RIDE Guide to HQCM Instructional Walkthroughs

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Purpose and Vision of Walkthroughs

Instructional walkthroughs are non-evaluative, structured classroom visits designed to understand how **High-Quality Curriculum Materials (HQCM)** are implemented skillfully in classrooms. They may last a few minutes or span the full duration of a lesson, depending on the purpose and focus. They focus on how teachers implement HQCM lessons, how students engage with the tasks, and how classroom interactions reflect the rigor and design of the materials. Leaders use the evidence they gather to strengthen curriculum-based professional learning, coaching, and school-level and district-level decisions. While this guidance is centered around walkthroughs to support HQCM implementation, the process outlined in the guidance is applicable to any classroom and curriculum.

What Leaders can Expect from Instructional Walkthroughs:

- Clear picture of how HQCM lessons are being implemented in classrooms.
- Signals about where to target coaching and professional learning.
- Trends over time that inform leadership and resource decisions.

Why HQCM-Anchored Walkthroughs Matter

Walkthroughs grounded in implementation of HQCM help educators see whether instruction reflects the design and intent of high-quality materials—ensuring students engage with authentic, complex, and grade-level tasks supported by embedded scaffolds. This distinguishes HQCM walkthroughs from generic observations, anchoring all evidence in curriculum use rather than teaching style.

Alignment of Walkthroughs to HQCM Implementation Systems

HQCM implementation is supported by four interdependent systems—**Leadership, Operations, Curriculum-Based Professional Learning (CBPL), and Meaningful Instruction**—and progresses through four phases: **Program Installation → Initial Implementation → Skilled Implementation → Sustainability & Innovation.** Walkthroughs act as a throughline across these systems and phases (RIDE Draft HQCM Implementation Guidance, 2025).

Walkthroughs are one of the few practices that can live inside all four HQCM implementation systems. The table below summarizes how.

Systems of HQCM Implementation	Description on How Instructional Walkthroughs Align with HQCM Implementation Guidance
Leadership	Leaders use walkthroughs to reinforce the instructional vision for HQCM, collect actionable data on curriculum use, and model supportive, non-evaluative feedback grounded in evidence from HQCM lessons. Model a non-evaluative walkthrough debrief with staff during a faculty meeting.
Operations	Scheduling, tool use, and data collection processes ensure walkthroughs occur routinely. An HQCM-aligned walkthrough tool—with content-specific indicators—is essential for consistency and reliability across classrooms and schools. Build a simple schedule to ensure each teacher is seen at least once per quarter.
Curriculum-Based Professional Learning	Walkthrough data directly informs CBPL. Trends identified through HQCM walkthroughs should shape PLC agendas, coaching priorities, and professional learning sessions. For example, if walkthroughs reveal inconsistent use of discussion protocols in ELA HQCM, leaders can target PL on facilitating academic discourse. Use walkthrough trends as a standing agenda item in PLCs.
Meaningful Instruction	The walkthrough process prioritizes what students are doing and learning with HQCM lessons. Observers look for evidence of student engagement with rigorous HQCM tasks, equitable participation, and the use of embedded supports for Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and Differently-Abled Students (DAS). Check explicitly for supports for MLLs and DAS when reviewing notes.

Culture for Effective Walkthroughs

A strong walkthrough culture grows when the purpose is improvement (not surveillance), teachers have voice, and structures are transparent and consistent (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Launching the practice—even before culture is "perfect"—can itself build trust when leaders communicate clearly and follow through on feedback routines (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

Shared purpose. Keep the "why" explicit and repeated: walkthroughs gather evidence of how HQCM lessons are enacted so leaders can target supports and professional learning, not evaluate teachers (Learning Forward, 2022; ASCD, 2018). State what evidence will be collected, how it will be used, and when findings will be shared.

Teacher investment. Involve teachers in adapting the walkthrough tool and norms, and periodically invite teachers to join the observing team to strengthen trust, perspective, and calibration (Rouleau & Corner, 2020)

Transparent communication. Share the tool and cadence in advance; clarify roles, data use, and feedback timelines. Without clear communication, teachers may experience walkthroughs as a "dog-and-pony show" or "gotcha," which undermines authentic evidence collection (Hamilton, 2019). Provide timely follow-up (e.g., a brief debrief or written note) that connects evidence to one actionable next step (Learning Forward, 2022).

Consistent structures. Normalize walkthroughs with a predictable schedule, common tools, and a simple before/during/after routine; consistency reduces anxiety and builds credibility (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Pair this with training and norming for *both* observers (low-inference evidence, calibration) and those being observed (what to expect, how feedback will be used) to ensure transparency and reliability (Learning Forward, 2022).

