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Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Walkthroughs

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, University of Phoenix, 2005

BS, California State Polytechnic University, 2003

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Providing teachers with professional development leads to enhanced instructional practices that influence student achievement. Because of low student achievement scores, secondary school administrators at a district in the western United States implemented administrator-led classroom walkthroughs (CWs) as ongoing professional development to improve teachers' instructional practices and student achievement. However, secondary teachers (Grades 7-12) in the district believed that the use of CWs as an instructional coaching model was not improving their instructional practices. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand secondary teachers' perceptions of CWs. Guided by Kolb's experiential learning theory as the conceptual framework, the research question focused on understanding teachers' perceptions of CWs. A basic qualitative study design was used to collect data via semistructured interviews from a purposeful sample of 12 secondary teachers with at least 2 years of teaching experience who participated in CWs and received feedback at least twice. Data were analyzed with a thematic analysis approach using open and axial coding. Teachers expressed positive attitudes toward CWs, yet they believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful for changing classroom instruction or improving student achievement. Based on these findings, a white paper was developed that addressed teachers' recommendations for CW observations to be conducted by instructional and content specialists who could provide content-specific feedback. The guidance provided through this model may promote positive social change by strengthening teachers' instructional practices with the goal of improving student outcomes.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project study to my late mother, Minerva Mazzawi, who was my greatest role model. Mom, it is because of your prayers, unwavering support of my aspirations, and constant encouragement that I am where I am today and the person I am today. I wish you were here to see me graduate for the last time. I hope I made you proud.

This project is also dedicated to my daughter Raya. Your patience, support, and encouragement have sustained me through life and made me better and stronger. Bahibek ad eldenia.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thank you, God the Almighty, for guiding me and giving me the strength to undertake this journey. To my family, friends, and colleagues who in one way or another supported me and encouraged me, thank you.

I would also like to extend my deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Patricia Patrick, for her guidance and encouragement throughout my doctoral study. Additionally, my sincere appreciation to Dr. Amy Booth, Dr. Colleen Paeplow, and Dr. Marie Howe for providing support and feedback along the way to advance my efforts.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the participants who generously shared their time and experiences for this project.

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Section 1: The Problem

Teacher accountability for student achievement is driving educational reform efforts to develop and support teachers' professional learning to meet increasing demands for preparing students for 21st-century competencies. At the forefront of the reform is improving teachers' instructional practices (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Kraft & Blazar, 2016). Rapid changes in information and communication technology have contributed to the transformation of how students learn and how teachers teach. As a result, a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction has had profound implications for teachers' instructional practices.

Teachers' effectiveness is a critical component of efforts to improve student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Gillespie, 2016). While many factors can influence student learning, Marzano and Toth (2014) stated that the most significant contributor to student achievement is classroom instruction. Thus, improving student outcomes cannot be achieved without improved instructional practices. As teaching and learning are intertwined, improving teachers' instructional practices through effective professional development (PD) opportunities has been a focus of many school reform efforts aimed at improving student achievement.

To develop and support teachers' instructional practices that are influenced by content and pedagogy, PD opportunities must be focused, ongoing, relevant, and reflective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). One PD model that is gaining popularity among educational leaders as a form of job-embedded instructional coaching is the classroom walkthrough (CW; Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Used as an observation tool to

examine instructional practices in terms of their influence on student learning, a CW is often conducted by either a content or a pedagogy specialist or by school administrators. According to Garza et al. (2016), a CW is a method for providing ongoing and timely instruction-related feedback to teachers that can result in changes in teacher instructional practices and, ultimately, improvement in student learning outcomes.

The Local Problem

The shift from focusing on the 3Rs (i.e., reading, w[r]iting, and a[r]ithmetic) of the 20th century to the 4Cs (critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication) brought forth by the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) dictated the need to provide teachers with effective professional learning opportunities to expand their knowledge and refine their instructional practices. To provide teachers with continuous professional learning opportunities to address the resulting instructional shift, Fairway School District (FSD; a pseudonym) implemented the use of administrator-led CWs as an instructional coaching model to improve teachers' instructional practices. The problem is that secondary teachers at FSD do not believe that the administrator-led CWs are improving their instructional practices with the goal of increasing student achievement.

Starting in 2014, California students in Grades 3-8 and Grade 11 were expected to take the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) aligned with CCSS. The computer-adaptive assessment and performance task was developed to measure student achievement, academic growth, and progress toward college and career readiness. A departure from the multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank format, CAASPP

involves completing complex tasks requiring higher order thinking and analytical skills. According to Porter et al. (2015), the initial achievement results on CAASPP stipulated a shift in teachers' instructional approaches, requiring the development of students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Examining a representative sample of secondary (Grades 7-12) students' achievement results on the CAASPP at a school containing Grades 7 through 12 in the district indicates that a large percentage of students tested in Grades 7, 8, and 11 do not meet or nearly meet state standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (California Department of Education [CDE], 2020). Table 1 shows the results from the 2014-2015 school years, the first year in which the test was administered to seventh, eighth, and 11th-grade students. The overall ELA data for the three tested grades indicate that 80% of seventh-grade students did not meet or nearly met the state set standards, compared to 56% for the state average. In eighth grade, 72% of students did not meet or nearly met the state set standards, compared to 55% for the state average, and 50% of 11th-grade students did not meet or nearly met the state set standards, compared to 44% for the state average (CDE, 2020). Similarly, in Table 2, the data show that 90% of the seventh-grade students did not meet or nearly met the state standards, compared to 66% for the state average. Data also show that 91% of eighth-grade students did not meet or nearly met state standards, compared to 67% for the state average, and 86% of 11th-grade students did not meet or nearly met state standards, compared to 70% for state average (CDE, 2020).

Table 1

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade ELA CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2014-2015

2014-2015 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	26%	25%
Not met	54%	31%
8th grade		
Nearly met	32%	29%
Not met	40%	26%
11th grade		
Nearly met	29%	24%
Not met	21%	20%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Table 2

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade Mathematics CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2014-2015

2014-2015 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	23%	29%
Not met	67%	37%
8th grade		
Nearly met	24%	26%
Not met	67%	41%
11th grade		
Nearly met	29%	25%
Not met	57%	45%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Tables 3 through 8 show the school's state testing results from subsequent years (2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 school years). The data show that students at the school scored well below the state average in ELA and mathematics (CDE, 2020). School and state data from 2017-2018 show a slight improvement in ELA and mathematics compared to the initial year of testing. Although state CAASPP test results for 2017 showed that students maintained progress from the initial year of testing, Tom Torlakson, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, stated that much more work needs to be done to narrow the achievement gap (CDE, 2020).

Table 3

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade ELA CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2015-2016

2015-2016 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	21%	24%
Not met	67%	28%
8th grade		
Nearly met	32%	27%
Not met	46%	25%
11th grade		
Nearly met	30%	22%
Not met	25%	19%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Table 4

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade Mathematics CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2015-2016

2015-2016 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	29%	30%
Not met	56%	34%
8th grade		
Nearly met	19%	25%
Not met	71%	39%
11th grade		
Nearly met	30%	25%
Not met	61%	43%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Table 5

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade ELA CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2016-2017

2016-2017 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	26.54%	23.39%
Not met	54.94%	27.22%
8th grade		
Nearly met	35.52%	25.97%
Not met	46.45%	25.42%
11th grade		
Nearly met	31.30%	21.34%
Not met	20.61%	18.91%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Table 6

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade Mathematics CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2016-2017

2016-2017 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	22.84%	27.07%
Not met	62.35%	36.03%
8th grade		
Nearly met	16.13%	23.42%
Not met	76.34%	40.28%
11th grade		
Nearly met	32.06%	23.64%
Not met	49.54%	44.22%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Table 7

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade ELA CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2017-2018

2017-2018 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	27.44%	23.15%
Not met	48.17%	26.70%
8th grade		
Nearly met	25.93%	25.04%
Not met	56.79%	25.84%
11th grade		
Nearly met	26.88%	22.18%
Not met	10.75%	21.85%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Table 8

Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Grade Mathematics CAASPP Student Achievement Results, 2017-2018

2017-2018 school year	School data (%) standards	State of California data (%) standards
7th grade		
Nearly met	21.95%	26.1%
Not met	54.88%	36.61%
8th grade		
Nearly met	12.88%	
Not met	74.23%	22.94%
		40.17%
11th grade		
Nearly met	19.15%	22.84%
Not met	53.19%	45.78%

Note. Data from CDE (2020).

Recognizing that teachers have the most impact on students' achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015), research findings suggest that engaging teachers in PD opportunities to enhance content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy can significantly influence student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Garet, 2015). The implementation of administrator-led CW at FSD aimed to partner teachers with administrators as instructional coaches to engage teachers in instructional dialogue that facilitates reflective practices to develop and strengthen teachers' instructional practices (Kuh, 2016; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015).

The use of administrator-led CWs prompted many conversations among teachers at the district about the failure of CWs to meet the intended purpose of improving their instructional practices. Exploring teachers' perceptions of CW provided me with the

teachers' views of the practice and an understanding of CW components that teachers regarded as supportive or unsupportive about influences on their instructional practices.

Rationale

The implementation of the CCSS in California provided educators with clear and concise learning goals aligned with college and career expectations. These new goals required an instructional shift in curriculum and classroom instruction to better support students' 21st-century skills and competencies (Marzano & Toth, 2014; Porter et al., 2015).

Research shows that effective teachers are the most important factor contributing to student achievement (Connor, 2017; Gillespie, 2016). Researchers have long agreed that effective PD opportunities can affect teachers' skills, enhance their knowledge, and provide them with instructional practices that can lead to higher student achievement (Abdurrahmani, 2013; Connor, 2017; Kachur et al., 2013b). Results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey in 2013, an international survey for teachers and school leaders about the teaching and learning environment, provided insight into how to foster better teaching and learning in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2015). The survey revealed that teachers in the United States receive less valuable PD opportunities, less time to collaborate, and less useful feedback all of which, are considered by research as valuable tools for improving instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2015). This inadequate support for teachers' PD in the United States, according to Darling-Hammond (2015), is largely contributing to the poor achievement of U.S. students compared to their

peers in other industrial nations. Therefore, to close the student achievement gap, it is necessary to close the teaching gap (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Additionally, high-stakes testing and educational reforms require an instructional shift in curriculum and teacher instruction. In this context, "instructional shift" means a shift in teachers' instructional approach that better supports the development of students' critical thinking and problem solving (Porter et al., 2015). As a result, great emphasis must be placed on providing teachers with instructional strategies to prepare students with 21st-century skills (Marzano & Toth, 2014). To achieve this goal, teachers need to be provided with ongoing job-embedded PD opportunities that allow for instructional dialogue and feedback that promote reflective practices that may lead to improved instructional practices (Teemant et al., 2014).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated that effective PD is structured professional learning that improves teaching practices and student outcomes. Darling-Hammond et al. suggested that effective PD encompasses content-specific pedagogy, allows for collaboration in a job-embedded context, provides ongoing coaching and expert support that offers feedback, and promotes reflective practices. CW as PD addresses all of Darling-Hammond et al.'s suggestions for effective PD. As a platform for instructional coaching, a CW allows for ongoing interaction between the coach and coachee. The interactions facilitate observations, feedback, and reflections on practices directly related to classroom instruction. Teemant et al. (2014) asserted that instructional coaching is regarded as a more effective PD option for teachers to improve and develop their instructional practices. A literature review on coaching found that although coaching has

common elements across different disciplines, there has not been a systemic consideration of the most effective approach in the field of education (Kurz et al., 2017).

To provide teachers with ongoing job-embedded PD directly connected to teachers' needs in the classroom, educational leaders have used CWs as an instructional coaching model to guide instruction-focused conversations (Garza et al., 2016; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013). Although CWs were primarily used as a tool for teacher evaluation and to increase administrator leadership capacity (Moss & Brookhart, 2015), CWs are regarded as a powerful tool to engage teachers and administrators in a collaborative process. The collaborative process allows teachers and administrators to engage in a cycle of instructional improvement that involves collecting data, facilitating instructional dialogue, encouraging reflective practices to support a change in pedagogy, and building teachers' instructional capacity (Garza et al., 2016).

Researchers found that most principals used CWs as an instructional leadership strategy and for monitoring teachers' practices, while a small number of principals regarded CWs as an opportunity to provide teachers with instructional coaching (Grissom et al., 2013). Kurz et al. (2017) noted a gap in the literature on the efficacy of instructional coaching and its influence on teachers' instructional practices that may lead to increased academic achievement. Additionally, Thomas et al. (2015) stated that teachers' instructional coaching is not properly understood in terms of the revision of practices among teachers and urged additional research on instructional coaching's influence to improve instructional practices.

Although research on the different types of CWs is available, there is minimal research on their influence as an instructional coaching model on teachers' instructional practices. The goal of this study was to understand FSD teachers' perceptions of the influence of CWs on their instructional practices. Findings from the study shed light on what teachers regard as useful components of engaging in a CW and what is needed that may not be occurring to influence their instructional practices.

Definition of Terms

Adult learners' knowledge base: Refers to the knowledge that adult learners bring to their new learning that is based on sets of assumptions that include learner's self-directedness, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, and motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2015).

The cycle of experiential learning: Refers to learning that occurs when someone creates knowledge through experiential transformation, going through four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 2015).

Classroom walkthrough (CW): An observation technique by which data can be collected on instructional strategies, level of student engagement, and classroom resources (Garza et al., 2016; Grissom et al., 2013).

Instructional coaching: A job-embedded PD strategy for enhancing teachers' classroom instructional practices to improve teaching and learning (Teemant et al., 2014).

Job-embedded: On-the-job teacher learning opportunities that aim at enhancing teachers' instructional skills grounded in day-to-day teaching practices (Owens et al., 2014).

Professional development (PD): Opportunities for enhancing professional knowledge, skills, and effectiveness to support quality teaching to improve students' learning. PD is sustained, collaborative, job-embedded, and classroom focused (Learning Forward, 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study's significance lies in the potential to provide insight into how teachers' instructional practices are influenced by CWs and what is needed that may not be occurring to influence adjustments in teachers' instructional practices. Making teachers more aware of the profound effect that their instructional practices have on students can lead to changes in practice and improved student achievement (Beauchamp et al., 2014; Kraft et al., 2018). Data collected at the local level will provide school administrators with much-needed information about teachers' perceptions of CWs and their influence on improving their instructional practices. Exploring the ways that teachers use feedback resulting from CWs could provide data that may result in improved teaching and learning. Findings may provide educational leaders with insight on how to proceed in developing a job-embedded instructional coaching model that can influence teachers' instructional practices.

Research Question

The growing need to support teachers' instructional practices requires educational leaders to provide teachers with continuous PD opportunities focusing on enhancing epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices. Epistemologically, CWs, which include instructional coaching as a form of professional development, may change the ways in which teachers understand and view learning. Pedagogically, instructional coaching via a CW can be a form of job-embedded PD that supports improved teaching techniques. Because little evidence exists at FSD and in the literature about the influence of CWs as an instructional coaching model on teachers' instructional practices, one research question was enough to address the data. The research question guiding this qualitative study was as follows:

RQ: What are the secondary (Grades 7-12) teachers' perceptions of the CWs?

Review of the Literature

Educational reform initiatives such as the adoption of CCSS aiming at developing the increasingly complex skills that students need to succeed in the 21st-century dictated the need to develop and support changes in teachers' instructional practices. As a result, educators continue to seek ways to provide teachers with ongoing job-embedded PD opportunities promoting 21st-century instructional practices. Researchers have found a strong link between teachers' PD opportunities, instructional practices, and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kraft & Blazar, 2016). This basic qualitative study aimed to understand the perceptions of 12 FSD teachers about the influence of CWs as job-embedded PD on their instructional practices.

The development of this literature review included an electronic search of peer-reviewed journals and books using Walden Thoreau, ERIC, SAGE Research Complete, and Google Scholar. The search included a summary of experiential learning theory (ELT) as the conceptual framework and topics related to teachers' PD opportunities. The review provided relevance to the study and justified the existing gap in professional knowledge of teachers' perceptions of the influence of CWs on their instructional practices.

Conceptual Framework

The familiarity of instructional leaders with the adult learning knowledge base has the potential to increase responsiveness to teachers' learning needs. Therefore, the descriptive study's conceptual framework was based on Kolb's ELT (2015). Kolb's theory, which involves a four-stage cycle of learning, emphasizes the importance of experience in the learning process. Through this cycle, individuals construct knowledge by interacting with their environment. Engaging in the experiential learning cycle involves teachers in active learning based on their experiences. Through those experiences, teachers gain a better understanding of how to develop and implement instructional strategies that support both learning and teaching in the classroom (Kolb, 2015). To demonstrate how Kolb's ELT aligns with the topic of this study, the following section includes a description of Kolb's ELT, the rationale for choosing the theory as the conceptual framework for the study, and how the theory shaped the research and interview question.

