for their own classroom practice inspired by the best practices of colleagues.