Asset-based tone. Lead with strengths, then name opportunities using precise, neutral descriptions. For example: "Students quickly turned and talked with partners when prompted (strength). During the sharing out, 7 of 24 students did not contribute yet (growth)." This invites problem-solving without judgment and keeps feedback anchored to HQCM lesson design (Murphy & George, 2018).

When leaders sustain a clear purpose, invite teacher partnership (including as observers), communicate openly, set predictable structures with training, and use strengths-forward, evidence-based feedback, walkthroughs become a collaborative engine for continuous improvement in HQCM implementation (Learning Forward, 2022; Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

An Instructional Walkthrough Cycle

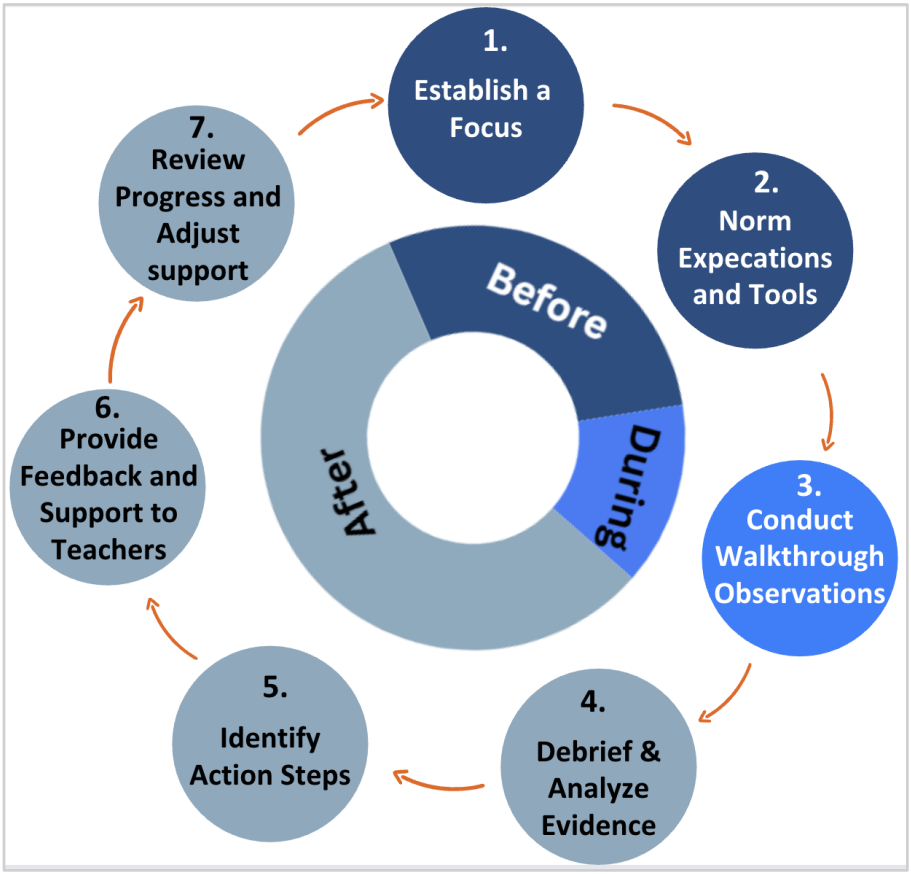

Figure 1: Circular seven-step loop showing the HQCM focused instructional walkthrough cycle

Research on classroom walkthroughs describes them as brief, non-evaluative visits embedded in regular cycles of evidence, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving to improve teaching and learning (Grissom et al., 2013; Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

1. Establish a Focus

Choose a clear, HQCM-aligned priority (e.g., students justifying their reasoning in Illustrative Mathematics). Translate that priority into specific look-fors tied to lesson design features in the curriculum, such as:

- use of math instructional routines to build conceptual understanding, application, and fluency
- supports that allow multilingual learners to work with grade-level text
- scaffolds grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) so all students can work with complex texts

2. **Norm Expectations and Tools**

   Before anyone walks into classrooms, observers and teachers being observed build a shared picture of "what good looks like" for the chosen focus. Calibrate on the walkthrough tool, indicators, and sample evidence. This might include:

   - reviewing short video clips or sample notes
   - naming what counts as low-inference evidence vs. interpretation
   - aligning on how the tool's language and any ratings will be used

   When multiple observers go together, norming is essential for consistent data; even solo observers should periodically norm with a colleague (e.g., a coach or another leader) to stay calibrated (Courtney et al., 2017)