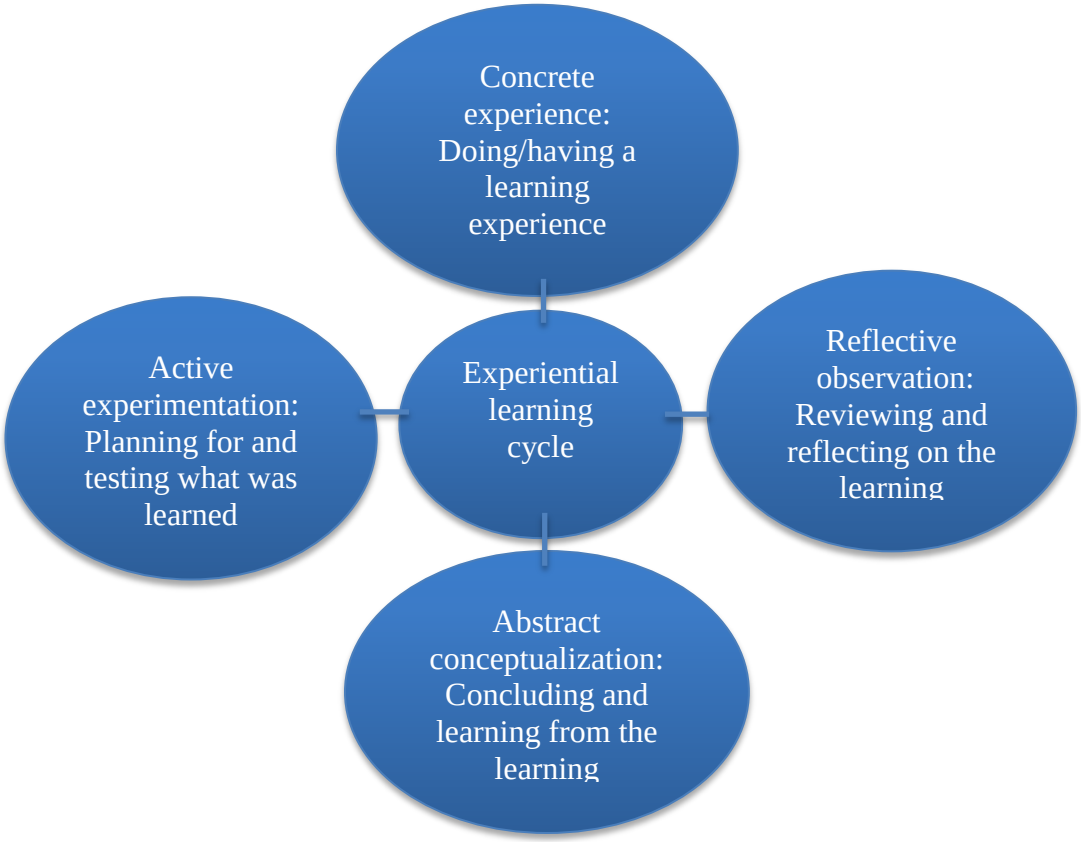
Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb's ELT (2015) draws on the intellectual work of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget. ELT is based on the idea that learning occurs during task-oriented activities and when contextually relating previous knowledge to the current situation (Kolb, 2015). Kolb's notion of learning can be applied to the current study, where the focus is on teachers' feedback following the experience of a CW observation. ELT is ideal for explaining adult learning as it focuses on the vital role of experience in learning and changing (Blair, 2016). Learning lies at the base of developing strategies, changing actions, and solving problems (Matsuo, 2015), which typifies teachers' daily encounters with teaching.

As shown in Figure 1, Kolb posited that gaining knowledge through personal and environmental experiences requires learners to have four abilities: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation (Matsuo, 2015). Two ways of understanding experiences involve concrete experience and abstract conceptualization stages, while the two ways of converting or transforming experience include reflective observation and active experimentation stages (Kolb et al., 2014). This study focused on teachers' experiences and their conceptualization of the experiences. These contrasting ways of dealing with experiences indicate the existence of tensions and oppositions in the learning process, which serve as a driving factor for learning.

Figure 1

Illustration of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



Note. Developed from Kolb (2015).

Engaging in this learning cycle, in which experience and conceptualization are the forces behind learning, aligns with a CW. In this study, feedback following a CW represents the concrete experience, where teachers immersed in a real teaching/learning experience engage in the conceptualization of their experience. During the CW and subsequent feedback, teachers have concrete experiences that should encourage abstract conceptualization or the learning that occurs. The experiences resulting from the CW should become part of what teachers describe after the CW. Gathering information on how teachers describe the concrete experience (CW) may lead to a better understanding

of their conceptualization of the CW (what they learned from the interaction). The information provided can be a powerful tool for educators. For classroom teachers, it can facilitate the development of classroom instructional practices; for instructional coaches, it can help identify and provide proper teachers' support; and for school leaders, it can facilitate the development and implementation of job-embedded PD opportunities.

Furthermore, ELT's four stages guided the method by which to collect data for the study. Using semistructured individual interviews to collect teachers' perceptions of the influence of CWs on their instructional practices afforded teachers the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions by describing their personal experiences, resulting in rich data for analysis. Qualitative data gathering through interviews allows participants' perceptions to stay intact and provides multiple contexts by which to analyze and understand the phenomenon under study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The framework guided the formulation of the interview questions, which were intended to explore teachers' concrete experiences and conceptualizations of those experiences, as well as to provide insight into their potential to plan for a change in instruction (active experimentation). By pursuing understanding of teachers' perceptions of CWs, I sought to shed light on how the implementation of newly acquired knowledge through feedback may result in changes in instructional practices.

Learning From Experience

Based on the criticisms of Kolb's learning theory, Matsuo (2015), a human resource management scholar, set out to develop a theoretical framework for learning from experience based on human management research findings. Matsuo accounted for

environmental factors, such as social and political influences and metacognitive elements of learning and concluded that people do not benefit and learn equally from the same experience. Influenced by the Prospector, an assessment scale measuring an individual's capacity to learn from experience developed by Spreitzer et al. (1997, as cited in Matsuo, 2015), Matsuo proposed a framework that integrates factors that facilitate experiential learning in different fields. Matsuo identified five facilitators—(a) seeking challenging tasks, (b) critical reflection, (c) enjoyment of work, (d) learning goal, and (e) developmental network—that directly and indirectly facilitate the performance of Kolb's experiential learning process. Like managers, teachers need to learn from experience to enhance and further develop their teaching practices (Matsuo, 2015). The capability to use and invite feedback is an essential aspect of learning from experience. Teachers need the ability to learn from experience and to use feedback from walkthroughs to influence their classroom instructional practices.

Providing teachers with job-embedded PD opportunities to improve teaching and learning could prepare them to face the challenges resulting from the demands of a changing global society (Cavazos et al., 2018; Owens et al., 2014). As adult learners, teachers who are provided learning activities through PD experiences often aim at improving their knowledge base and instructional practices. To provide meaningful learning activities to adults, it is essential to understand their specific learning requirements, the environment that best suits them, and the characteristics of learning in adults (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Teachers as Adult Learners

Knowles et al. (2015) asserted that adults have unique learning needs dictating the structure by which they learn. In the case of teachers as adult learners, PD is adult education (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Therefore, providing teachers with the proper PD opportunities addressing specific learning needs is crucial to its effectiveness. Knowles (1984) popularized the term *andragogy* to describe the art and science of adult learning as he attempted to create a unified theory of adult learning. Knowles suggested that adults' learning needs are different from children's learning needs based on the following assumptions: self-directedness, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, and motivation to learn. Awareness of adult learners' characteristics requires key concepts of andragogy integrated into experiential learning opportunities to yield higher benefits and greater engagement (Blair, 2016; Leigh et al., 2015).

Self-Directedness

Knowles's self-directedness assumption about adult learners' characteristics indicates that adult learners take initiative to address their learning needs and assume responsibility for their learning choices (Ozuah, 2016). Based on this assumption, teachers as adult learners should self-assess their needs and be involved in planning their own PD to address their individual needs (Park et al., 2016). Teachers must establish a collegial, trusting relationship with their instructor/coach, who scaffolds support (Park et al., 2016).

Experience

Adults tend to link their experiences as a basis from which to not only create new learning, but also gauge their learning needs (Ozuah, 2016). Carlson et al. (2018) asserted that those who develop PD opportunities should consider validating teachers' new concepts based on prior learning shaped by their backgrounds, learning styles, motivation, and needs. Knowles (1984) contended that adults learn best through participation in discussion or problem solving, a notion confirmed by Desimone and Garet (2015), who asserted that adult learning activities should be collaborative. Collaborative activities, along with coaching and mentoring support, can potentially facilitate the gradual transformation of teachers who acquire knowledge through social participation with colleagues and coaches (Gutierez, 2015). Therefore, teachers' PD opportunities should be organized to involve learning teams consisting of individuals with similar life experience levels to facilitate interaction, sharing, and discussions among members (Desimone & Garet, 2015).

Readiness to Learn

Adults are motivated to learn and achieve personal growth. Their readiness to learn is oriented toward the development of tasks that correspond to their social roles and responsibilities, which the adult learner perceives as relevant and practical (Knowles et al., 2015; Ozuah, 2016). Ozuah (2016) stated that teachers' readiness to learn is oriented toward tasks that they perceive as relevant to their work.

Orientation to Learn

For adult learners, the orientation for learning shifts from one that is subject centered to one that is problem centered (Ozuah, 2016). Ozuah (2016) explained that aligning tasks, individual learning goals, and work roles encourages complete engagement in the learning process. Studies on teachers' learning experiences have indicated that teachers are likely to adopt reformed instructional practices when their learning experiences directly relate to ways of teaching curricula (Camburn & Han, 2015).

Motivation to Learn

Knowles et al. (2015) asserted that although adult learners respond to external motivation, internal factors can also motivate them. Internal motivators, such as job satisfaction, the desire to grow, improved self-esteem, and quality of life, are usually more important to adults in their learning process (Ozuah, 2016). Because this motivation is the driving force behind learning, it is imperative to design PD opportunities that provoke teachers' intrinsic motivation supported by intellectually stimulating resources.

Review of the Broader Problem

The literature review sources included peer-reviewed journals and books, which I located using Walden Thoreau, ERIC, SAGE Research Complete, and Google Scholar. The search included the terms *instructional coaching, teachers' instructional practices, instruction, classroom walkthroughs*, *classroom observations*, *experiential learning, feedback,* and *embedded professional development*. The literature review of the broader problem is organized into the sections addressing the following topics: PD relating to

teachers' instructional practices, instructional coaching, classroom walkthroughs, feedback, and reflective practices.

Professional Development as It Relates to Teachers' Instructional Practices

The need to respond individually and collectively to the rapid changes required to prepare students with 21st-century skills emphasizes the importance of providing teachers with effective PD opportunities that support changes in their instructional practices. PD is defined as opportunities to enhance teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and effectiveness associated with their instruction with the aim of improving instruction and students' outcomes (Desimone & Garet, 2015). Rodriguez et al. (2014) asserted that teachers need continuous PD opportunities to support their teaching, refine their instructional skills, and enhance their knowledge of content and pedagogy.

Meeting the demands of the CCSS and the need for more inquiry-based learning so that students are ready for career and college means radical change in the way that teachers are provided with PD opportunities to implement new pedagogical practices (Girvan, 2016; Johnson, 2016). According to Cavazos et al. (2018), PD opportunities evolved in the past 15 years from "one-shot" workshops where teachers are passive recipients of information to models of job-embedded PD in which teachers are involved in collaborative decision making that addresses their specific needs. Patton et al. (2015) also asserted that it is no longer sufficient to expose teachers to traditional one-time workshops to improve their instructional practices. Gulamhussein (2013) stated that teachers often report that workshops have very little influence on their classroom practices and indicate that they do not find them useful.

Historically, educators favored the workshop approach to teacher PD that offered one-time training on a variety of pedagogy and content-specific topics. Studies conducted on teachers' PD showed that U.S. teachers spent more time instructing students and less time in PD learning opportunities compared to teachers in top performing countries (Darling-Hammond, 2015). To address this gap, several site-based PD models emerged beginning in the 2000s. Such site-based PD models included professional learning communities where teachers meet several times a week in grade level or content area teams to collaborate on teaching strategies. Other site-based practices included the Japanese lesson study protocol, in which a teacher creates and teaches a model lesson that colleagues observe and later analyze to make improvements (Vrikki et al., 2017).

The instructional shift resulting from the implementation of CCSS highlighted the need to equip teachers with instructional strategies that address 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Often referred to as the 4 Cs, teachers are required to utilize strategies and approaches that align with students' individualized learning styles using technology to facilitate the learning process. As a result of this instructional shift, interest in finding effective PD opportunities for teachers became one of the most important driving forces behind any reform initiatives aimed at improving teaching and learning. In their study of 887 teachers in a large urban district in the USA, Camburn and Han (2015) found that teachers engaged in reflecting on their learning experiences directly related to their classroom teaching are more likely to change their instructional practices.

Understanding teachers as individual learners with different learning styles and unique classroom challenges dictate the need to provide teachers with individualized PD opportunities that are relevant and directly related to their classroom work. Patton et al. (2015) suggested linking teachers' PD opportunities to desired student outcomes. Therefore, PD opportunities should engage teachers as active learners, who consider their needs and interests, are collaborative, ongoing, and focus on enhancing the content knowledge and pedagogy skills (Girvan, 2016; Patton et al., 2015). A review of studies on PD conducted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found seven features of effective PD paraphrased below:

- **Content focus.** PD opportunities focusing on improving teachers' content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy resulted in improving some aspects of instructional practices.
- **Participants as active learners.** Engaging teachers in designing, developing, implementing, and reflecting on different teaching strategies can facilitate changes in their instructional practices.
- **Collaborative.** Providing teachers opportunities to collaborate and share ideas in a job-embedded context.
- **Use of effective practice models.** Providing teachers with research-based instructional practice models.
- **Coaching and expert support**. Provide teachers with coaching and expert support opportunities focused on individual teachers' needs.

- **Feedback and reflection.** Embedding frequent opportunities to receive feedback and reflecting on instructional practices can lead to improved and refined teaching practices.
- **Sustained over time.** Providing teachers with adequate time to engage in a PD cycle that includes learning, practicing, implementing, and reflecting to improve instructional practices.

To help teachers make a fundamental shift in practice requires a specific approach to PD that engages teachers in experiential learning that results in instructional change (Blair, 2016; Girvan, 2016). Dreyer (2015) asserted that instructional change could occur through a PD process that focuses on teachers developing their classroom instructional practices through experimentation, reflecting, and adopting new practices in their professional context. According to Dreyer, developing reflective skills is an essential component of teachers' PD. Camburn and Han (2015) asserted that embedded learning experiences that directly focus on classroom teaching are effective because they foster teachers' reflection and enable teachers to make informed decisions to adjust their instructional practices.

In recent years, educators employed the use of a CW as a job-embedded PD that encompasses the seven features of effective PD identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). CW facilitates gathering information to coach through frequent classroom observations, feedback, and reflection on practices (Garza, 2016; Gillespie, 2016). Used by building administrators, a CW provides a structure for dialogue between teachers and administrators as instructional coaches (Kachur et al., 2013b). CW also provides

continuous support during the implementation phase of newly acquired knowledge, which is often regarded as the greatest challenge facing teachers about developing and changing instructional approaches (Camburn & Han, 2015; Shernoff et al., 2017). Without support during this phase, it is highly unlikely that teachers will master the newly acquired instructional strategies (Shernoff et al., 2017). Therefore, affording teachers ongoing support via coaching before, during, and after lessons, providing feedback, and promoting reflective practices is crucial in supporting and developing teachers' instructional practices.

Instructional Coaching

In recent years, teachers' PD focused on providing teachers with opportunities to improve teachers' instruction, resulting in higher student achievement (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). A growing body of research suggests that learning experiences that are job-embedded and directly related to classroom teaching are a highly effective form of PD (Camburn & Han, 2015). Instructional coaching emerged as one of the more effective job-embedded PD options for teachers as adult learners to improve their instructional practices (Crawford et al., 2017; Kraft & Blazar, 2016; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Teemant et al., 2014). While instructional coaching regarded as an effective form of PD, there is no defined description for the role of an instructional coach because the position is multifaceted and fulfills various needs. Despite variances in the role of an instructional coach, researchers agree that an instructional coach is a mentor who provides teachers with training to become more effective in classroom instruction (Hanover Research, 2014). According to Huguet et al. (2014), the goal of instructional coaching is to build

teachers' capacity to guide dialogue and reflection about teaching and learning practices. Coaching involves the classroom teacher and the coach, who provides the teacher with content planning, content-specific pedagogical support, classroom management approaches, instruction, and assessment guided by adult learning principles (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Johnson, 2016). Effective coaching has the potential to influence positively the way teachers teach, and students learn (Johnson, 2016; Sailors & Price, 2015).

According to Camburn and Han (2015), coaching can foster interaction between coach and teacher that can potentially prompt critical reflection on the part of the teacher that results in increased pedagogical knowledge. Desimone and Pak (2017) asserted that for coaching to be effective, adequate time for frequent interaction between coach and teacher must take place to influence teachers' instructional practices. Simoncini et al. (2014) found that engaging in inquiry and reflective conversations allow participants to extend their learning and grow professionally. Additionally, coaches who are responsive to teachers' needs regarded as more effective in establishing a trusting relationship with teachers through reflective conversations and feedback (Hammond & Moore, 2018).

Knight (2017) identified three components essential to the coaching cycle: identify, learn, and improve. In the identify stage, teachers identify their areas of need to improve teaching and learning. The second, the learn stage, involves collaboration between teachers and coaches about resources and instructional practices that can support improvement efforts. Finally, the improvement stage includes the implementation of identified instructional strategies and the monitoring of implementations.

Three approaches to coaching identified by Knight (2017) include:

- **Facilitative coaching.** The coach refrains from sharing expertise or suggestions but encourages teachers to share ideas and reflect on their practices.
- **Directive coaching**. The coach assumes the expert's role that transfers knowledge and provides suggestions to teachers to improve classroom practices.
- **Dialogical coaching.** There is a partnership between teacher and coach. Both share strategies and options for improvements by identifying areas of need and ways to address them.