3. **Conduct Walkthrough Observations:**

   Visit classrooms to record what you see and hear connected to the look-for tool indicators, including:

   - teacher actions
   - student actions
   - the task and materials

   Notes should be low-inference (descriptive and objective); the goal is to gather evidence, not to judge. Observers can carry the walkthrough tool to guide what they notice but should generally wait until after the visit to assign any ratings or levels (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

4. **Debrief and Analyze Evidence**

   After visits, observers debrief using a simple protocol so the conversation stays focused and productive. The team:

   - compares notes to the agreed indicators or rubric
   - looks for patterns across classrooms
   - surfaces bright spots, recurring needs, and lingering questions

   Debriefs can be quick between visits and a longer, more formal conversation once all classrooms have been seen; both help turn raw notes into usable insight. (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

5. **Identify Action Steps**

   Using the trends, the team names 1–2 priority shifts (e.g., "increase student talk that requires reasoning, not just recall"). Then they define concrete next steps, such as:

   - focus points for upcoming coaching cycles
   - adjustments to upcoming units or lessons
   - topics for PLC work or professional learning sessions

   The aim is a short list of high-leverage moves, not an exhaustive "fix everything" plan. (Rowland, C., 2018)

6. **Provide Feedback and Support to Teachers**

Close the loop with every teacher who was observed. Provide timely, specific, growth-oriented feedback through a quick note, a brief conversation, or a coaching meeting. Effective feedback and support:

- names specific strengths connected to the focus and grounded in what was observed during the walkthrough
- offers one clear "next step" that is concrete and doable
- clarifies what supports teachers will receive (e.g., coaching, co-planning, modeling, resources, or peer observation) and who will provide it
- reinforces that walkthroughs are about support and learning, not evaluation. (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

7. Review Progress and Adjust

Aggregate and log the evidence from each cycle so teams can see patterns over time—by grade, school, or focus area. Use what was seen during walkthrough observations and captured in the tool to:

- review whether agreed changes and supports are showing up in classrooms
- adjust coaching, PL, or resource allocation based on what teachers are trying and needing
- decide whether to continue, refine, or shift the walkthrough focus and the supports that accompany it

In this way, walkthroughs become a routine part of a continuous-improvement rhythm, not a one-time initiative (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

The next sections are organized as **Before, During, and After a Walkthrough**, which aligns to the steps in the walkthrough cycle:

- Before Walkthrough aligns to steps 1 and 2 (Establish a Focus; Norm Expectations and Tools)
- During Walkthrough aligns to step 3 (Conduct Walkthrough Observations)
- After Walkthrough aligns to steps 4-7 (Debrief & Analyze Evidence; Identify Action Steps; Provide Feedback and Support to Teachers; Review Progress and Adjust Support)

A. Before a Walkthrough: Norming & Preparation

This section unpacks Steps 1 and 2 of the walkthrough cycle—Establish a Focus and Norm Expectations and Tools. It describes how teams select an aligned tool, norm together, and prepare observers, so the focus is clear before anyone enters a classroom.

Select An Aligned Walkthrough Tool:

Classroom observation research highlights the importance of tools that are content-specific, aligned to instructional priorities, and built around observable indicators and clear rating scales (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

The first step is choosing (or adapting) a walkthrough tool and calibrating observers on how to use it. A strong tool gives everyone a shared frame for what to look for in HQCM lessons. Effective tools typically:

- **Are curriculum and content specific:** Look-fors connect directly to the HQCM and high-leverage practices in the content area (e.g., math discourse; text-based discussion), rather than generic strategy checklists.
- **Align with your vision and priorities:** Indicators reflect your district or school instructional vision, HQCM implementation goals, and expectations for Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and Differently-Abled Students (DAS).
- **Use observable, evidence-based indicators:** Items describe specific, visible behaviors across the instructional core—teacher actions, student actions, and the task/content—written in non-evaluative language (e.g., "Students persist with complex tasks using provided scaffolds" rather than "Student engagement is high").
- **Capture degrees of practice:** Tools offer levels of performance (e.g., "not observed," "emerging," "proficient," "exemplary"), not just yes/no. This supports nuanced observation and progress over time.
- **Are user-friendly:** The tool is concise enough to use in the time you have scheduled the visit and organized into clear sections (e.g., Classroom Culture, HQCM Use, Student Thinking). Observers may jot free-form notes and later align evidence to sections during debrief.

1. Norm as a Team

Once a tool is selected, leaders should invest time in **training and norming** observers before launching walkthroughs. Norming involves:

- Practicing with a shared lesson (live or video).
- Comparing what each person recorded and how they rated indicators.
- Clarifying ambiguous language and refining look-fors.

Even if only one person typically conducts walkthroughs, norming with a broader team (e.g., district staff, coaches, leaders from other schools) helps ensure consistency across classrooms and schools.

During norming, teams commit to a few simple agreements:

- Stay open and "agree to disagree" while addressing differences.
- Talk through misaligned ratings or notes until there is clarity.
- Keep students at the center and anchor evidence in HQCM.
- Justify any conclusions with specific, low-inference evidence.

Norming is not a one-time event; revisit it when the tool or focus changes and periodically to prevent drift.

2. Prepare Observers: Lessons, goals, and data

In addition to norming, observers should "do their homework" so the walkthrough is grounded in context rather than a cold snapshot. Helpful preparation steps include:

- **Review the HQCM lesson/unit.** Understand unit goals, the specific lesson objective, and how the lesson aligns to grade-level standards.
- **Anticipate key tasks and evidence of learning.** Identify the central task(s) and what student success should look like, including likely misconceptions.
- **Plan for diverse learners.** Note built-in supports and accommodations for MLLs, students with disabilities, or other groups, and plan to look for how these appear in instruction.
- **Consider pacing and sequence.** Know where the lesson falls in the unit and pacing guide; heavy scaffolds may be appropriate early but concerning if still present late in the unit.
- **Align to school/district priorities.** Be clear about current focus areas (e.g., academic discourse, student agency) and which tool indicators connect to them.
- **Know your learners.** When possible, scan student data (reading levels, formative assessments, IEP/504 accommodations) to interpret what you see more accurately.

A brief framing huddle before entering classrooms can cover key details when time for deeper preparation is limited.

B. During a Walkthrough: Low-Inference Note-Taking

This section unpacks Step 3 of the walkthrough cycle—Conduct Walkthrough Observations. It explains how observers focus on the instructional core and use low-inference notes to capture what they see and hear during the visit.

Once in the classroom, observers have their scheduled time to collect information on the use of HQCM. The priority is to observe and record, not to judge or score.

1. **Focus on the instructional core**

Observation studies emphasize attending to the interaction of teacher, student, and content—the instructional core—rather than isolated behaviors (Meyer-Looze, 2015). Focus notes on the three parts of the instructional core:

- Teacher actions (how content is presented, questions asked, responses to students).
- Student actions (what students are doing, saying, writing, and how they interact).
- The task and materials (what work students are actually doing and whether it is HQCM-aligned).

For example, if the focus is student discussion, record how the teacher launches the discussion, the prompts or sentence frames used, sample student comments, and the text or task students are discussing.

2. Take low-inference notes

Low-inference notes stick to **what you can see and hear**, like a video camera. They avoid assumptions, labels, or evaluations. Helpful moves include:

- Use direct quotes when possible.
- Include numbers and specifics (e.g., “7 of 24 students…”).
- Answer questions such as:
  - What is the teacher doing and saying?
  - What are students doing and saying?
  - What task are students working on, and what evidence shows success or struggle?
  - How is the teacher checking for understanding?

Avoid judgmental or vague phrases (“students were bored,” “class was chaotic,” “great strategy”). Instead, describe the behaviors that led you to those impressions. Guidance on observation for instructional improvement consistently recommends low-inference note-taking to reduce bias and support accurate, evidence-based feedback (Student Achievement Partners, 2017; LaRusso et al., 2024).

Example of low-inference notes	Non-example of low-inference notes
"Assigned students distribute the worksheet to groups. Process takes 3 minutes and 12 seconds." "Teacher counts down transition from carpet to desk. Kids continue to move when she hits zero." Teacher says, 'Turn and talk about how you solved problem 2,' and sets a 2-minute timer. Four of five pairs begin talking immediately; teacher circulates and listens Teacher writes: 'I notice ___; this makes me think ___.' One student says, 'I notice the character keeps hiding; this makes me think he's afraid.'	"Kids are not learning in this lesson." "The classroom was utter chaos while the kids worked on their art activity." Students were highly engaged in the discussion. Excellent use of sentence frame.

By grounding notes in observable evidence, teams can later agree on what they saw, connect it to the tool's indicators, and generate clear, actionable feedback. Over time, multiple snapshots build a fuller picture of instructional quality.

C. After a Walkthrough: Debrief and Action Planning

This section unpacks Step 4 –7 of the walkthrough cycle—Debrief & Analyze Evidence; Identify Action Steps; Provide Feedback and Support to Teachers; Review Progress and Adjust Support. It guides teams to turn what was seen in the classrooms into shared findings, concrete supports for teachers,and adjustments over time.