Instructional coaching provides individual teachers with one-on-one support to identify instructional needs in collaboration with the coach-mentor (Johnson, 2016). Coaches can be individuals from inside or outside the organization and can be part-time or full-time support providers. In many school districts, school administrators are entrusted with the role of evaluator and instructional leader. Knight (2017) asserted that instructional coaches' roles include observations, feedback, and engaging teachers in reflective conversations. According to Knight, the primary role of an instructional coach is to engage teachers in reflective practices to identify ways by which to strengthen teachers' practices. Coaching should not be a top-down approach, but a partnership that allows for dialogue through open-ended questions and feedback to promote teachers' active engagement (Thomas et al., 2015).

As a research-based job-embedded approach, instructional coaching regarded as an instructional intervention may provide teachers with the support needed to acquire and

implement new knowledge and instructional practices that could result in improved teaching and learning (Hammond & Moore, 2018). Hammond and Moore suggested that coaching was effective in addressing the individual needs of teachers. Additionally, coaching significantly contribute to reform efforts and systematic transformation (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Stefaniak, 2017). Although little empirical evidence supports the notion that coaching improves teacher practices (Desimone & Pak, 2017), additional studies are necessary to understand how coaching can contribute to the revision of practices among teachers (Thomas et al., 2015).

Classroom Walkthroughs

In an era of educational accountability, efforts to improve classroom instructions have been at the forefront of school reform initiatives. Traditionally, used as a supervisory tool by school administrators for teacher evaluation, CW has been employed in the clinical sense as a job-embedded PD that aims to improve teachers' instructional practices (Kachur et al., 2013b). CW, also known as informal observation, learning walk, and reflective walkthrough, is defined as informal, frequent, short, focused visit to gather data on teaching and learning in the classroom (Kachur et al., 2013a),

Although there is a variation in the meaning of CW, the common goal is to gather evidence of teaching and student learning to guide improvement (Garza et al., 2016). CW can provide valuable information on the teaching and learning occurring in the school, identifies PD needs of faculty, and promotes collegial and collaborative instructional dialogue among staff. CW also regarded as facilitating teachers' reflection on their

instructional practices, identifying their areas of need, and establishing a trusting collegial relationship with school administrators.

CW gained popularity in recent years as building administrators looked for ways to improve instructional practices that lead to higher student achievement (Kachur et al., 2013b). Using CW to facilitate conversations between administrators and teachers regarding instructional practices could lead to improved student achievement (Kachur et al., 2013b) and increased leadership visibility and capacity (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Although there is a need for additional research on the effectiveness of CW as an instructional coaching model, teachers engaging in a CW can yield positive effects on instructional practices and student achievement if four important components are present (Kachur et al., 2013b). First, the frequency and length of time of a CW must serve as a snapshot of what is transpiring in the classroom at different times. Second, there is a need to identify the "look-for" that provides the focus and the structure of the CW and clarifies expectations. The third component is the objective collection of data of what is strictly observed, departing from any evaluative lens that can then be shared as evidence during the feedback phase. Lastly, the follow-up phase is where teachers receive feedback using the collected data as evidence to reflect on practices and experiences to make instructional adjustments.

Teachers play a significant role in improving student outcomes (Gonzalez & Maxwell, 2018). Researchers concluded that a high correlation between quality teaching and student performance is evident (Gillespie, 2016; Yoo, 2016). As a result of this correlation, educational leaders looked for ways to provide teachers with ongoing job-

embedded opportunities to collect data and provide support, resources, and feedback (Kachur et al., 2013b). Derived from Hewlett-Packard's supervisory practice of *Management by Wandering Around*, CW has been utilized to collect data regarding teachers' instructional practices and provide feedback (Garza et al., 2016). Although there are various models for CWs, they all share common features. According to Garza et al. (2016), a CW is brief observation (sometimes lasting only 3 minutes) that occurs at different points of the classroom period with the common goal to provide direct and specific feedback to teachers. According to DuFour and Marzano (2011), CWs utilized by principals as instructional leaders can provide data and insight that can help improve teachers' instructional practices and ultimately result in higher student achievement. Garza et al. (2016) asserted that while CWs can lead to instruction-focused conversations between teachers and instructional leaders, the sufficient duration of such observation is unclear. The *Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough* developed by Carolyn Downey (Downey et al., 2004), the *Learning Walk* developed by Lauren Resnick (1996, as cited in Bole & Farizo, 2013), and the *UCLA Walkthrough* (Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007) call for short classroom visits to gather evidence that will facilitate a conversation which could lead to improved instruction and ultimately increased student achievement. Gillespie (2016) asserted that gathering information on multiple short visits could lead to identifying patterns and areas of strengths and weaknesses in instructional practices. In addition, feedback resulting from short classroom visits could facilitate a discussion between teacher and coach to support teachers' professional growth (Downey et al., 2004; Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007; Garza et al., 2016).

Although research about the influence of CW on school improvement is limited, Kachur et al. (2013b) suggested that they could facilitate better communication among staff and identify PD needs that could lead to improved teaching and learning. Such outcomes can only result from meaningful feedback within the context of conversations between teacher and instructional coach as part of the CW. Garza et al. (2016) found that feedback, either verbal or written, should be given shortly after the CW. Tuytens and Devos (2017) noted that teachers did not look for specific content knowledge feedback from their school leadership after observation, but regarded feedback on instructional support as valuable.

Feedback and Reflective Practices

A vital component of CW is feedback after a classroom observation. Girvan et al. (2016) asserted that feedback and reflection affords teachers ownership over their specific PD needs. Garza et al. (2016) noted that principals use CW to increase leadership visibility and enhance leadership capacity. However, teachers perceive CWs as an opportunity for feedback and reflection to facilitate dialogue between teachers and administrators to improve instruction. A study conducted by Gurkan (2018) on the effect of feedback on instructional behaviors concluded that effective feedback requires four elements. First, feedback needs to be goal-oriented that shows a connection between teaching and the learning goal of the teacher. Second, provide tangible results related to the goal. Third, feedback needs to offer actionable information on what worked and what did not based on the observation. Fourth, feedback needs to be timely and ongoing. Feedback, immediate or delayed, greatly affected teachers' performance; however, the

study emphasized that immediate feedback yielded greater results in decreasing teachers' undesirable behaviors (Gurkan, 2018).

Feedback intended to identify discrepancies between actual outcomes and intended outcomes is essential to improving the learning process. Recent research suggests that frequent and actionable performance feedback is a key factor in improving teaching performance through reflective practices (Steinberg & Sartain, 2015). Kuh (2016) interviewed over 500 teachers and found that feedback is a critical factor in stimulating reflective practices. It is through reflection that teachers are empowered to foster their professional growth. Gurkan (2018) found that collegial interaction with peers after classroom observation could promote reflective dialogue that could lead to improved teaching practices. Kuh (2016) also identified that reflective practices were better sustained when teachers reflected on their instructional leaders' feedback from discussions with their colleagues.

Engaging in CW is one way to share teachers' actionable feedback to make the instructional shift called for by the new college and career readiness standards (Marzano & Toth, 2014; Porter et al., 2015). Feedback at the conclusion of a CW intends to change teachers' behavior resulting from self-reflection rather than a top-down approach that can lead to instructional improvement (Holmstrom et al., 2015). A study conducted by Kheirzadeh and Sistani (2018) examined the effect of reflective teaching on student achievement which indicated a correlation between teachers engaging in reflective practices and student achievement.

Reflection is an integral component in connecting learning to the experience (Bleach, 2014; Ganly, 2018). Engaging in CWs afford teachers the opportunity to grasp the experience and transform the experience through reflection that results in learning. Schön (1983) explained that practitioners rely on practical experiences to reflect *in* practice and *on* practice. Reflecting *in* practice involves noticing what one is doing while doing it. Reflecting *on* practice involves looking back at experiences and evaluating what worked and what did not to develop a new approach when faced with similar situations (Schön, 1983). Therefore, reflective teachers who continuously assess and refine teaching practices are better equipped to serve students' diverse needs (Kheirzadeh & Sistani, 2018).

Collecting teachers' perceptions of CW may provide data on what components should be included in CW intended to improve teachers' instructional practices. Findings may also provide insight into how new knowledge acquired from reflecting on feedback is used to make instructional adjustments.

Implications

The sharing of findings from the basic qualitative study may provide a better understanding of how teachers' participation in a CW influences their instructional practices. The study findings may reveal how to share feedback following classroom observation and the needed support to implement action steps resulting from reflection on practices. The findings may reveal components of CW that teachers believe they need to improve classroom instruction. The project deliverable, a white paper, aims to provide recommendations for a structured CW cycle. The cycle will be based on a collaborative

approach for determining the purpose of the observation, the observer conducting the CW, providing feedback, and facilitating ongoing learning through reflection on classroom experiences.

Summary

I used a basic qualitative study to explore teachers' perceptions on the influence of CW on their instructional practices. This study focused on administrator-led CWs implemented at FSD to influence teachers' instructional practices with the goal to improve student achievement. The lack of data regarding the influence of a CW on instructional practices guided the research question that seeks to understand teachers' perceptions of the CW and provide data on its influence and the use of feedback to adjust instructional practices.

The framework guiding this study, Kolb's experiential learning cycle suggests that learning is a process where knowledge is created as a result of transformation of experiences that embodies the CW experience. A brief explanation followed on teachers as adult learners and the elements required for providing effective learning experiences through PD opportunities. In addition, the section included a review of PD literature as it relates to instructional practices and instructional coaching as an effective PD option to build teachers' capacity (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Teemant et al., 2014). Section 1 concluded with a literature review on CWs, feedback, and reflective practices that aim to develop and implement actions that will guide and support changes in teachers' instructional practices (Kachur et al., 2013b).

Section 2 outlines the qualitative methodology, the research design and approach, setting, criteria for participants' selection, data sources, the role of the researcher, and data analysis. The section concludes with the limitation of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

I chose a basic qualitative study design to explore teachers' perceptions of CWs. Using a basic qualitative study, a researcher seeks to learn about the meaning that participants ascribe to experiences that are not intense (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The qualitative design approach enables researchers to formulate holistic and mostly narrative descriptions to understand occurrences (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to provide insight into how experiences happen in a natural setting, rather than what caused the experiences (Creswell, 2014).

When a researcher is deciding whether to use a qualitative or quantitative design, the nature of the research problem and research questions must be determined (Szyjka, 2012). In conducting qualitative research, a researcher aims to understand a phenomenon from participants' perspectives (Szyjka, 2012). Qualitative research methods necessitate in-depth and detailed descriptions of participants' contributions to understand and explain situations in a natural setting. On the other hand, quantitative research focuses on gathering knowledge grounded in generalizations using large populations. Numerical data resulting from quantitative research do not provide in-depth, detailed information from participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that a qualitative approach using researchable questions to gather rich data could lead to improved practices. In the current research, there was a need for detailed and in-depth data collection to explore 12 FSD teachers' perceptions of the influence of CW on their instructional practices.

Qualitative research, which is conducted to gather descriptive narrative to inform understanding of a social and cultural phenomenon, includes four major designs: ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell, 2014). To address the study problem, I chose a basic qualitative study design to understand teachers' perceptions of a CW's influence on their instructional practices. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the use of a basic qualitative study is appropriate when the researcher is interested in participants' perceptions and understanding their experiences. A basic qualitative study worked best for my research because I focused on teachers' perceptions of the influence of CWs on their instructional practices.

I did not use a case study methodology because a case study allows for an in-depth investigation and analysis of a phenomenon within a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethnographic research seeks to describe specific cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values from the perceptions of the subject of the study (Creswell, 2014); therefore, this design was not appropriate for my study. Creswell (2014) explained that phenomenological research design is used to study how people experience a particular phenomenon, while grounded theory methodology involves constructing theory through gathering and analyzing data; therefore, both designs were inappropriate for the study. Qualitative data were collected from 12 secondary teachers via semistructured interviews to understand participants' perceptions and experiences with CWs. The data collected might lead to identifying what teachers deemed to be useful components of CWs and what was needed that might not be occurring to influence their instructional practices.

Setting

The site for the study was limited to FSD, a suburban school district in the western United States. The student body consisted of approximately 12,600 elementary students, 2,600 middle school students, and 7,400 high school students (Ed-Data, 2019). The student population was approximately 94% Hispanic, 0.05% African American, 0.04% Asian, and 0.04% Caucasian or other. About 86% of the population were regarded as low income and consisted of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (Ed-Data, 2019. Additionally, 29.2% of the population were regarded as English language learners (Ed-Data, 2019).

Participants

I employed a basic qualitative study design to explore 12 secondary teachers' perceptions of CWs. I used purposive sampling to recruit and identify participants (Etikan et al., 2016). According to Etikan et al. (2016), a purposive sample is a nonprobability sample from a group assumed to be representative of the population based on the objective of the study. This sampling technique renders a homogenous sample that should provide sufficient data based on knowledge or experience with the phenomenon of interest (Etikan et al., 2016). The decision to include 12 participants was deemed appropriate for the study because a greater number of participants would not have allowed for the collection of rich and in-depth data per individual (Etikan et al., 2016).

The inclusion criteria for participation applied to middle and high school teachers at FSD who (a) taught one of the academic content areas, (b) had 2 or more years' teaching experience, and (c) had experienced CW and feedback at least twice. The criteria established

ensured that participating teachers had the professional background needed to provide in-depth information about their experiences with CW. Table 9 shows the participants' demographics. Participants were two males and 10 female teachers who taught core subjects, four of whom were middle school teachers and eight of whom were high school teachers with 14 to 27 years of teaching experience.

Table 9

Teacher Demographics

Participants	Gender	Years of teaching	Grade level
Teacher A	Female	16 years	High school
Teacher B	Female	16 years	Middle school
Teacher C	Female	15 years	High school
Teacher D	Female	15 years	High school
Teacher E	Female	25 years	High school
Teacher F	Male	27 years	Middle school
Teacher G	Female	10 years	Middle school
Teacher H	Female	20 years	High school
Teacher I	Female	14 years	Middle school
Teacher J	Female	15 years	High school
Teacher K	Male	18 years	High school
Teacher L	Female	16 years	High school

Gaining Access to Participants

After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval by Walden University (IRB # 11-14-19-0413992), I followed the school district process to gain approval to conduct the study by contacting the director of pupil and community services. I sent a request letter, a copy of the proposed interview questions (Appendix B), and Walden's IRB approval letter. Once I had obtained approval from the director of pupil and community services, I retrieved qualified participants' email addresses, which were public information on the district website. I sent each prospective participant an introductory letter containing my

contact information, the purpose of the study, proposed interview questions, and a consent form. Upon receipt of the consent form, I contacted each teacher who agreed to participate via email to schedule an interview at a time and place convenient for the teacher. I followed up with a reminder email closer to the meeting time.

The relationship between researcher and participants is integral to the quality of research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My role as an instrumental agent in collecting data was to ensure that I addressed ethics in research planning, conduct, and reporting. Due to my previous employment as a dean of students at one of the schools in the district, I refrained from recruiting teachers with whom I had worked in a supervisory capacity in the last 5 years. I communicated to participating teachers my obligation to adhere to IRB guidelines and maintain strict ethical considerations. I reiterated that participation was voluntary and that participants had the option to opt out of the study at any time and could refuse to answer any questions during the interview. I explained that confidentiality measures included assigning each participant a pseudonym and removing any participant identifiers. I also shared with participants that I would secure all records associated with the study in password-protected files accessed only by me.

Data Collection

I collected the data from a purposive sample of 12 teachers through individual semistructured interviews. Interviews allow a researcher to pose questions exploring participants' perceptions and collect detailed information about research questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). A semistructured questioning format allows for probing questions to explore and gain a better understanding of issues. The open-ended questions

afforded the participants flexibility to add their perceptions and feelings about their experience (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

During data collection, I removed all identifying information linking participants to school sites and administrators to ensure confidentiality. I assigned each participant a letter from A-L to ensure confidentiality.

Semistructured Interviews

Once I had received the consent forms electronically, scheduled interviews with the 12 participating teachers took place at times and locations convenient for the participants, which lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. At the beginning of each interview, I explained the purpose of the study, stated that participation was voluntary, and indicated that participants could decline to answer questions and were free to stop taking part in the study at any time. To provide additional assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity, I reiterated that I would remove any identifying information and would not share participants' names and school sites with anyone. I informed them that I would not share any research-related data and documents outside the research study and that the data would be stored for 5 years after the conclusion of the research and later destroyed, as required by Walden University. I informed participants that I would share a two-page summary of the findings with them via email once data analysis was completed. I obtained permission to audio-record each interview for later transcription. Because I had emailed the interview questions with the consent form to each participant, several of the participating teachers had their answers to the questions

written and referred to them during the interview. The open-ended question format allowed for additional probing and follow-up questions as needed.

Role of the Researcher

My connection with the participating teachers was limited to the professional relationship that I had with them as a teaching member in the school district. Two of the 12 participating teachers were teaching members at the school where I currently work, while the other 10 participants were from five different schools in the district. In that participating teachers knew of my previous role as an administrator, I was aware that they might alter their responses to provide me with what they thought I wanted to hear. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded the participants that their participation was confidential and encouraged them to be thoughtful and honest with their answers. To address any bias that might occur during the interviews, I made every effort to be aware of my nonverbal communication, facial expressions, and body language and adhered to the interview protocol. During the interviews, I avoided sharing my views and expressing my opinion.

To establish transparency and eliminate bias, I maintained field notes to determine issues arising during the interviews. Vaismoradi et al. (2016) stated that field notes help identify an audit trail to substantiate trustworthiness. Field notes allowed me to capture descriptive information, make notes of actions and behaviors, and journal my reflections on the process (Schwandt, 2015). According to Phillippi and Aluderdale (2017), journaling allows a researcher to note observations during and after interviews and to record ideas and queries that may facilitate the development of categories and themes to

enhance data and provide context for analysis. Journaling may also lead to the development of an audit trail, which establishes dependability and confirmability of research findings by describing data collection and how codes formed the basis of identified themes that may facilitate data analysis (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I transcribed the interviews within a week of conducting them to ensure that I captured the ideas noted by each participant.

Because I was a previous administrator who conducted and participated in CWs, I possessed the following researcher biases:

1. As a past administrator conducting CWs and providing feedback for teachers, I considered CWs an effective alternative for job-embedded PD for teachers. However, I understood that teachers might not find CWs to be a form of PD that could improve their instructional practices.
2. As a classroom teacher, I had my own opinion regarding how a CW can influence instructional practices to improve teaching and learning that might have been contrary to participants' opinions.

To address my preconceived notions that teachers might not like CWs or see them as a way to adjust instruction, I asked a friend with a doctoral degree in education who was not related to the study to examine the coded transcripts, themes, and findings to rule out any biases or inconsistencies in the process. Further, I sought to ensure the reporting of discrepant data, which Creswell (2014) described as data that contradict patterns of explanations emerging during data analysis, to avoid and eliminate any preconceived biases. Additionally, my dissertation chair and committee member checked and guided

the data analysis process. To ensure that findings were based on participants' responses, I maintained field notes that provided an audit trail by describing how I collected and analyzed the data. The field notes also helped me reflect and make meaning of the data collected.

Data Analysis

The purpose of qualitative analysis is to interpret the data and the resulting themes to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Edwards-Jones (2014) asserted that a qualitative description is valuable because it derives knowledge from the participants' narratives, providing a way to record findings and establish meanings. For this study, I used an inductive analysis approach to allow research findings to emerge by assigning codes for frequent and dominant themes appearing from the raw data. Coding the data reduces the amount of raw data to manageable sections that are relevant to the research questions (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Table 10 shows the data analysis process used in the study.

Table 10

Data Analysis Process

Open coding	Axial coding	Identification of themes
Initial reading of transcripts and field notes. Second reading; marginal notes, initial broad codes. Line-by-line coding. Assigning codes to each concept. Created a code list.	Identify relationships among open codes. Created categories based on codes	Answering research question guiding the study

To analyze the data, I used an inductive analysis approach that reflects frequently reported themes and patterns. I began the process by reading each interview transcript to familiarize myself with the content. Vaismoradi et al. (2016) asserted that coding reduces the amount of raw data to facilitate the identification and reporting of emerging patterns and themes. Coding enables the researcher to label relevant words and sentences and organize the data for synthesis (Saldana, 2016). Next, I reviewed my field notes to develop a deeper understanding of the data collected. During the second reading of the interviews, I started the open coding process by reading the transcripts multiple times. In this phase, I made marginal notes about my first impressions and generated broad tentative codes for chunks of data.

Inductive coding involves identifying text segments that convey similar meaning and ideas (Saldana, 2016). Using a line-by-line coding, I used different color highlighters for each concept identified and then using the same color to highlight corresponding data in the interview transcripts. This process produced over 40 broad codes assigned to the raw data. Next, I reviewed the codes to ensure that I captured all concepts. I checked for the frequency to identify dominant categories and themes and reflected on their meanings to decide which codes best-represented participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014; Vaismoradi et al. 2016). Once I completed coding the transcripts, I created a list of codes to aid in the next stage of the analysis. I read through all the codes and combined similar codes and noted the most frequent codes emerging. To confirm that I coded all the information, I sent the coded transcripts to my first and second chair for input. To add credibility and avoid any personal biases from preconceived notions, I asked a friend (not

related to the study) with a doctoral degree in education and experience in qualitative research to code the transcripts to ensure that I captured all concepts accurately.

In the next stage of the process, I used axial coding to identify relationships among the open codes emerging across the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this phase, what Vaismoradi et al. (2016) call the construction phase, similar codes were organized and compared in terms of similarities and differences in relation to the research question and included labeling the themes identified. Through the axial coding process, I combined similar concepts resulting in the emergence of three overarching themes. Table 11 shows the coding progression with codes, subthemes, themes, interview excerpts, and frequency used to analyze the data.

Table 11

Coding Progression

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Excerpts	# and % of participants
Teachers expressed a positive attitude toward CWs	Positive	Beneficial, Helpful	I have a positive attitude toward classroom walkthrough, I like to have admin or anybody come in to my classroom to see how the kids are doing, how I teach, how they are learning and then to be able to give me some feedback. (Participant G)	10 (83%)
	Negative	Not helpful Never used feedback, No benefit, Anger	I know they are only doing their job and do not think their intention are true as far as really evaluating my practices for improving them. I always get the feeling that they are just coming in to do a job because that is what they are told to do. (Participant B)	2 (17%)
	Content-specialist observer	Positive: Related feedback, Knowledgeable, Helpful	I found the feedback I receive from my AVID coach very useful because it provides me with deeper level of understanding on meeting the requirements for the WICOR strategies and providing me with the skills to go to the next level of questioning and ways by which to reach my higher and lower-level students. (Participant A)	11 (92%) (1 person mentioned only administrator)
		Negative		0 (%)
	Administrator as observer	Negative: Judge, Not knowledgeable No experience, Focus on student behavior/ engagement, Biased	Not useful when administrators walk in and have no idea what I am teaching especially if they are not versed in the content and when classroom walkthrough does not include feedback. (Participant I)	9 (75%)

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Excerpts	# and % of participants
		Positive: Validate, Provide feedback	… comments I received during feedback. 'It seems clear, you are breaking the lesson down.' that encourages me to keep doing that. (Participant D)	3 (25%)
Teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement.	Type of feedback	Notes, Checklist, Face-to-face, Email, Short slip	Feedback after a walkthrough was provided via notes with checklist. The observer would just check off any observed strategies in the classroom that were on the list. (Participant C)	12 (100%)
	Not helpful	Not specific, Not helpful, Not useful, Do not use, Not specific, Not focused	I can't think of an example of how I used feedback to adjust my instructional practices … feedback administrators usually provide is not specific to my content. (Participant E)	8 (67%)
	Helpful	Helpful. Useful, Support	… useful. The student and I need additional eyes and suggestions. Students are more focused and can get more support with more adults in the classroom. (Participant F)	4 (33%)
	Not instruction related	General, Not related, Engaging, Checking, Behavior, Engagement	Administrators are more focused on general school initiatives such as physical classroom environment, school climate and culture … would mostly give me feedback or suggestions on general strategies like engaging students, checking for understanding, collaborative groupings ... (Participant K)	8 (67%)

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Excerpts	# and % of participants
	Instruction related	Instruction, Work, Feedback	If the feedback is specific about instruction then I do think about it and make adjustments accordingly. (Participant H)	4 (33%)
	No change in instruction	Monitoring, Watching, No change	I don't think any improvement that I made ever came from a feedback from an admin. It has been through reflecting on my practices and my personal experience with classroom management, seating arrangement, and my knowledge of the curriculum. (Participant B)	7 (58%)
	Change in instruction	Change, Adjust, Follow	I do follow the suggestions I am provided because of engaging in classroom walkthrough cycle but I do not necessarily have a way to evaluate their effectiveness. (Participant A)	5 (42%)
	No change in student achievement	No influence, No change	I cannot think of how engaging in a classroom walkthrough cycle influenced student achievement. (Participant J)	10 (83%)
	Change in student achievement	Attribute, Improvement	I made a conscious effort to slow down, watch for students' reaction, and take cues from students. I also made it a routine to get feedback from my students on how they would like me to improve/change the way I teach them. As a result, I think my students are more engaged in the learning, which allows me to provide them many more hands on activities and demos. (Participant H)	2 (17%)

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Excerpts	# and % of participants
Teachers recommend that instructional and content specialists should conduct CWs, CWs should increase in duration, know the purpose of CWs, teachers should use self-reflection, observe colleagues, and participate in follow-up discussions	Instructional Specialist	Knowledge, Experience	Administrators need to go back to teaching for a month every few years so they understand the realities we face to provide feedback that is realistic and useful to improve teachers' instructional practices. (Participant A)	11 (92%)
	Content specialist	Content	I think that observers need to know about the content, ways to deliver that content, and how the instruction should look like to begin with. (Participant I)	10 (83%)
	Self-reflection	Face to face, Reflective	… suggestions for correction in form of reflective questions that can take teachers to the next level. (Participant A)	10 (83%)
	Observation and follow-up discussions	Teacher, Content specialist, Colleague, Partner	I think a good classroom walkthrough must involve teachers in observing other teachers as well as being observed followed by discussion on what works and what doesn't. (Participant K)	9 (75%)

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Excerpts	# and % of participants
				(*table continues*)
	Increase duration of observations	More, Over time, Whole class, Short visits	For classroom walkthrough to be effective, a quick glimpse of one period is not sufficient as a sample of data. Data must be collected from different periods to get a valid observation data because what you might see in one period might not be representative of what is really transpiring in the classroom. (Participant K)	9 (75%)
	Strategies	Specific, Realistic, Model, Suggestions	… someone that has the knowledge and experience in this area to provide me with the different strategies and better yet model such strategies for me in my classroom … (Participant A)	6 (50%)
	Data	Measure, Data, Score, Translate	The classroom walkthrough cycle should include observation, collecting data, feedback to help improve instruction and student learning. (Participant K)	2 (17%)

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases in qualitative research may emerge when data collected are different or contradictory when compared to identified themes (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Reporting discrepant cases that vary from the patterns and themes identified are vital approaches to ensure the reliability of findings, contest researcher bias, and circumvent an uninformed interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014). In reviewing the data, I did not find any unrelated ideas to the emerging patterns and themes; thus, I did not report discrepant cases.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure quality and establish validity in this qualitative study, I employed several measures to address both the internal and external validity of the findings. While internal validity relates to how well a study is conducted, external validity is related to whether results apply to a similar population in different settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To address the interview protocol's internal validity and reliability, members of my doctoral committee for content and relevance reviewed interview questions aligned and designed to support the research question. A second measure to address internal validity was the use of member checking. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking covers a range of activities, including returning interview transcripts to participants to ensure accuracy of transcription and sharing analyzed synthesized data for validation and enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) asserted that to lend credibility to research findings the researcher must establish the

trustworthiness of the research study by allowing participants to review findings for accuracy of their data. To add credibility to the study, I shared a synthesized summary of preliminary findings with each participant to review that the findings captured the essence of their contribution and accurately interpreted their perspectives. The use of a second coder to code interview transcripts during the analysis process ensured that I coded the data appropriately and to mitigate subjectivity. To address researcher bias, I maintained field notes to ensure I continually reflected on the process to avoid potential bias toward participants' responses (Lodico et al., 2010; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Additionally, I acknowledge in the "Role of the Researcher" section my beliefs and biases to limit the impact on my interpretation of findings.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), external validity refers to how applicable the findings are in other settings. In this study, I used the rich and thick description of the data to enhance external validity by providing a clear context for possible transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Additionally, the participation of 12 secondary teachers from six different school sites representing middle and high school grades and various content areas at the district helped maximize the diversity in the phenomenon of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Data Analysis Results

Qualitative research aims at gaining a deep understanding of the phenomenon through compiling, organizing, and analyzing data to answer the research question (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The purpose of this study was to understand

teachers' perceptions of CWs. Based on the findings from the data analysis, three themes emerged that represented the perceptions of the participants: (a) teachers expressed a positive attitude toward CWs, (b) teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement, and (c) teachers recommend that instructional and content specialists should conduct CWs. CWs should increase in duration, know the purpose of CWs, and teachers should use self-reflection, observe colleagues, and participate in follow-up discussions. The themes revealed that although teachers expressed a positive attitude toward engaging in CWs, they did not perceive CWs as contributing to improving their instructional practices that can lead to improved student achievement.

Themes

Theme 1: Teachers Expressed a Positive Attitude Toward CWs

Ten (83%) teachers expressed a positive attitude toward engaging in CWs. Teachers used favorable words such as, positive experience, useful, helpful process, a good thing, and valuable to describe their experiences with CW. Teacher F articulated this notion by describing the potential benefit of engaging in a classroom walkthrough cycle as "growth." He explained, "As a teacher, I want to learn and get help from others that can provide me resources and support to adjust my instructional practices to better serve students' learning." Teacher G stated,

> I have a positive attitude towards CW. I like to have admin or anybody come in to my classroom to see how the kids are doing, how I teach, how they are learning and then be able to give me some feedback.

Teacher A described CW as "… helpful but can be nerve-wracking" and elaborated by saying,

> Involvement in classroom walkthrough alters what I might do in the classroom because they [administrators] are watching me. I might leave something out or overcompensate, which may not depict a true picture of what transpires in the classroom.

While most teachers had a positive attitude toward CWs, two (17%) teachers did not view them in a positive light. Teacher L described CW as not helpful and added, "It is at times annoying as it can interrupt the flow of the teaching process." Teacher L elaborated further by saying that

> …although short visits, they [CWs] can disrupt the learning process as students react to the teacher or behave differently with others in the classroom. It can be an invasion into the safe space of the classroom between teachers and students.

Teacher B stated that she has no opinion on whether a CW is beneficial and explained by saying,

> It is mostly when an administrator observes me, and I feel it is just something they have to do. If they did not have to do it, they probably will not observe me. I know when they are coming; they have to schedule so many [CW] every semester. I know they are only doing their job and [I] do not think their intention[s] are true as far as really evaluating my practices for improving them.

Theme 2: Teachers Believed That CW Feedback Was Neither Helpful Nor Useful to Change Classroom Instruction or Improve Student Achievement

While teachers welcomed participation in CWs, they expressed their preference for an observer with whom they had a good and trusting relationship and was familiar with the content they teach. Teachers stated that receiving content-specific feedback from an observer, who is knowledgeable in the content, such as an academic coach or a colleague teaching the same content, is more valuable than administrators' feedback.

Eleven (92%) teachers reiterated the need for a content-specific observer such as an academic coach, a person familiar with the content, or a colleague who teaches the same content to be the one providing feedback to influence instructional practices. Teacher A described how she benefited from specific feedback provided by an academic coach to improve her higher level of questioning:

> I found the feedback I received from my [content] coach very useful because it provided me with a deeper level of understanding on meeting the requirements for the [content-specific] strategies and providing me with the skills to go to the next level of questioning and ways by which to reach my higher and lower-level students.

Teachers K stated that general feedback provided by administrators after CW that is not specific to content does not help improve content-specific instructional practices. Teacher B explained this notion stating that feedback provided by administrators is not valued based on knowledge about their professional experience. This opinion was also described by teacher E, noting that feedback coming from observers that have no

experience in the specific content is not valued as it relates to improving instruction. Teacher E's response captured the sentiment of nine (75%) teachers regarding administrators' feedback by explaining, "The feedback administrators usually provide is not specific to my content but feedback on general teaching practices that have to do with student engagement strategies and physical classroom environment." Teacher K also stated the need for specific feedback by saying, "Administrators can provide feedback on general practices and the implementation of school initiatives, while colleagues can provide feedback on content-specific instructional practices."

Eight (67%) teachers indicated that engaging in a CW was limited to administrators' feedback on general classroom practices and not related to instruction. Teacher A explained that feedback provided by administrators usually addressed general classroom practices and not content-specific practices that could contribute to improving her content-specific instructional practices. Teacher K explained,

> Administrators are more focused on general school initiatives such as physical classroom environment, school climate and culture … would mostly give me feedback or suggestions on general strategies like engaging students, checking for understanding, collaborative groupings.

Teacher H provided an example of general feedback she received from her administrator by sharing,

> Once I received feedback where the observer made an observation regarding my voice projection and suggested that I project a stronger voice and speak slower

> during direct instruction. I did reflect on that feedback and made adjustments accordingly.

Teachers also noted that feedback consisted of administrators restating what took place in the classroom, such as sharing observed strategies employed during the observation. Sharing feedback consisted of a checkmark next to an observed strategy demonstrated during observation on a feedback checklist or restating observed strategies via hand-written note or email. Four (33%) teachers shared that feedback they received was helpful because it included suggestions on how they can improve their practices and included questions about the observation.

Two (17%) teachers shared that they experienced CW, where observers engaged students in a conversation or asked them questions. Teacher F saw engaging students as a positive thing by explaining that engaging students in a conversation provided an additional measure for the effectiveness of instruction and provided another perspective for teachers during feedback. Teacher H explained that she did not restrict feedback to educator observers, but she routinely solicited students' feedback on how she can improve the way she delivers her lessons. She elaborated by saying,

> I find myself improving more because of students' feedback. Because students provide me with specific feedback on how I can improve the lesson so that they can understand it better, after all, they are the ones affected by how I deliver the lessons.

On the other hand, teacher C did not find engaging students in conversation during observation helpful to improve her instructional practices. She shared her experience with a CW:

> A recent walkthrough entailed an administrator coming into my classroom, asking one student a question, looking at another student's work, and then leaving. The feedback I received was related to if students understood what they were doing and not based on my teaching practices.

The teacher's answer to my follow-up question, "Do you find the feedback helpful?" was, "No, it is more insulting than helpful. It was not specific to the way I teach." The teacher continued by explaining that sometimes unannounced visits can come at a bad time, and students' unacceptable behavior or low level of engagement at that particular time in the lesson does not accurately reflect how the classroom is usually run. The teacher added, "… short visits do not provide enough information to generate feedback to help improve instructional practices."

The format for sharing feedback and the lack of specific feedback prevented teachers from engaging in an instructional dialogue that can lead to instructional changes. Teacher K explained that although he welcomed all type of feedback, a face-to-face meeting to discuss feedback is beneficial. He elaborated,

> …you have to have face-to-face discussion. That way, the observers are clear on what transpired in the classroom, and the teacher has the opportunity to clarify what was not clear. This [discussion] gives the feedback more relevance because now it adds more contexts to it.