Gathering evidence is only the first step; walkthroughs become powerful when teams pause to interpret the data together and commit to specific next actions (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Effective debriefs are structured, time-bound, and grounded in low-inference evidence, with a coaching mindset and asset-based tone (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Learning Forward, 2022).

Depending on the scope, teams can use **brief "mini" debriefs** between classrooms and a **full debrief** after all observations.

1. Quick "Mini" Debriefs Between Classrooms

When a team visits several classrooms in a short window, short debriefs help capture fresh evidence and maintain focus. Whenever possible, step into a private space (for example, an empty classroom or office) so conversations about teaching and learning are not overheard in the hallway.

A simple 3–5 minute protocol:

- **Re-focus on the look-fors.** Restate the agreed HQCM-aligned focus for the visit (for example, "Today we are looking at how students use evidence in small-group discussion.").
- **Share key evidence.** Each observer names one strength and one growth-related piece of low-inference evidence tied to the focus (e.g., "Four students cited the text without prompting.").
- **Quick calibration.** As a group, place the evidence on your walkthrough tool or rubric (meeting / approaching / not yet meeting expectation). Note any major differences in judgment to revisit during the full debrief.

If time is very tight, use a "zip around": 30–60 seconds of silent thinking, then each observer quickly shares one strength and one growth point connected to the focus. This keeps all voices in the mix and normalizes that every lesson has both "glows" and "grows."

Mini debriefs should stay descriptive. Avoid explaining *why* something happened; save hypotheses about causes for the full debrief and clearly label them as tentative.

2. Full Debrief After All Observations

Once all scheduled walkthroughs are complete, the team meets for a 30–60 minute debrief to synthesize evidence across classrooms and turn it into an HQCM-aligned action plan (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

A suggested structure:

1. **Opening and norms (5 min).** Revisit purpose, focus, and norms (e.g., stick to evidence, honor all voices, assume positive intent). Clarify roles: facilitator, timekeeper, and note-taker.
2. **Individual reflection (5 min).** Observers silently review their notes, highlight 2–3 key pieces of evidence per classroom, and, if using a rubric, mark a tentative rating.
3. **Share trends (10–15 min).** Instead of recapping each classroom, name cross-class strengths and needs supported by evidence (for example, "In all four rooms, lesson objectives were visible and referenced; in three rooms, students did not have structured opportunities to talk."). Focus on patterns; record separate notes for any **outlier classrooms** that were exceptionally strong or significantly struggling, so those can be addressed with targeted follow-up.
4. **Analyze evidence (10 min).** For each agreed trend, surface the concrete evidence behind it. Then, **carefully** generate a few possible causes, clearly framed as hypotheses to test (e.g., "One possible reason checks for understanding were limited may be that teachers have not yet internalized the HQCM formative assessment routines."). Keep the conversation anchored in how the pattern affects student learning.
5. **Prioritize and goal-set (5 min).** Select one or two high-leverage priorities that align with school goals and HQCM implementation (for example, "Increase student talk that uses HQCM texts/problems as evidence."). Trying to tackle everything dilutes impact (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018).
6. **Action planning (15 min).** Identify 2–5 concrete action steps, balancing quick wins and longer-term moves. For each step, name:
    - **What** will happen (e.g., "Instructional lead will model one discourse routine using the HQCM in next week's PL.")
    - **Who** is responsible
    - **When** it will be done
    - **Where** it will live in existing structures (PL sessions, PLC agendas, coaching cycles, leadership team meetings).
7. **Conclusion and next cycle (5 min).** Summarize key strengths, priority needs, and agreed actions. Decide how and when feedback will be shared with teachers and schedule a check-in on implementation. This closes the loop and sets up the next walkthrough cycle as part of continuous improvement rather than a one-off event.

Throughout the debrief, maintain a coaching stance: stay anchored in what students and teachers were doing, connect conclusions to HQCM design, and ask, "How will this action improve students' experience with high-quality materials?" When leaders and coaches leave with a shared, evidence-based understanding of strengths, needs, and next steps, walkthroughs become a coherent system for strengthening instruction rather than isolated visits (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

Using Walkthrough Data to Drive Improvement

One walkthrough—or even one cycle—is not enough to change a system. What matters is **how consistently schools use the evidence from walkthroughs to adjust practice over time**. Research on walkthroughs and data use shows that when observation data are aggregated, shared, and used in structured cycles of inquiry, they can guide professional learning and support continuous improvement (Kubicek, 2015; Rouleau & Corner, 2020; Rowland, 2018).