Teacher I added that in her experience not engaging in a conversation with the observer limited the benefits of feedback:

> The administrator conducting the CW and I never took the time to sit and discuss the observation or the questions he/she had after the walkthrough, where we could have explored further, which would have been more beneficial to support improvements.

Classroom Instruction. All (*N* = 12, 100%) teachers stated that engaging in a CW, which provides meaningful feedback can support instructional improvements. For teacher G, engaging in classroom walkthrough provided another perspective on student learning and their level of engagement as well as learning about teachers' instruction through someone else's lens.

Teachers shared that when provided feedback by administrators it is often general in nature and does not support them in adjusting their instructional practices. Teacher E explained, "The notes [feedback] are usually positive comments about what occurred in the classroom, but do not provide specific feedback on how I can improve or make adjustments to my classroom practices." Eleven (92%) teachers shared that engaging in CWs as it pertains to planning for instruction would be of value if feedback were specific. Teacher A and teacher H indicated that receiving specific feedback from someone specialized in the content area is most useful because specific feedback can provide teachers with strategies and suggestions for improving teaching and student learning. Teacher G explained that she might implement planning instruction suggestions if someone familiar with the content provided feedback. Teacher D also stated that if she

was provided feedback that included new strategies that she has not used before; she would then use them in planning for instruction.

Teachers noted that to improve teachers' instructional practices, feedback needs to be specific and provided by an observer familiar with the content they teach. The response from teacher G articulated this sentiment:

> Observers need to know about the content area and how to teach it so that they can provide specific feedback that can help improve me as a teacher. Administrators can usually provide feedback on practices not specifically about my content, which I think s better provided by a colleague who knows the content and the challenges teaching certain topics.

Seven (58%) teachers stated that they did not make adjustments to their instructional practices as a result of CWs. Teacher B explained her improvements to instructional practices came from personal experiences and knowledge of the curriculum, not necessarily from feedback. She elaborated by saying,

> I feel like if I was to receive beneficial evaluation [feedback] that could improve my teaching practices, I would prefer that it's done by perhaps another colleague that is in the same subject, pretty much the same content or maybe an academic coach that is specialized in that content and has been trained on how to give feedback that is beneficial.

Teachers E, teacher G, and teacher H expressed that they value and consider feedback provided by someone with expertise in the subject, because they can provide suggestions

on instructional practices specific to their content. Teacher K attributed adjustments he made to his instructional practices to

> … conversation with colleagues in staff meetings or from observation of other colleagues demonstrating the use of strategies that I then adapted in my own classroom to support teaching my curriculum and own students.

Teacher L noted that she would use feedback to adjust her instructional practices if she felt "… it aligned with my teaching style and is in the best interest of my students and the way they learn."

While six (50%) participants expressed that engaging in CWs facilitated an instructional dialogue between observer and teacher, three teachers saw the walkthrough as an accountability measure to ensure teachers were doing their job. Teacher F stated,

> Engaging in [a] CW process provide[s] the accountability piece to monitor what is required to be implemented in the classroom by the district and the school, focuses on improving instructional practices, encourages teachers to amp-up the game.

Teacher J also explained the accountability that comes from engaging in CWs in the following way,

> I think [the] CW process is a good thing because it keeps teachers on their toes and not slack or take things for granted. Teachers know that there is someone watching over them and need to stay on their toes, making sure they are working on their lessons and teaching.

Teacher K stated that his involvement with CWs in the role of observer and the one observed "… I do not see a whole lot of benefits resulting from it." He elaborated, "Most teachers look at CWs as a way for administrators to collect information on what is happening in the classroom and not necessarily a way to improve their instructional practices." Teacher D stated, "…although CW may not provide ways by which to improve instructional practices, feedback can help reinforce the use of effective strategies already used by the teacher."

Student Achievement. Ten (83%) teachers stated that engaging in a CW did not influence student achievement. Teacher J summed up this notion by stating, "I can't think of how engaging in CW influenced student achievement." Two (17%) teachers shared examples attributing improvement in student achievement to adjustment they made to their general classroom practices resulting from CW feedback. Teacher I explained that adjustments made to how she checks student undersatnding attributed to students being more focused and engaged. Teacher H shared that adjustments made after feedback to her voice projection and slowing down during direct instruction influenced the way she delivers the lessons that resulted in better student engagement in the classroom. While teacher L did not credit engaging in a CW to improved student achievement, she noted short-term improvement in student behavior and engagement while an observer was in the classroom.

Two (17%) teachers credited improved student achievement to adjustments they made to their instructional practices but not based on their participation in CWs. Teacher K credited student improvement to instructional adjustments that he made based on his

observations of other colleagues using effective strategies. Teacher F shared how his proactive approach to inviting teachers from different content areas and grade levels to engage in vertical and horizontal collaboration resulted in him adjusting his practices that contributed to improvement in student achievement.

Theme 3: Teachers Recommend That Instructional and Content Specialists Should Conduct CWs, CWs Should Increase in Duration, Know the Purpose of CWs, and Teachers Should Use Self-Reflection, Observe Colleagues, and Participate in Follow-Up Discussions

Eleven (92%) teachers provided suggestions on how to use CW to serve its intended purpose as an instructional coaching model to improve instructional practices with the goal of improving student achievement.

Instructional and Content Specialist Should Conduct CWs. Ten (85%) teachers noted that a content-specific coach or expert in the content such as a colleague should conduct CWs. Teachers explained that lack of experience in the specific content and the fact that administrators do not fully understand the challenges that teachers face in the classroom prevents them from providing useful feedback that could lead to instructional improvements.

Teachers indicated that they did not find general feedback after CWs to be helpful to improving their instructional practices. They stated the need for content-specific feedback provided by an academic coach or a colleague familiar with the content they teach. Teacher F stated, “I value the feedback I receive from those with expertise and experience in specific areas, and based on that, I adjust instructional practices.”

Teacher I stated, “I think that observers need to know about the content, ways to deliver that content, and how the instruction should look like to begin with.” This notion was further supported by a statement made by teacher A that captured the voice of 11 (92%) teachers in regard to the person providing feedback to increase content knowledge and adjust instructional practices, “… someone that has the knowledge and experience in this area to provide me with the different strategies and better yet model such strategies for me in my classroom.”

Although teachers perceived content-specific feedback from a colleague or a coach more valuable than general feedback provided by administrators, they welcomed any feedback at the conclusion of a CW. Teacher G acknowledged that providing any feedback after CWs may be beneficial to improving teaching and learning. Teacher K stated that engaging in a CW that includes feedback could be beneficial for reflecting on personal practices and contributing to professional growth.

CWs Should Increase in Duration. Teachers expressed that the short duration of the classroom walkthrough was also not sufficient to generate adequate data for meaningful feedback. Nine (75%) teachers noted that the short duration of a CW does not provide an accurate picture of what is transpiring in the classroom and therefore does not produce meaningful feedback that can contribute to improved instructional practices. Teacher C described CWs as “Short visits that do not provide enough information to generate feedback to help improve instructional practices.” Teacher A also noted that if the intention is to improve teachers’ instructional practices, short visits followed by feedback are insufficient. Teachers H and J stated that short classroom visits are not a

good gauge for what is happening in the classroom and cannot provide an accurate picture of teachers' needs for instructional improvements. Two (17 %) teachers believed that collecting observation data should take place at different times from different periods to formulate a true picture of teachers' needs and in turn provide meaningful feedback.

Know the Purpose of the CW. Eight (67%) teachers' responses included statements about what observers look for during a CW. While most participants concurred that observer "look-fors" included collecting data on teachers' direct instruction and level of student engagement, five (42%) stated that they would prefer to know specifically what observers are looking for during observation. Teacher J explained,

> A good CW is when an administrator observed me share and give me feedback on what he/she was looking for, something specific that is happening in the classroom.

Three (25%) teachers shared that they prefer to have the observer provide feedback on what took place during the observation rather than observers coming in with pre-established look-fors. Teacher G stated,

> I am looking for the observers to figure out what is going on while they are walking around to get a snapshot of what is happening, what the objective is, and then provide feedback on what they observed happen in the classroom rather than something else that they were targeting and I did not know what it is.

Teacher I also noted preference for receiving feedback on what specifically transpired in the classroom,

> To me, it means having someone observe me while teaching, and I prefer if they [observers] actually are familiar with the lesson I will teach so they can then provide me feedback and engage me in dialogue to reflect on the lesson I delivered.

Teacher Should Use Self-Reflection. Ten (83%) teachers shared that they prefer feedback in the form of reflective questions rather than a directive. Teachers thought feedback should not be punitive but delivered in the form of questions that promote reflective practices. Teacher K stated, "I believe that feedback should not be punitive, but should help you reflect on what you are doing so that you adjust and modify your ways to make your instruction better." Teacher A stated "…suggestions for correction in form of reflective questions that can take teachers to the next level." Five (42%) teachers stated that they do use feedback to reflect or adjust their practices. Teacher A explained, "I do follow the suggestions I am provided as a result of engaging in classroom walkthrough cycle, but I don't necessarily have a way to evaluate their effectiveness." Teacher F and teacher H also shared that they use feedback to reflect on their practices to improve teaching practices.

Observe Colleagues. Nine (75%) teachers believed that a CW should include colleagues as observers. Teachers shared that a CW conducted by a colleague can promote collaborative instructional dialogue to include specific feedback and suggestions that can potentially enhance content knowledge and provide content-specific strategies that could support instructional improvements. Teacher I noted that CWs conducted by colleagues that include planning a lesson together, observing each other deliver the

lesson, and then together reflecting on what worked and what did not work may contribute to instructional improvements.

Participate in Follow-Up Discussions. All participants (*N* = 12, 100%) stated that feedback should be shared with teachers after every CW. Teachers acknowledged that feedback is instrumental in engaging teachers in instructional dialogue. Teacher D explained, "For me getting that feedback at the conclusion is intended to make you a better teacher so why wouldn't you welcome it." Teacher C, teacher D, and teacher E accredited positive feedback received after an observation to reinforce good practices and confirm that teachers are doing a good job. Teachers G, J, K, and I stated that a face-to-face follow-up discussion after an observation can promote instructional dialogue that facilitates the exploration of the data collected that may support instructional improvement.

While eight (67%) participants noted the role and importance of feedback after an observation, four (33%) stated that in their experience feedback was not always provided after a CW. Teacher H stated, "When I receive feedback from administrators, I do pay attention and try to implement their suggestions, but feedback is not always provided after a CW." Minimal feedback prevented teachers from engaging in an instructional dialogue that can lead to instructional changes.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand secondary teachers' perceptions of the CWs. Based on data collected via semi-structured interviews surrounding the research question, the following themes emerged: (a)teachers expressed a

positive attitude toward CWs, (b) teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement, and (c) teachers recommend that instructional and content specialists should conduct CWs. CWs should increase in duration, know the purpose of CWs, and teachers should use self-reflection, observe colleagues, and participate in follow-up discussions. Data analysis revealed that although teachers have a positive attitude toward CWs and regarded them as a way for administrators to collect data on teaching and learning, they did not find CWs beneficial to improve their instructional practices, the intended purpose for its implementation. Teachers attributed the limited change in instructional practices to the observer who conducted the observations and the quality of the CW's feedback.

Ten (83%) teachers expressed a positive attitude about engaging in a CW. They described a CW as being helpful for gathering data on the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom and an opportunity for teachers to demonstrate their teaching skills. Teachers also felt it is a way for administrators to validate them and reinforce their use of effective practices. While most CWs were conducted by administrators, teachers did not find CWs effective in improving their instructional practices. Teachers explained that administrators as observers resulted in feedback about general classroom practices rather than content-specific feedback that can potentially increase content knowledge and provide content-specific strategies that can result in instructional change. Teacher K explained that most teachers view CWs as a way for administrators to collect data on what is happening in different classrooms and not necessarily to improve teachers' instructional practices. This sentiment was shared by 10 (83%) teachers explaining that

school administrators' feedback is usually focused on the implementation of school and district initiatives or general classroom practices such as strategies for student engagement, collaborative grouping, checking for understanding, and classroom environment.

Teachers noted that although feedback was general and mostly restated what was observed, it did facilitate communication with their administrator and contributed to validating teachers' work which contributed to the positive attitude teacher expressed toward CWs. Eleven (92%) teachers expressed the need for observers who are versed in the specific content such as academic coaches or colleagues. Teachers noted that observers familiar with the content could provide content-specific feedback to include content knowledge and content-specific instructional strategies instrumental to adjusting their instructional practices.

All teachers described the importance of feedback as a significant component of a CW. As for the usefulness of administrators' feedback, teachers deemed their feedback as unhelpful for improving their instructional practices because of administrators' unfamiliarity or lack of experience with the specific content area. All teachers (N = 12, 100%) stated that the type of feedback they regarded as most valuable was content-specific feedback directly related to their instructional practices and specific to the content they teach. Teachers deemed content-specific feedback, including suggestions and demonstration of strategies specific to their content, most beneficial. Contrary to administrators' general feedback, teachers regarded content-specific feedback from a colleague or academic coach who is versed in the content as credible and beneficial

because it is relevant and directly related to their teaching. Teacher A shared how feedback specific to the content and suggestions from an academic coach helped her develop higher-order questioning skills to activate student critical thinking. Teacher F provided an example of how feedback and suggestions from colleagues engaging in a classroom observation helped him incorporate a new rubric to evaluate and assess student progress.

Although teachers were indifferent about the format by which they received feedback, six (50%) teachers mentioned that at some point face-to-face feedback was necessary. Teachers A and H stated they preferred face-to-face feedback when it includes suggestions. Teacher A went further by explaining that she would prefer that feedback include strategies or suggestions modeled for the teacher to ensure the greatest benefits. Teachers G, J, and K supported the notion of face-to-face feedback to promote instructional dialogue and discussion. Teacher I noted that feedback that includes engaging the teacher and the observer in a conversation to explore the data collected has the potential to support instructional improvements. Four (33%) teachers expressed their preference for having feedback presented in the form of suggestions or questions that can help them reflect on their practices rather than directive or evaluative comments.

Data analysis revealed that 10 (83%) teachers could not provide evidence on how student achievement improved because of engaging in a CW. Two (17%) teachers shared that adjustments made to their classroom practices based on feedback had to do with voice projection and checking for understanding techniques that resulted in better student engagment but did not influence their academic achievment.

Two (17%) other teachers also shared that short term benefits related to students' behavior were noted while observers were in the classroom. Students may have behaved better or were more attentive but did not find evidence of improved student achievement.

Teachers shared that CW could fulfill its intended purpose as an instructional coaching model if the observers are versed and have experience with the content they teach. Teachers deemed feedback as relevant and useful when provided by colleagues or content-specific experts who can contribute to monitoring and evaluating newly acquired instructional practices. Teachers stated the need for content-specific knowledge, strategies, and instructional approaches to improve their instructional practices. They noted the short duration of a CW is not sufficient to understand the choices made in the lesson, nor an accurate depiction of the teaching and learning taking place. As a result of the short duration of a Cw, feedback or suggestions following the observation lack context that can lessen the feedback's credibility and contribute to incorrectly identifying teachers' professional needs for instructional improvement. Teachers expressed the need to know the purpose of the CW to frame the observation "look-fors" that provides clear objective and focused feedback that may promote reflective practices to support and refine their instructional practices. In addition to being observed, affording teachers the opportunity to observe other colleagues was noted by teachers as another way to engage in follow-up discussionsand reflection on instruction to improve teaching.

Findings indicated that teachers might benefit from a structured CW cycle that aligns with Kolb's ELT (2015), the conceptual framework guiding this study. Kolb asserted that effective learning takes place through the cyclical transformation of

experiences. CWs intended to embed learning within a real-world context provides teachers with opportunities to learn from reflecting on their experiences to gain conceptual insight. Engaging in classroom observations, teachers encounter experiences by which they can gain knowledge through feedback and reflection on practices supported by Kolb's transformation from the concrete experience stage to the reflective observation stage. Mirroring the ELT cycle, a CW cycle affords teachers a platform to reflect on their experiences facilitated by continuous assessment of experiences that can lead to newly acquired knowledge and changes in preexisting concepts. At the final stage, active experimentation stage, while teachers apply and test newly acquired knowledge, they discover new ways to improve their practices.

Conclusion

The research provided understanding of secondary teachers' perceptions of CWs. Research findings showed that although teachers expressed a positive attitude toward CWs, they believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful for changing classroom instruction that can lead to improved student achievement. Additionally, teachers recommended that CW observations be conducted by instructional and content-specific specialists who can provide content-specific feedback. Teachers stated that feedback they receive after a classroom observation is usually not content-specific and therefore, not useful to improving their instructional practices. Research shows that for feedback to be effective, it must be concrete, specific, and useful (Gillespie, 2016; Gurkan, 2018, Lochmiller, 2016). Feedback must be timely, consistent, include sharing observable data, and pose reflective questions to support and develop teachers'

instructional practices. This notion aligns with Kolb's ELT cycle (2015), the framework for the study, where the concrete experience corresponds to engaging in a CW. The reflective observation stage is the feedback, the conceptualization stage represented by learning from the experience, and active experimentation involves planning and testing the learning occurring during the walkthrough. Based on the findings, a CW cycle as a job-embedded PD is recommended. Engaging in a CW incorporates active learning and the opportunity for teachers to design personally adapted learning opportunities focused on content, collaboration, and sustainability.