1. Track data over time

Create a simple, shared system to log each walkthrough cycle (e.g., spreadsheet, dashboard, or platform). Capture:

- focus area and date range
- number of classrooms visited
- summary of strengths and bright spots
- summary of needs or gaps
- agreed action steps

Include both **quantitative indicators** (e.g., average rubric levels by indicator) and **qualitative trends** from notes. Over time, this makes it easy to see whether specific practices are improving, stalling, or slipping.

2. Assign clear roles for data review

Name who is responsible for looking at the data and how often, so it doesn't sit unused:

- district curriculum/academics leaders review districtwide trends monthly
- principals review school-level data bi-weekly or monthly
- coaches and department heads monitor patterns for specific teams or teachers

Build walkthrough data into existing **standing meetings** (e.g., leadership team, coaches' huddles) so "What are we learning from the latest walkthroughs?" becomes a routine question.

3. Share and interpret data *with* teachers

Teachers should not experience walkthroughs as something done *to* them. Use aggregate data (never naming individual teachers) as a tool for **shared sense-making**:

- Principals share school-level trends in staff meetings or PLCs ("Across classrooms, we saw strong use of manipulatives, and a need to strengthen math talk.").
- Grade-level or content teams examine patterns for their team and co-design next steps.
- Districts highlight exemplars and invite teachers to share strategies that walkthroughs surfaced as strengths.

This transparency builds trust and makes it clear that walkthroughs exist to support teacher in building strong skills in HQCM implementation through curriculum-based professional learning.

4. Use walkthrough trends to drive professional learning and coaching

Use walkthrough data—alongside student learning results—to set **concrete priorities** for support:

- If academic discourse is a recurring need, design PL focused on discussion routines and questioning.
- If a specific grade band is struggling with pacing, schedule extra collaborative planning and coaching there.
- If certain classrooms exemplify strong practice, organize peer visits so others can see those strategies in action.

Aligning PL to real, observed needs makes professional learning more targeted and impactful.

5. Connect walkthrough data to other goals and measures

Triangulate walkthrough findings with:

- student assessment data
- curriculum implementation or HQCM usage data
- strategic-plan or school-improvement goals

For example, if walkthroughs show inconsistent writing instruction and writing outcomes are flat, that combined evidence strengthens the case for focused action. Conversely, if you see improvement in walkthrough indicators and rising student performance, you can attribute some of that growth to the strategies you've implemented.

6. Adapt, innovate, and raise the bar

Across cycles, use what you learn to refine your approach:

- If an indicator remains low, ask whether teachers need different support (e.g., more modeling, content PD) or whether the tool language needs clarification.
- When a goal is met (e.g., consistent HQCM use), refine the focus to a more ambitious practice (e.g., deepening reasoning or discourse).
- Invite **teacher-led inquiry**—for example, PLCs selecting a common problem of practice that surfaced in the data and testing new strategies between cycles.

This keeps walkthroughs anchored in a **Plan–Do–Study–Act** rhythm rather than a compliance routine (Rowland, 2018).

7. Build simple, usable data tools

House the data in a format that leaders and teachers can actually use:

- a shared spreadsheet with auto-generated charts
- a simple dashboard that shows trends by school, grade, or indicator
- integration with existing data systems where possible

User-friendly tools increase the likelihood that teams will regularly look at, discuss, and act on the data.

A practical tip: Store walkthrough data in an accessible, easy-to-update system. Many districts use a live shared spreadsheet or dashboard (for example, a Google Sheet with tabs for each school or cycle that automatically summarizes key metrics). The simpler the system, the more likely leaders and teachers will use it regularly. When possible, connect it to existing data systems so walkthrough findings can be viewed alongside student achievement data.

For example, one district reviewed walkthrough data monthly and noticed a drop in 9th-grade classes using complex texts in December. They responded with refresher training on text complexity and adjusted pacing in 9th-grade ELA. By the next walkthrough cycle, use of complex texts rebounded and observers noted stronger student engagement.

In short, treat walkthrough data as a valuable asset. When it is systematically collected, analyzed, and used, it becomes a powerful feedback loop that turns classroom observations into real improvements in curriculum implementation and student learning.

Providing Supportive, HQCM-Grounded Feedback to Teachers

Feedback is the step that closes the walkthrough cycle for teachers and turns evidence into growth. Research on feedback and coaching shows that it is most effective when it is timely, specific, and focused on concrete next steps in practice, rather than on general praise or criticism (Hattie & Clarke, 2018; Kraft et al., 2018; Wiliam, 2017).