In section 3, I will present my project, a white paper, developed to address the gaps identified by teachers in the study. A white paper is an informational document that conveys information on specific issues and presents recommendations and strategies to address them (Willerton, 2012). Based on the study findings, the recommendation for this project is the implementation of a structured CW cycle that includes pre- and post-observation meetings and maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder. The preobservation meeting will address teachers' recommendations that call for CW observations to be conducted by instructional and content specialists to increase the duration of the observation and identify the purpose for the CW, and for teachers to observe colleagues. According to Kachur et al. (2013b), determining the frequency, the duration, and the "look-fors" of the observations provide the structure for the CW and clarifies the observer's expectations. Identifying the purpose of the observation would be helpful in selecting the observer who would provide feedback to improve teachers' instruction. The post-observation meeting may support teachers' recommendations for the need to

participate in follow-up discussions where feedback and next steps will be discussed. To address teachers' recommendations for use of self-reflection, the CW cycle will include a walkthrough evidence folder that will be used to archive and present data resulting from observation and follow-up discussions which could promote teachers' reflective practices. Reflective practices are better sustained when teachers reflect on their discussions with their colleagues (Kuh, 2016). Gurkan (2018) asserted that collegial interaction with peers after classroom observations could promote reflective instructional dialogue that could lead to improved instructional practices and student achievement.

Summary

In this section I presented the qualitative approach to analyzing the data collected from 12 participants. Data revealed that engaging in a CW did not improve teachers' instructional practices that could lead to improved student achievement. Teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement. While they regarded feedback as an essential component of the CW, they indicated that the short duration of a CW was not adequate to generate meaningful feedback. They also expressed the general feedback provided by their school administrators was not useful for addressing their needs related to content-specific instructional practices. Teachers recommended that instructional and content specialists should conduct CWs so that they can be provided with content-specific feedback to support and develop their content-specific instructional practices and enhance their content knowledge. They believed that content specialist observers who provide adequate feedback could result in improved teaching and learning.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project I chose for this study was a white paper report (see Appendix A) to address the gaps identified by teachers at FSD that contributed to the minimal influence on their instructional practices. In this section, I provide the rationale for the project and a review of the literature that supports the project recommendations. I present the project description followed by the project evaluation plan and project implications. The project's goals are to improve instruction and possibly increase student achievement.

Rationale

A white paper serves as an in-depth report describing a specific topic and any related issues surrounding it. The purpose is to educate the targeted audience on the topic and provide recommendations by which to address it (Stelzner, 2006; Willerton, 2012). The white paper for this project will provide educational leaders at FSD with recommendations for a job-embedded PD that aims at influencing teachers' instructional practices. The recommendations in the white paper were based on the gaps identified by teachers about CWs' lack of influence on their instructional practices.

Researchers have long agreed that effective PD opportunities can enhance teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices and lead to improved student achievement (Connor, 2017; Gillespie, 2016). To provide teachers with job-embedded PD, FSD implemented the use of administrator-led CWs as an instructional coaching model. The model was intended to influence teachers' instructional practices with the goal of improving student achievement. Analysis of data collected from 12 FSD teachers

through semistructured interviews revealed that teachers neither found CW feedback to be an effective means of improving their instructional practices nor useful in improving student achievement.

Although teachers welcomed CWs and regarded their use as a way for administrators to collect data on teaching and learning, they did not find CWs helpful in improving their content-specific instructional practices. Teachers did not find CW feedback helpful or useful in relation to changing classroom instruction or improving student achievement. Teachers recommended that CW observations be conducted by instructional and content specialists who can provide content-specific feedback.

Eight (67%) teachers reported that they did not find the feedback provided by the administrator conducting the CW helpful. Eleven (92%) teachers emphasized the need for an observer versed in the content, such as an academic coach or a colleague. They viewed coaches and colleagues as possessing the ability to add to their content knowledge and provide them with content-specific strategies to adjust their instructional practices. They explained that CW feedback was on general teaching concerns such as classroom management, student engagement practices, and classroom environment. Additionally, nine (75%) teachers noted that the short duration of an administrator-led CW is not sufficient to assess teacher needs or identify instructional gaps that can result in meaningful feedback. As for the influence of CWs on student achievement, 10 (83%) teachers communicated that they could not attribute student achievement to their engagement in CWs.

To address the gaps noted by teachers, I wrote a white paper to share teachers' perceptions of CWs and provided recommendations to improve instruction. Based on findings, the white paper addresses teachers' recommendations for CW observations to be conducted by instructional and content specialists, to increase the duration of CW observations, to identify the purpose for CWs, to have teachers observe colleagues, to use self-reflection, and to involve CW participants in follow-up discussions. I propose in the white paper the implementation of a structured CW cycle that consists of pre- and postobservation meetings and maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder that will address teachers' recommendations for CW observations to be conducted by instructional and content specialists who can provide content-specific feedback. I will present the white paper to instructional leaders at FSD to encourage them to consider addressing teachers' recommendations that might contribute to instructional improvements.

Review of the Literature

The literature review will provide instructional leaders at FSD with information to support the recommendation for a structured CW cycle to influence teachers' instructional practices. Data analysis showed that teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful in changing classroom instruction or improving student achievement. Teachers recommended that CW observations be conducted by instructional and content specialists, that CWs should increase in duration, that teachers know the purpose of CWs, and that teachers should use self-reflection, observe colleagues, and participate in follow-up discussions. Based on the study findings, the recommendation for this project is the implementation of a structured CW cycle that

includes pre- and postobservation meetings and maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder.

The cycle will include a preobservation meeting that will engage teachers, along with their administrator, in determining the purpose, “look-fors,” and the CW observer. Kachur et al. (2013b) asserted that determining the frequency, duration, and “look-fors” of observations provides structure for CWs and clarifies observer’s expectations. Identifying the purpose of a CW will then help determine which instructional or content specialist observer is best suited to conduct the observation and provide content-specific feedback and strategies to support and develop teachers’ classroom practices. In addition, identifying the purpose and focus of the CW can provide the rationale for colleague observations, a recommendation made by teachers, and can assist in identifying the teacher observer who can provide content-specific feedback and strategies to the teacher observed. According to Gurkan (2018), collegial interaction with peers after classroom observations could promote reflective dialogue and improved instructional practices. Kuh (2016) also found that reflective practices were better sustained when teachers reflected on their discussions with their colleagues.

The CW cycle will also include a postobservation meeting for a follow-up discussion. The postobservation meeting is designed for dialogue between the teacaher and observer to disucss observation feedback and next steps. Gurkan (2018) concluded that effective feedback that can influence instructional behaviors requires four elements: It must (a) be goal oriented, with a clear connection to the teacher’s learning goals; (b)

provide tangible results related to the goals; (c) offer actionable information on what worked and what did not based on the observation; and (d) be timely and ongoing.

Maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder will address teachers' recommendations for self-reflection. In the evidence folder are observable data, observable data, feedback, reflective questions, and next-steps that can promote teacher reflective practices. Steinberg and Sartain (2015) asserted that frequent and actionable performance feedback is a key factor in improving teaching performance through reflective practices. Teachers will use the evidence folder to monitor and evaluate their progress and identify their instructional needs. Girvan et al. (2016) asserted that feedback and reflection afford teachers ownership over their specific PD needs.

To support the recommendations included in the white paper, the literature review focused on four components of a CW: (a) the purpose and "look-fors" of the observation, (b) the observer conducting the observation, (c) the frequency and duration of the observation, and (d) the observation's feedback on instruction. Aligned with the gaps noted, a review of literature relevant to this study was conducted using peer-reviewed journals and books identified through Walden Thoreau, ERIC, SAGE Research Complete, and Google Scholar. To compile the literature review, the following terms were used: *classroom observations, instructional practices, instructional coaching, administrators as instructional leaders, teacher feedback*, and *content-specific feedback.*

Components of a Classroom Walkthrough

Recognizing that teachers have the most impact on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015), efforts to improve teaching practices prompted the need to identify PD

opportunities for teachers to influence student achievement positively. These efforts led to identifying vital aspects of effective PD: It should be job-embedded; it should be ongoing, with a focus on a discrete skill set; and it should engage participants in active learning, collaboration, use of effective practice models, coaching and expert support, feedback, and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Kraft et al., 2018). To provide effective PD opportunities, educational leaders resorted to the use of CWs as an instructional coaching model to improve and develop teachers' instructional practices. Defined as frequent, short, instruction-focused classroom observations, CWs are used to gather evidence of teaching and student learning (Grissom et al., 2013) through collecting data about what is transpiring in the classroom (DeWitt, 2012). Furthermore, CWs can facilitate an instructional dialogue that promotes reflective practices for improving teaching and learning and bringing about change in pedagogy (Gillespie, 2016; Grissom et al., 2013; Kachur et al., 2013a; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Although CWs can take on different forms, the goal is to engage teachers in meaningful PD opportunities to improve teaching and learning (Johnson, 2016; Kachur et al., 2013b; Lochmiller, 2016). The most notable differences among the types of CWs include (a) the duration of the observation (which can range from a few minutes to an entire class period) and (b) who conducts the observation (e.g., administrators, coaches, teachers, parents, and students). Kachur et al. (2013b) found that regardless of such differences, the majority of CWs included feedback.

Purpose and "Look-Fors"

Engaging teachers in determining the purpose and the "look-fors" of observation not only solidifies the focus of the CW as a strategy for instructional support (Kachur et al., 2013a), but also allows teachers to plan their own learning experience (Knowles et al., 2015; Visone, 2020) that can support instructional improvement leading to improved student achievement. According to Gillespie (2016), observations focused on agreed-upon priorities can support the brevity of classroom observations and ensure objectivity. The collection of specific, observable evidence, such as classroom instructional strategies, artifacts, and learning activities, can lend credibility and relevance to support conversations specific to the teacher's individual instructional needs (Gillespie, 2016; Kachur et al. (2013b). Gillespie asserted that such data could empower instructional conversations and promote teachers' reflective practices.

The collection and recording of observable data by the CW observer can be used to facilitate an instructional conversation and provide support for feedback. Recording evidence during and after the observation can take many forms. The most common formats used to record CW data include anecdotal/narrative notes, checklists, and a combination of checklists and narrative forms (Kachur, 2013b). Gillespie (2016) advocated for using a well-designed rubric to minimize guesswork in ascertaining whether "look-fors" are visible or not visible during an observation. While checklists can be completed quickly and help the observer focus on elements of explicit instruction, some argue that checklists may not provide useful information that helps refine instructional practices (David, 2008, as cited in Gillespie, 2016). Regardless of the format

used to record evidence collected during or after an observation, Gillespie asserted that the purpose of data collection is to support an instructional conversation that allows teachers to self-reflect on their instructional practices. Furthermore, archiving the data collected allows longitudinal data analysis to monitor and evaluate improvements and inform and design PD opportunities (Gillespie, 2016).

Observer

Identifying the purpose of a CW is critical to determining the individual conducting the observation. Pairing the purpose of the observation with an observer's expertise can result in focused and relevant feedback related to teachers' specific learning needs (Johnson, 2016). Kraft et al. (2018) stated that observations focusing on discrete skills can result in content-specific feedback that supports the development of teachers' instructional practices.

CW observers who aim at improving teachers' instruction with the goal of improving student achievement include instructional coaches who are content and pedagogy specialists, school administrators, and colleagues (Celeste, 2016; Johnson, 2016). Lochmiller (2016) asserted that classroom supervision involves coaching facilitated by frequent classroom observations and ongoing instructional dialogue. Engaging different practitioners/observers in classroom observations that focus on discrete skills such as pedagogical content coaching and clinical supervision allows for differentiated PD opportunities that can result in improved instructional practices.

Observations conducted by instructional and content specialists can yield significant benefits for improving pedagogical content knowledge. Hammond and Moore

(2018) suggested that engaging in an instructional coaching experience effectively addresses teachers' individual needs. In addition to mentoring, instructional and content specialists can provide teachers with content-specific pedagogical support for improving their classroom instruction that can result in higher student achievement (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Huguet et al., 2014; Johnson, 2016). A content-specific specialist provides teachers with the coaching experience needed to extend their understanding of curriculum and pedagogy knowledge as well as developing and using effective instructional and assessment strategies that are content-specific. Through the coaching experience, teachers are afforded the collaborative opportunity to identify instructional needs addressed through observations, feedback, and reflective conversations (Thomas et al., 2015).

A PD experience is considered effective if the interaction is well aligned with teachers' needs (Visone, 2020). Knowles (1984) suggested that adults' learning needs dictate the structure by which they learn. One assumption about adult learners' characteristics is that adult learners exhibit self-directedness, which involves taking the initiative to address their learning needs and assuming responsibility for their learning choices (Ozuah, 2016). A second assumption is that adult learners show readiness to learn, meaning that they are motivated to learn to perform tasks relevant to their work (Ozuah, 2016). Peer observation, as a learning tool, closely aligned with adult learning theory because it allows teachers to address their learning needs within their jobs (Visone, 2020).

A collaborative and contextualized learning opportunity, peer observation involves colleagues working together to refine, expand, and acquire knowledge through

classroom observations, sharing of ideas, and engagement in action research (Visone, 2020). Findings from Visone's study on the implementation of a peer observation protocol called the "Collegial Visits" model revealed that engaging teachers in peer observations reduced teacher isolation. Additionally, findings revealed that teacher buy-in was enhanced because formal school supervisors were not part of the process. The model included short peer observations, with each focusing on a specific, discrete skill, followed by a debriefing session with the host teacher. The predetermined purpose for a visit determined the configuration of participants in the process. For example, if the purpose was pedagogical strategy, then a heterogeneous group of teachers would participate. On the other hand, if the purpose was a particular curricular element that was grade level content-specific, then a homogeneous group of observers participated. Visone noted that the use of the peer observation model has the potential to empower teachers as the observers and the observed and enhance professional learning and collegiality.

In their role as instructional leaders, school administrators are expected to conduct frequent CWs and provide feedback to establish an ongoing instructional dialogue with teachers (Grissom et al., 2013; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Sheng et al., 2017). Scholars have noted the assumption that administrators can provide meaningful feedback that can lead to improved instruction (Lochmiller, 2016; Neumerski, 2013). Lochmiller (2016) found that providing teachers with relevant feedback was difficult for most administrators. In his study on exploring administrators' feedback to secondary school mathematics and science teachers, Lochmiller found that administrators' feedback was bound within a distinct subject related to their experiences as classroom teachers. Moreover, Kraft and

Gilmour (2016) noted that administrators found providing feedback difficult because content-specific feedback was outside of their expertise; therefore, they limited their feedback to general practices. Lochmiller found that data collected by administrators often involved evidence of the physical classroom environment, teacher actions such as questioning strategies, classroom routines, student behavior, and level of engagement. This further supports the notion that without the identification of a purpose and "look-fors," the data collected during an observation are likely to reflect the interest of the observer and be generic rather than addressing teachers' needs (Lochmiller, 2016).

Research shows that although school administrators spend a short time observing classroom instruction, they provide teachers with detailed feedback about their instruction (Lochmiller, 2016). The feedback provided by administrators focused more on general pedagogical practices than content-specific feedback (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Lochmiller, 2016). Although teachers regarded feedback on general pedagogical practices as valuable, they wanted content-specific feedback aligned with their specific content (Lochmiller, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2017). Lochmiller (2016) attributed the lack of content-specific feedback administrators provide secondary teachers to the pronounced need for content-specific expertise. Therefore, identifying the purpose and "look-fors" of an observation during the preobservation meeting can help determine the observer who will be best suited to provide meaningful feedback (Visone, 2020).

Frequency and Duration

Researchers suggested that short, frequent classroom observations are instrumental in providing a structure for dialogue between teacher and observer to

improve instruction and possibly student achievement (Garza et al., 2016; Kachur et al., 2013a; Kachur et al., 2013b). CWs are used by teachers and observers to engage in collaborative coaching opportunities to improve instruction. Desimone and Pak (2017) asserted that effective coaching requires ample time for frequent interactions between teacher and observer. Frequent classroom visits at different times contributed to a better collection of data about what is transpiring in the classroom (Kachur et al., 2013b; Garza et al., 2016). Additionally, Garza et al. (2016) found that frequent CWs were instrumental in promoting trust and transparency between teachers and the administrator who conducted the observation. Although researchers differ on the amount of time needed for observations, the consensus is that CWs should be frequent and relatively short. According to Gillespie (2016), short CWs considered an "authentic observation" that provides a snapshot of what is transpiring in the classroom and genuinely reflects the classroom environment. Although Zepeda (2013) acknowledged the value of short, frequent CWs for generating formative feedback, she advocated for longer classroom observations noting that brevity of classroom observations minimizes the collection of meaningful data. Shorter observations may prevent the observer from witnessing expected teaching practices that perhaps are not used during the short time of the observation. Furthermore, short visits do not provide the observer with a strong understanding of teachers' instructional abilities or their choices for teaching strategies, thus minimizing the value placed on the feedback teachers receive (Garza et al., 2016).

Feedback

Research supports the notion that CWs provide a structure for instructional dialogue between observers and teachers (Connor, 2017; Desimone, 2017; Garza et al., 2016; Gillespie, 2016). Because CW observations can serve different purposes, the purpose of the observation should determine the choice of observer who can provide relevant feedback intended to support instructional changes. One of the core benefits of the CW is the component of feedback that follows classroom observations (Garza et al., 2016; Gurkan, 2018; Lochmiller, 2016). Gurkan's (2018) study about the effects of immediate versus delayed feedback revealed that both types of feedback are effective to improve instruction. However, immediate feedback is more effective than delayed feedback in decreasing teachers' undesirable behaviors.

Feedback needs to be goal-oriented with a clear connection to teachers' learning needs (Tuytens & Devos, 2014). Providing content-specific feedback directly related to pedagogy allows for a relevant instructional dialogue between teacher and observer. Regardless of the approach used to conduct CWs, authentic feedback needs to be supported by tangible data and accompanied by actionable information on what worked and did not work based on the observation. Feedback can be instrumental for providing continuous support during the implementation phase of newly acquired knowledge, often regarded as the most significant challenge facing teachers in developing and changing their instructional approaches (Shernoff et al., 2017). For teachers, feedback is an essential aspect of learning from experience because it provides teachers a way to reflect

on their practices, so they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses; thus, resulting in changes to enhance their instructional practices (Ganly, 2017; Kachur et al., 2013b).