In this guidance, “effective feedback” means feedback that is explicitly anchored in **HQCM expectations, tasks, and look-fors**, not just generic pedagogy.

1. Core principles for walkthrough feedback

Timely and predictable

- Aim for timely feedback from the walkthrough (even if it is brief).
- Build a routine so teachers know when to expect feedback (for example, a quick note the next day and a short coaching conversation every few cycles).
- Regular, expected feedback lowers anxiety and makes it part of professional life, not a rare, high-stakes event.

Supportive tone and trust

- Open by checking readiness: “Is now a good time to debrief yesterday’s lesson, or would another time work better?”

- Start with a genuine HQCM-linked strength: “In yesterday’s Illustrative Mathematics lesson, I noticed you consistently pressed students to justify their reasoning—that’s tightly aligned to our HQCM focus on student thinking.”
- Make the conversation collaborative: “How did the lesson feel to you? Where did the HQCM tasks work as planned, and where did they feel off?”
- Close by asking, “What was most helpful today?” to refine future feedback conversations.

Grounded in HQCM and shared criteria

- Frame feedback in relation to:
    - the **HQCM unit/lesson** the teacher taught
    - the **walkthrough tool indicators**
    - school/district instructional priorities
- This keeps feedback actionable and aligned with what teachers are actually being asked to implement, addressing findings that generic professional development often fails to change classroom practice.

2. What effective feedback sounds like

Tie comments to HQCM look-fors and evidence

- Instead of: “You need to improve student engagement.”
- Say: “One of our HQCM goals is *students doing the thinking*. On yesterday’s EL Education lesson, we saw 4 of 20 students contribute during the text-based discussion. Let’s look at the discussion prompt and consider how we might adapt it so more students can use the text to support their thinking.”

Use low-inference, specific evidence

- “Students spent 7 of 15 minutes copying notes from the board. During that time, three students had heads down and did not write.”
- “When you used think-pair-share, all pairs began talking immediately; I heard several students refer back to the problem in their books.”

Offer concrete, HQCM-connected suggestions

- “For Lesson 12, where the HQCM calls for partner reasoning, let’s add one more open-ended question—‘Why does this strategy work?’—and plan a 1-minute turn-and-talk after you ask it.”
- “The lesson materials include sentence frames for multilingual learners. Next time, let’s post those frames and model using one before students start their discussion.”

Reinforce specific positives

- "Your routine of having students restate the learning target from the HQCM each day is powerful; students could explain what they were working toward in their own words. Keep that going."

Research on formative assessment and feedback emphasizes that comments linked to clear success criteria and next steps—rather than grades or vague praise—are more likely to change practice and improve learning (Hattie & Clarke, 2018; Wiliam, 2017).

3. The "One Next Thing" (ONT)

To avoid overwhelming teachers, focus each feedback cycle on **one high-leverage action**, co-created with the teacher and directly connected to HQCM. A strong ONT is:

- **Connected** – It clearly follows from the walkthrough evidence and aligns with HQCM expectations and the teacher's goals.
- **High-leverage** – It is likely to move student learning (e.g., adding checks for understanding or increasing student discourse).
- **Concrete & HQCM-anchored** – It names a specific move in an upcoming HQCM lesson.
    - Example: "In next week's Grade 5 IM lesson, use the think-pair-share protocol from the teacher guide after problem 3, and cold-call two pairs to share their reasoning."
- **Bite-sized** – Feasible within about a week.
- **Measurable** – You can observe whether it happened in the next walkthrough or coaching visit.

Teacher-coaching research finds that focused, practice-embedded goals—rather than long lists of suggestions—are associated with stronger changes in instruction and student outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018; Foster, 2018).

4. Feedback formats and logistics

Choose feedback formats that fit your context **and keep HQCM at the center**:

- **1:1 coaching conversation** – Ideal for deep work on instruction. Bring the HQCM lesson and walkthrough tool to the table and look at them together.
- **Written feedback (form or email)** – Use a simple structure such as:
    - *HQCM-aligned Glow*: "What to keep doing (linked to specific task/indicator)"
    - *HQCM-aligned Grow*: "One Next Thing, with where it will show up in upcoming HQCM lessons"
- **Group feedback / PLCs** – Share trends without naming individuals ("Across our Grade 6 HQCM math lessons, we saw strong use of manipulatives but limited opportunities for students to explain *why* their strategies work."). Use the HQCM materials and tool to plan shared next steps.

Regardless of format:

- Protect confidentiality; never highlight an individual teacher's weakness in front of peers.
- Document the agreed ONT and the HQCM lesson(s) it connects to, so it can be revisited in the next cycle.