Feedback that is intended to identify discrepancies between actual outcomes and intended outcomes is regarded as a key factor for improving instruction through reflective practices (Camburn & Han, 2015; Ganly, 2017; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015). Although current literature lacks a universally accepted definition for reflective practice, the literature encompasses a formative evaluation process by which teachers gather and reflect on feedback to improve teaching practices (Camburn & Han, 2015; Dreyer, 2015; Kuh, 2016). For teachers, reflection can mean examining their teaching practices, exploring ways to improve them, and implementing newly acquired knowledge to improve teaching and learning (Dreyer, 2015). Teachers use reflective journaling to record teaching events or ideas to increase their awareness of their practices (Kheirzadeh & Sistani, 2018; Zulficar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Camburn and Han (2015) asserted that teachers tend to reflect on their practices when directly related to their teaching. This further supports the notion that providing feedback after classroom observations can provide the structure for ongoing instructional dialogue and can stimulate reflective practices that lead to improved classroom teaching (Kuh, 2016).

Simoncini et al. (2014) asserted that engaging in inquiry and reflective conversations allow the observer and the teacher to extend their learning and grow professionally. The instructional dialogue resulting from feedback can potentially prompt critical reflection that may result in teachers' increased pedagogical knowledge and continuous improvement in instruction (Camburn & Han, 2015; Gillespie, 2016;

Holmstrom et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016). The reflective process requires teachers to recapture their experiences through the observer's perspective, think about the experience, and then evaluate the experience to integrate new knowledge. Reflective practices engage teachers in the experiential learning cycle. Through reflection teachers become self-directed learners who learn from their experiences using observation as the concrete experience. By reflecting on their experiences, teachers move through the abstract conceptualization stage to reach the active experimentation stage where new acquired knowledge can be tested to improve instruction (Girvan et al., 2016).

White Paper Effectiveness

A white paper serves as an in-depth report used to describe an issue and provide recommendations or different perspectives on how to solve a problem (Stelzner, 2006; Willerton, 2012). White papers typically are used in business and professional settings for a range of purposes and different audiences (Willerton, 2012). Corporations often use this genre as a marketing tool to inform audiences about a product as a solution that addresses their needs (Willerton, 2012). This white paper is intended to share teachers' perceptions and create awareness of vital components that support instructional improvements using a CW cycle as an instructional coaching model that aims to improve teaching and learning.

Project Description

I developed this project to address secondary teachers' perceptions of CWs. I chose a white paper as the project to address the local problem that secondary teachers at FSD do not believe that the administrator-led CWs are improving their instructional practices. This white paper contains recommendations for instructional leaders at FSD to

change classroom instruction and improve student achievement. Teachers recommended that observations should be conducted by instructional and content specialists, to increase the duration of CW observations, to identify the purpose of CWs, to have teachers observe colleagues, to use self-reflection, and to involve CW participants in follow-up discussions. To address teachers' recommendations, I propose the implementation of a structured CW cycle to include pre- and postobservation meetings and maintain a walkthrough evidence folder.

To address the gaps identified by teachers, the first recommendation is to schedule pre and postobservation meetings once every 2 months with teachers and their supervising school administrators. Completing the CW observation form will facilitate the pre- and postobservation meetings that will address teachers' recommendations for CWs to be conducted by instructional and content specialists, to increase the duration of CW observations, to identify the purpose for CWs, and to have teachers observe colleagues. During the preobservation meeting, the purpose will be identified and the timing, duration, and the observer who is best suited to conduct the observation and provide relevant feedback. The postobservation meetings will include feedback to facilitate reflection on data collected, link PD opportunities to teachers' areas of interest or need, and discuss next steps (Zepeda, 2014) that address teachers' recommendations for self-reflection and participation in follow-up discussions.

The second recommendation is to maintain an electronic walkthrough evidence folder that will address teachers' recommendations for self-reflection. The walkthrough evidence folder will house the walkthrough observation forms, evidence collected during

observations, and anecdotal notes captured during observation activities. These activities will be used to promote teachers' reflective practices and help monitor and evaluate progress and identify PD needs.

The white paper begins with an introduction that includes a brief overview of the literature, followed by a description of the local problem, and the three themes identified: (a) teachers expressed a positive attitude toward CWs, (b) teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement, and (c) teachers recommend that CW observations be conducted by instructional and content specialists. The white paper concludes with recommendations based on the research findings for a structured CW cycle to improve teachers' instructional practices with the goal to increase student achievement.

Implementation

Based on the research findings and to address teachers' recommendations, instructional leaders at FSD need to consider the resources and the barriers associated with the implementation of a structured CW cycle. The time for scheduled meetings will occur during the bimonthly structured teacher planning time (STPT) meetings, rotating between content and grade level meetings. A training session by technology teacher lead (TTL) to train teachers on how to create an electronic walkthrough evidence folder can also occur during one of the bimonthly staff. However, aspects of scheduling classroom walkthroughs such as the time, duration, and the observer need consideration and planning.

Resources

To implement the recommendations for a CW cycle, resources needed include, TTL, access to computers that requires reserving a computer lab for training, and substitute teachers to be reserved for half a day on scheduled observations. The pre and postobservation meetings will not require additional time since they can take place during the two scheduled 50 minutes allocated for STPT. Since STPT time is rotated between content and grade level meetings, pre and postobservation meetings that involve peer observation and require collaboration and feedback by peers could take place during STPT allotted time and will not require any additional time. TTL training will not require additional time, because it can occur during scheduled bimonthly staff meetings. Maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder requires access to a computer already provided to every teacher in the district. Training teachers to create an electronic folder may require reserving the computer lab.

Barriers

Potential barriers to the project's implementation may involve scheduling observations that might require substitute teachers to cover the observer's class. Because the purpose of the observation will determine the observer, there is a need to coordinate required personnel. For example, content-specific coaches will be needed from the district and classroom coverage may be required if peer observations are to take place. Another barrier might involve teacher buy-in for engaging in the process. Overcoming this barrier will include respecting teachers' time by ensuring that pre and post meetings take place at the time already allocated for STPT. Another consideration to support

teachers' buy-in will be giving them control over their learning. Allowing teachers to align the purpose of the observation with the observer will solidify the focus of the walkthrough as a strategy for support and allow teachers to design their learning experiences (Kachur et al., 2013a; Knowles et al., 2015; Visone, 2020).

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Administrators

Teachers

Teachers' roles include collaboration with the supervising administrator to schedule a CW every 2 months, identify the purpose of the observation, and determine the observer. CW observations may include teachers being observed in their classrooms or observing colleagues. Enabling teachers to observe other colleagues who have developed effective activities or instructional practices directly related to teachers' content area can support the development of their own instructional practices. Additionally, teachers will be expected to maintain a walkthrough portfolio, which will include completing their portion of the CW observation form once every 2 months as a tool to reflect on their experiences and monitor their progress.

Administrators

The supervising school administrators' role will be to meet with teachers once every 2 months during STPT to schedule CW. Additionally, administrators need to arrange the observation logistics, such as providing substitute teachers to cover classes or a content-specific observer. Administrators serving as observers need to complete a CW observation form that includes feedback focusing on teachers' instruction and next steps to facilitate the postobservation meetings. The form maintained in the teachers'

walkthrough evidence folder will facilitate teachers' reflection and a way to monitor and evaluate their progress.

Observers

Observers can include administrators, peers, and academic coaches. The observers' role will be to conduct the classroom observations focusing on teachers' instruction at the time and duration determined at the preobservation meeting, collect data to support the focus of the observation, and provide feedback and next steps at the postobservation meeting captured on the classroom observation form.

Project Evaluation Plan

To evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations in the white paper, which aims at improving teachers' instruction and student achievement, an outcome-based evaluation will be used. According to (Schalock, 1995) an outcome-based evaluation focuses on the changes in attitudes, behaviors, and practices that result from program activities. Participating teachers will be asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix D) after engaging in at least three CW cycles that is aligned with the goal of this project. The questionnaire was developed to help indicate if the goals of the project were met as it relates to instructional improvements and student achievement. I will use the questionnaire to solicit feedback about teachers' perceptions of the CW cycle, the use of feedback to adjust instruction, challenges and helpful aspects of the CW cycle, short- or long-term measurable outcomes of student achievement, and recommendations to improve CW cycle. The data collected will be shared with instructional leaders at FSD to include secondary aurriculum & instruction director,

equity & professional sevelopment irdector, and participating teachers and their school administrators.

Project's Implications for Social Change

This project aims to engage teachers in a structured CW cycle to influence their instructional practices that can lead to improved student achievement. The project's adoption and implementation may contribute to creating an ongoing job-embedded PD opportunity to improve and enhance instructional practices. A CW cycle can be used as an opportunity for teachers to design their learning experiences through collaboration with other colleagues, supervisors, and coaches. Teachers will assume dual roles of observers and observed that may afford them the opportunity to gain different perspectives to further support reflective practices, which may yield improved instructional practices. Maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder may facilitate archiving the data and help teachers record and monitor their progress as well as identify PD needs.

The outcomes of the study may have implications for social change by providing teachers opportunities to engage in experiences, which improve their instructional practices and monitor progress leading to improved student achievement. Additional implication for social change includes identification of components of PD that educational leaders can use to develop and implement ongoing job-embedded PD that support instructional improvements.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The project for this study, a white paper, addresses the gaps identified through the examination of teachers' perceptions of CWs as they relate to the goal of improving instructional practices and student achievement. In this section, I present the project's strengths and limitations, followed by recommendations for alternative approaches. I also discuss scholarship, project development, and leadership change. The section concludes with a reflection on the work and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

A strength of this project is that it provides a platform used to advocate for change through the implementation of a structured CW cycle to improve instructional practices at FSD and potentially other school districts. The project provides two recommendations for the implementation of a structured CW cycle to influence teachers' instructional practices. First, the white paper provides all stakeholders at FSD with findings and literature supporting the implementation of a structured CW cycle that includes pre- and postobservation meetings. The preobservation meeting is used for teachers to collaborate with their supervising administrators to design a personalized PD experience that is relevant and closely connected to their teaching and student learning (Ozuah, 2016). Another component of the preobservation meeting is to collaboratively choose an observer, who will conduct the observation and provide feedback. As a result of such PD experience, feedback and next steps discussed during the postobservation will be more goal referenced, specific, personalized, and actionable (Garza et al., 2016). Reflection

practices prompted by feedback may increase self-awareness and encourage active engagement in adjusting instructional practices (Holmstrom, 2015; Kuh, 2016). Second, the project contains a recommendation to maintain a walkthrough evidence portfolio. Teachers and administrators will use the portfolio to monitor teachers' progress and identify individual and collective staff needs for instructional improvement.

By providing an overview of my study, the findings, and the literature supporting the recommendations, this white paper can be instrumental in bringing about change in how teachers' instructional practices may be improved. Teachers can take an active role in identifying their individual needs and designing learning experiences relevant to their teaching within the CW cycle (Knowles et al., 2015; Visone, 2020). The project's goals are improved instructional practices and higher student achievement.

Project Limitations

One limitation of this white paper could be the reluctance of the school district personnel to implement the recommendations of the project. It is not possible to ascertain whether the gaps and recommendations mentioned by participants would be addressed because personnel's reluctance is tentative. Additionally, it is possible that no changes will be made to the administrator-led CWs, which have not fulfilled their intended purpose as an instructional coaching model to improve teachers' instructional practices. A second limitation may be the reluctance of teachers to maintain a walkthrough evidence portfolio due to lack of time or the perception that this would be a responsibility added to their already heavy schedules.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The proposed CW cycle aims to provide teachers a platform to engage in ongoing collaborative dialogue and active self-reflection to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and practices. The recommendations afford teachers the opportunity to address their needs by designing personalized learning experiences. By allowing teachers to choose the purpose of an observation and the observer it may be possible to afford them the opportunity to engage in relevant, content-specific instructional dialogue directly related to their teaching.

An alternative approach to providing teachers opportunities to improve their instructional practices is facilitating access to research-based pedagogical practices and content knowledge through online PD platforms. For example, the district can purchase a license to use online platforms giving teachers access to on-demand instructional videos covering pedagogical topics, instructional strategies, and tools used to create PD plans to track and monitor progress. Although an online platform is a viable alternative, online interactions may limit the collaboration component whereby teachers work as partners with their supervisors and colleagues.

Another alternative for providing teachers opportunities for instructional improvements could involve the use of common planning periods for same-content teachers from all grade levels. Common planning time could be used for horizontal (same grade level) and vertical (different grade level) collaboration among teachers teaching the same content. During common planning time, teachers can engage in sharing best practices and instructional strategies, analyze student data, and engage in action research,

all of which can support and develop teachers' instructional practices with the goal of improving student achievement. Cavazos (2018) asserted that PD opportunities that facilitate collaboration among teachers can result in collaborative decision making that addresses teachers' specific needs.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

In this section, I reflect on my development as a scholar, project developer and evaluator, and agent of change.

Scholarship

Scholarship is the process of discovery that involves engaging in research to expand one's knowledge. The doctoral program prepared me to gather, interpret, and understand content relevant to my field of study by gathering and reading academic resources to gain and further my knowledge. I learned that the academic resources gathered need to have been published within the last 5 years and need to be supported by peer-reviewed articles so that the acquired knowledge is credible and relevant. In doing so, I learned to reach conclusions and make decisions based on theory and research. The program was instrumental in developing my academic writing skills so that I can write with a scholarly voice and convey my ideas in a cohesive and clear manner.

The doctoral project study has helped me grow as a scholar who understands all aspects of the research process. I learned the importance of developing a structure to manage my time, formulate research questions to guide my study, review current research to make informed decisions, and effectively communicate my findings and recommendations. The project allowed me to experience the steps involved in developing

a process to review literature and collect, analyze, and synthesize data to investigate a phenomenon.

The knowledge that I gained as a scholar to advance my analytical and critical thinking skills during the doctoral program will allow me to seek opportunities to build teachers' capacity to prepare students for college and careers. The further that I got into my course work, the better I understood the impact that my specialization of choice can have during paradigm shifts in education. My commitment to scholarly development resulting from my involvement empowered me to become an agent of change who can affect positive outcomes.

Project Development and Evaluation

Project development is the systematic use of resources and knowledge to design and implement a project to meet established goals and objectives. The research study allowed me to pursue my interest in teachers' PD opportunities and use it to undertake my own study project in a scholarly manner. Based on the results of my research, I developed a CW cycle to address the gaps in applying CWs. The knowledge that I gained from the literature review about the characteristics of adult learners guided my development of the project, in which I kept in mind the notion that teachers are adult learners and that PD is their educational opportunity. In addition, the data collected from teachers helped me better understand the local problem and the perspectives of teachers that resulted in the recommendations for this project.

First, I learned that to develop a project that will address teachers' needs it must be based on the research findings and related to the framework and relative literature. The

second step involved developing a plan by which to achieve the project's goals. The recommendations of the teachers in the study were instrumental in helping me organize what will be done and by whom. Next, I communicated the plan for implementation, the resources needed, and the project's outcome-based evaluation plan to ensure that the project goals were met.

I designed a white paper to advocate for change based on teachers' recommendations to improve instruction and student achievement. In the white paper, I conveyed teachers' voice, literature supporting the project, and my recommendations for a structured CW cycle that may influence instructional improvements and student achievement. Experiencing all aspects of project development provided me the first steppingstones toward other topics to research in the field of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Leadership and Change

I learned from this doctoral program that through advocating and working to build an education system that removes obstacles to academic success, I can be an agent of change. Engaging in this project study empowered me to become an effective leader who can initiate change by identifying a local problem and developing a process by which to investigate it and provide solutions. While developing this project, I had to consider all stakeholders' perspectives to ensure that the project addressed the gaps identified while considering the obstacles to and limitations of project implementation. The process taught me that to be an effective educational leader, I must utilize data and resources to make informed decisions. Effective leaders strive to create a collaborative and inclusive

learning community based on trust that empowers teachers to learn and take risks to stimulate growth continually. My goal is to use the knowledge that I gained in my course work in the field of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and my experience in developing a project to promote innovative strategies for enhancing teaching and learning.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

In reflecting on my work in this project, I am encouraged by the potential positive change that a structured CW cycle could create in teachers' instructional practices and student achievement. I learned that although teachers expressed positive attitudes toward CWs, they did not find the feedback helpful or useful in improving instruction and student achievement. To address the minimal useful feedback intended to support teachers' instructional practices, the CW cycle was developed based on teachers' recommendations to incorporate effective features of PD experiences. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), effective PD experiences include participants as active learners, are collaborative, are content focused, include coaching and expert support, and provide feedback and opportunities for reflection. By incorporating the features of effective PD in the proposed CW cycle, I sought to address the gaps noted by teachers who wished to improve their instructional practices and student achievement. Additionally, embedding opportunities to engage teachers in designing their learning experiences through the platform of a structured CW cycle makes teachers' learning meaningful and directly related to their teaching.

It is gratifying to know that my work could have a positive effect on teachers' professional learning. The use of the white paper afforded me the opportunity to become an agent of change by addressing the need for effective CW as job-embedded PD that may influence teachers' instruction and improve student achievement at FSD.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Recognizing that the most significant contributor to student achievement is effective classroom instruction (Gillespie, 2016; Marzano & Toth, 2014), I maintain that affording teachers PD opportunities that can enhance their content knowledge and skills is vital to improving their instructional practices, potentially leading to higher student achievement (Abdurrahmani, 2013; Connor, 2017; Kachur et al., 2013b).