5. Creating a continuous feedback loop

Feedback should be part of an ongoing cycle, not a one-time event:

1. **Walkthrough:** Gather low-inference evidence using the HQCM-aligned tool.
2. **Feedback:** Co-create an HQCM-grounded ONT.
3. **Practice:** Teacher implements the ONT in upcoming HQCM lessons.
4. **Next walkthrough or coaching visit:** Look specifically for that ONT; celebrate growth, refine, or choose a new focus.
5. **Team learning:** Common themes from feedback inform PLC work and professional learning design.

When leaders implement feedback in this way—timely, trustworthy, HQCM-anchored, and focused on one next actionable step—teachers are more likely to see walkthroughs as **supportive coaching** that helps them use HQCM well, rather than as evaluation. Over time, this builds a culture where everyone is engaged in reflective practice and in continuously improving curriculum implementation and student learning.

RIDE Suggested Walkthrough Tools

The content-specific tools linked below meet the criteria for an effective walkthrough tool. While they share common sections (e.g., culture of learning, student ownership), each section includes content-specific, research-based best practices, informed by the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) coaching tools. These tools are customizable to your district or school context, instructional vision, and priorities. Whatever tool you use, ensure it aligns with these criteria for an effective walkthrough tool.

- Literacy Walkthrough Tool
- Math Walkthrough Tool
- Science Walkthrough Tool
- Social Studies Walkthrough Tool

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Appendix

Appendix A: Structured Feedback Conversations – The 6-Step Model:

To deliver feedback in a coherent way, many coaches and leaders find it helpful to follow a structured conversation protocol. One such structure, adapted from Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's "Leverage Leadership," is a 6-step feedback conversation:

1. **Praise:** Begin with specific praise, narrating a positive aspect of the lesson. For example, "I want to start by highlighting something that went really well – the way you had students turn and talk was very effective. I noticed every student shared something with a partner, which shows great engagement." This sets a supportive tone and recognizes effective practice.

2. **Probe:** Rather than jumping straight to your suggestions, ask a targeted question to prompt the teacher's reflection on the area you want to address. For instance, "How did you feel about the level of student understanding during the group work? What evidence did you use to gauge if they 'got it'?" This probing question leads the teacher to think about the issue (in this case, checking for understanding) and invites them to identify any gap. If the teacher doesn't quite get to the heart of it, you can scaffold with more questions. The idea is to let the teacher do some thinking rather than just being told.

3. **One Next Thing:** Based on the discussion, arrive at the one next action step – the ONT we discussed. This might emerge naturally from the probe (e.g., teacher says, "I guess I didn't really check everyone's understanding; I mostly noticed the few who spoke up." Coach: "Right, so a next step could be to build in a quick check for all students. How about we try a quick quiz or exit ticket?"). If not, you propose it directly now: "One thing I suggest we work on is incorporating an exit ticket to measure every student's understanding at the end of the lesson." Ensure the teacher understands and agrees to this step.

4. **Practice:** This is a crucial (and often skipped) step – actually practice or plan *how* the teacher will implement the action step. Depending on time and the nature of the step, this could mean role-playing a scenario, writing sample questions together, or modeling the technique. For example, "Let's take 5 minutes to create an exit ticket for your next lesson. What's the key question you want every student to answer? Okay, how about we phrase it like this... Now, how will you collect and quickly review those? Let's practice how you'll introduce it to students." Practicing builds the teacher's confidence and sometimes uncovers small details to iron out.

5. **Plan Ahead:** Ensure the teacher is clear on when and where this action will fit in their upcoming lessons. For instance, "Looking at your plan for tomorrow, where could an exit ticket fit? Maybe right after the independent practice. Do you need to adjust timing for that? What materials do you need?" This forward-planning makes it far more likely

the action will be executed. It also connects the feedback to the teacher's actual lesson planning process.

6. **Set a Timeline (and Follow-Up):** Finally, establish when the action step will be completed and when you will follow up on it. You might say, "Great, so you will use this exit ticket in tomorrow's class. I'll stop by towards the end to see how it went, or you can send me a photo of the student responses. Let's meet briefly on Friday to reflect on how it went." By setting a specific follow-up time, you create accountability and show that you're invested in the teacher's progress. It also signals that feedback is an ongoing cycle, not one-and-done.

Using a structured approach like this helps ensure that feedback meetings are productive and focused on improvement, rather than unstructured discussions that might not lead to change. It also maximizes the chances that the teacher will actually implement the feedback, because you have practiced it, planned it, and scheduled a follow-up.