Administrator-led CWs that have been implemented at FSD with the intention of improving teachers' instructional practices have not been effective. Teachers stated that they did not find the current practice beneficial as it related to influencing their instructional practices or student achievement. Findings indicated that teachers need to engage in instructional dialogue that includes pedagogy and content-specific feedback provided by instructional and content specialists.

The potential social-change impact of this study resides in the provision of teachers at FSD with a CW cycle that can influence their instructional practices and student achievement. Educational leaders at FSD may find benefits from the findings of this study as it relates to improving teachers' instructional practices and student achievement through the implementation of a CW cycle that engages teachers in experiences that may lead to instructional improvements. The development of the CW

cycle stemmed from the teachers' desire to receive content-specific feedback. Findings revealed that teachers found feedback provided by academic coaches, colleagues, and content specialists to be valuable. Allowing teachers to choose the observer and the focus of a CW observation may result in content focused dialogue and feedback. Changes to teachers' instruction will be facilitated by learning prompted by reflective practices. Maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder will facilitate teachers' learning by fostering reflection on practices that can help develop their pedagogical knowledge (Kheirzadeh & Sistani, 2018). Additionally, the evidence folder can be a way to monitor and evaluate teachers' progress. For teachers and school administrators, the folder can facilitate the identification of teachers' needs at a specific school site to improve instructional practices. For the school district, the information could provide insight on developing PD opportunities to address teachers' instructional needs.

Providing teachers with a structured CW cycle that incorporates their recommendations affords them the opportunity to design their own learning experiences based on their interests and needs, which may contribute to improved instructional practices and student achievement. A recommendation for future research is to use qualitative research methods to explore how school administrators could provide ongoing PD that improves student achievement. Another recommendation is to use qualitative research methods to explore how teachers use feedback to adjust their instructional practices. Such studies could provide insight on how to utilize feedback, an essential component of CW, for instructional improvements.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to understand teachers' perceptions of CWs. Study findings indicated that teachers do not believe that administrator-led CWs are improving their instructional practices. Teachers attributed the limited change in instructional practices to who conducted the observations and the quality of the CW feedback. To address those gaps, recommendations for a structured CW cycle included pre- and postobservation meetings and maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder. As such, the recommended CW cycle affords teachers job-embedded PD to engage in active learning that is content focused, collaborative, supported by coaching, and sustained over time, which may lead to improved instructional practices by teachers and higher student achievement.

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Appendix A: The Project

White Paper

Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Walkthroughs and the Influence of Walkthroughs on Instructional Practices

Randa Mazzawi

Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Walkthroughs and the Influence of Walkthroughs on Instructional Practices

Introduction

The adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in California established clear grade level mastery goals aligned with college and career expectations for all students. The new goals required an instructional shift in terms of curriculum and classroom instruction that better supports students' 21st-century skills and competencies (Porter et al., 2015). The emphasis placed on developing students' critical thinking and problem solving dictated the need to provide teachers with effective professional learning opportunities to expand their knowledge and refine their instructional practices.

A growing body of research suggests that providing teachers with learning experiences that are job-embedded and directly related to their classroom-teaching can enhance their content knowledge and develop their instructional skills (Abdurrahmani, 2013; Camburn & Han, 2015; Connor, 2017; Kachur et al., 2013). Regarded as a collaborative job-embedded opportunity that provides a platform for ongoing instructional dialogue, instructional leaders utilize a CW to enhance and support teachers' instructional practices (Garza et al., 2016; Moss & Brookhart, 2015). As a learning experience, a CW allows teachers to engage in instructional improvements through observation, data collection, and instructional dialogue that promote reflective practices to influence instructional practices (Garza et al., 2016).

FSD, a suburban school district in the western United States, implemented the use of administrator-led CWs as an instructional coaching model to influence teachers'

instructional practices. Data collected from 12 FSD teachers through semistructured interviews revealed that engaging in administrator-led CWs did not contribute to improvements in insgtructional practices or student achievement. The white paper addresses the findings based on teachers' perceptions of the influence CWs and provides recommendations based on this study's findings and current research for implementing a structured CW cycle. The structured CW cycle that encompasses pre- and postobservation meetings and maintaining a walkthrough evidence folder will provide teachers with a structure to design their own learning experiences. Reflecting on practices prompted by feedback and ongoing dialogue will engage teachers in learning to gain new knowledge and develop their content-specific pedagogy.

The structured CW cycle designed to address the gaps noted by teachers requires no additional time for implementation. Pre- and postobservation meetings and maintaining the walkthrough evidence folder will take place during the two 50-minute monthly meetings already established for structured teacher planning time (STPT). To evaluate the proposed structured CW cycle, an open-ended questionnaire will solicit teachers' feedback and suggestions that may support the project's adoption and implementation.

Local Problem

Fairway School District's (FSD: pseudonym) students' achievement results indicate that a large percentage of students tested in seventh, eighth, and 11th grade do not meet or nearly meet state standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics (California Department of Education [CDE], 2018). To improve student achievement,

instructional leaders at FSD implemented administrator-led CWs as an instructional coaching model to improve teachers' instructional practices that can lead to higher student achievement. The problem is that teachers at FSD do not believe that the administrator-led CWs are improving their instructional practices that can lead to improved student achievement.

Summary of Project Study

Methodology

The purpose of my study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the influence of CWs. To understand what aspects of CW teachers regarded as supportive and lacking, I explored teachers' perceptions of CWs relative to their instructional planning, instructional practices, student achievement, and the use of feedback to adjust their practices.

Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory (ELT) based on the idea that knowledge is constructed through personal and environmental experiences that transform through four stages of the learning cycle guided the conceptual framework for this study.

Figure A1

Illustration of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Note. Developed from Kolb (2015).

Kolb's learning cycle, closely aligned with the CW cycle, emphasizes the importance of experience in the learning process. Participating in a CW cycle represents the concrete experience that immerses teachers in a real teaching/learning experience that transforms into the reflective observation stage. In the second stage, feedback following observation intended to identify discrepancies between actual outcomes and intended outcomes prompts reflection on the experience where learning begins (Steinberg & Sartain, 2015). Reflecting on the experience during the third stage allows new knowledge construction or modification of practices. In the fourth stage, active experimentation stage, learners' newly acquired knowledge is applied and tested (Kolb et al., 2014).

To explore teachers' perceptions regarding their experiences CWs, I chose a basic qualitative research design. A basic qualitative study is a suitable approach when the researcher is interested in participant's perceptions and understanding of their

experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The qualitative design approach enables researchers to formulate a holistic and mostly narrative description to provide insight into how experiences happen in a natural setting rather than what caused it (Creswell, 2014). To explore FSD teachers' perceptions, I used purposive sampling to recruit and identify 12 secondary teachers (Grades 7-12). A purposive sample is a non-probability sample assumed representative of the population based on knowledge or experience with the phenomenon of interest (Etikan et al., 2016). The decision to include 12 participants for the study was deemed appropriate because a greater number of participants would not allow for the collection of rich and in-depth data per individual (Etikan et al., 2016).

To ensure that participating teachers had the professional background and experiences needed to provide in-depth information, the criteria for participation was comprised of secondary teachers at FSD with at least two years of teaching experience that experienced classroom walkthrough and feedback at least twice. I invited prospective participants via email and provided an introductory letter containing my contact information, an explanation of the study, and a consent form. Upon receiving of the consent forms, I contacted the teachers, who agreed to participate, via email to schedule interviews at a time and place convenient for them.

Data were collected from a purposive sample of 12 teachers through individual semistructured interviews. The semistructured questioning format allowed for probing and follow-up questions to gain a better understanding of issues.

Data Analysis Results

Based on analyzed interview data, three themes emerged: (a) teachers expressed a positive attitude toward CWs, (b) teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement, and (c) teachers recommend that instructional and content specialists should conduct CWs, CWs should increase in duration, know the purpose of CWs, teachers should use self-reflection, observe colleagues, and participate in follow-up discussions.

Theme 1: Teachers expressed a positive attitude toward CWs. Ten (83%) teachers expressed positive attitude toward CWs. Teachers welcomed CWs as a way for administrators to collect data on the teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers expressed that it allowed them to demonstrate their teaching skills to their administrators that validated them and reinforced their use of effective practices.

Theme 2: Teachers believed that CW feedback was neither helpful nor useful to change classroom instruction or improve student achievement. Although teachers noted that CW provided a platform for administrators and teachers to engage in an instructional dialogue, the feedback provided was general and limited to classroom practices that did not contribute to adjustments in their instructional practices. Eleven (92%) teachers expressed the importance of an observer that has content expertise such as academic coaches or colleagues. Teachers noted that observers familiar with the content could provide content-specific feedback to include content knowledge and content-specific instructional strategies instrumental to making adjustments to influence instructional changes.

Data analysis revealed that 11 (92%) teachers did not regard CWs as helpful for improving their instructional practices that can lead to higher student achievement, the intend purpose of administrator-led CWs. They attributed that to the lack of content-specific feedback provided by their administrators and felt that observer that is versed in the content could best provide useful feedback. Seven (58%) teachers shared that engaging in a classroom walkthrough cycle as it pertains to planning for instruction was of value when feedback was specific. Teachers indicated that administrators' feedback was on general classroom practices such as student engagement, checking for understanding strategies and classroom environment and not related to content-specific instructional strategies. Teachers explained that in order to make instructional adjustments feedback needs to be content-specific to add to their content knowledge, include content-specific strategies, demonstration of strategies and activities, and suggestions on how to overcome challenges with certain concepts.

Ten (83%) teachers stated that engaging in a CW did not contribute to improved student achievement. Two (17%) teachers attributed short-term benefits of CW to students' improved behavior while observers are in the classroom that contributed to student being more attentive and engaged. Two (17%) teachers credited improved student achievement to adjustments they made to their instructional practices but not based on their participation in a CW.

Theme 3: Teachers recommend that observations be conducted by instructional and content specialists, to increase the duration of CW observations, to identify the purpose for CWs, to have teachers observe colleagues, to use self-

reflection, and to involve CW participants in follow-up discussions. During the interviews, teachers provided suggestions on how a CW can contribute to adjustments that can lead to instructional changes. Eleven (92%) teachers expressed the need for CW observers that are experts in the content such as academic coaches or colleagues so that feedback can be content-specific that can enhance their content knowledge and their instructional practices. Eight (67%) teachers shared that feedback consisted of administrators restating what took place during the observation and was not content-specific, therefore, not useful in regards to improving their instructional practices. Teachers explained that administrators' lack of experience with the content and the fact that they do not fully understand the challenges teachers face in the classroom prevents them from providing useful feedback that could lead to instructional improvements.

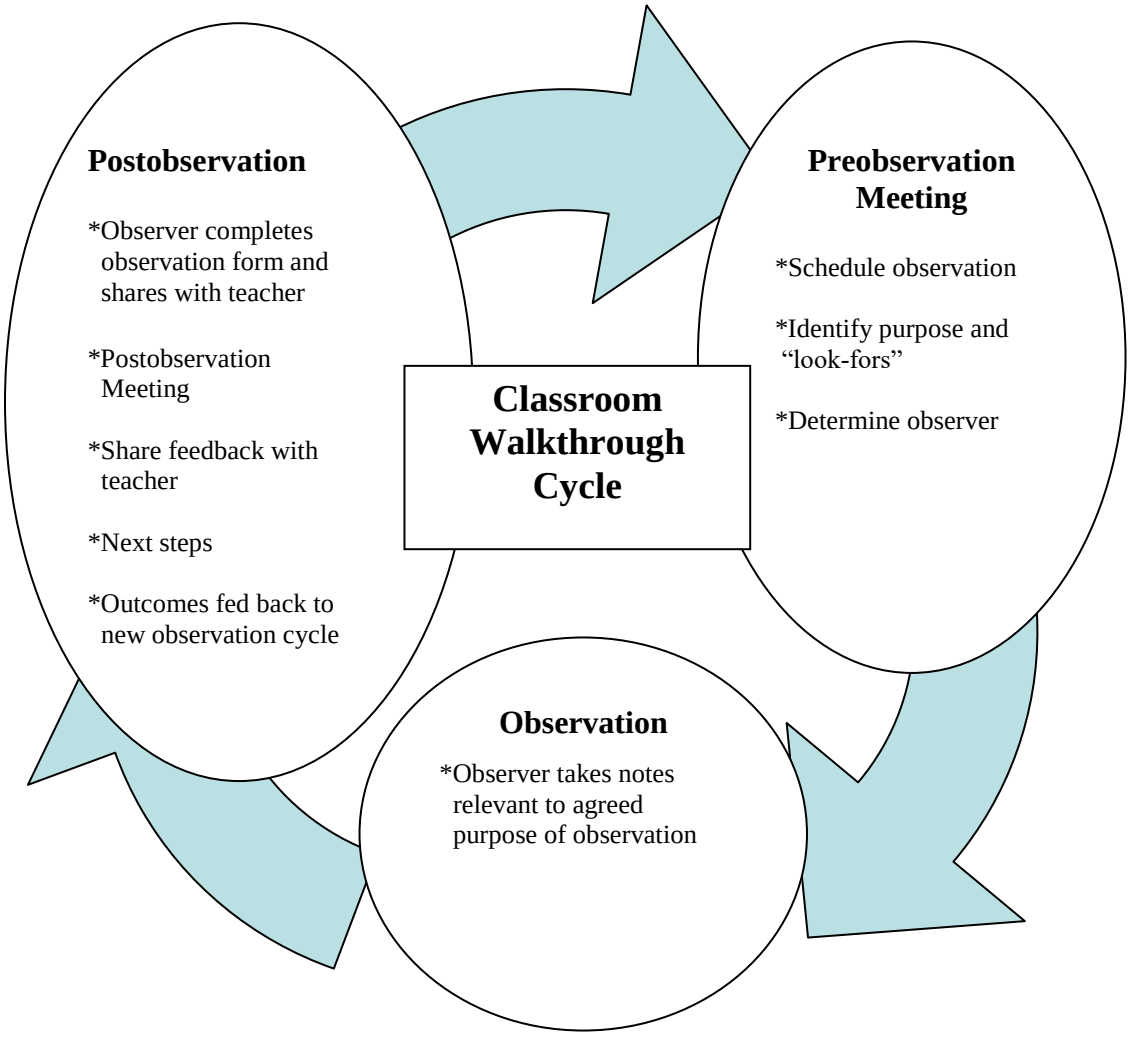
All (N = 12, 100%) teachers regarded feedback as an important component of a CW cycle. Eleven (92%) teachers stated their preference for feedback that is specific to their content area. Ten (83%) teachers mentioned that feedback should not be punitive and should come in the form of questions to promote reflective practices. Seven (58%) teachers stated that they use feedback to reflect on practices as a way to make adjustments to improve their instructional practices. Nine (75%) teachers believed that a CW should include teachers observing each other, modeling strategies and activities specific to their content, and engaging in collaborative instructional dialogue. Nine (75%) teachers noted that the short duration of a CW was not sufficient to generate meaningful feedback.

Recommendations

Findings from the study revealed that teachers expressed positive attitude toward CWs but did not regard them as useful or helpful to improve instruction or student achievement. Teachers attributed the limited change in instructional practices to who conducted the observations and the quality of the CWs feedback. Based on the study findings, and recommendations from participating teachers, I recommend implementing a structured CW cycle as an instructional coaching model that may lead to instructional changes. The recommendations for a sturctured CW cycle include pre- and postobservation meetings once every 2 months and maintaining an electronic walkthrough evidence folder that can engage teachers in ongoing collaborative instructional dialogue and refelctive practices.

Figure A2

Classroom Walkthrough Cycle



First Recommendation

Based on study findings, I recommend that FSD implement a structured CW cycle that will engage teachers in CW observations once every 2 months. As a job-embedded instructional coaching model, the cycle will incorporate components that will address the gaps identified during the analysis process. Effective PD that results in improved

teaching practices, according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) allows for collaboration in a job-embedded context and support that offers feedback to promote reflective practices. To ensure that teachers are provided with effective PD experience, four components will be integrated into the recommended CW cycle and captured on the walkthrough observation form to include: (a) identify the purpose and "look-fors" of observation, (b) determine the observer, (c) determine frequency and duration of observation, and (d) provide teachers feedback to improve instruction.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers and their supervising administrators will schedule observation meetings once every 2 months in the school planning calendar. The school planning calendar developed at the beginning of each school year contains holidays and days the school/district is not in session, PD days, school/district/state testing periods, school events, grade reporting periods, and scheduled STPT. The preobservation meetings will occur during department or grade level STPT determined by the nature of the observation. The preobservation meetings will be facilitated by the completion of the walkthrough form that will include period, time, and date of the observation, the purpose and "look-fors" of the observation that will specify the type of evidence to be collected, and observer/s conducting the observation. After the observation, the observer will include anecdotal notes, feedback, and next steps on the walkthrough observation form and upload it to the teacher's walkthrough evidence folder. Observers will share feedback within a day of the observation so the teacher can review and respond. Girvan et al. (2016) asserted that feedback and reflection affords teachers ownership of their individual PD needs. A scheduled face-to-face postobservation

meeting will to take place during the next scheduled STPT immediately following the observation. Face-to-face feedback allows a dialogue to facilitate reflective practices and a venue to explain and justify choices made in class (Chalmers et al., 2018).

Second Recommendation

The second recommendation for implementing a structured CW cycle is to maintain an electronic walkthrough evidence folder on Google Sites. The folder includes all walkthrough observation forms, anecdotal notes, artifacts, or evidence collected from the observation. Teachers will be encouraged to maintain evidence in the folder of their learning through observations of colleagues, involvement in action research, and any collaborative activities with content and grade level colleagues. The folder will facilitate the archiving of teachers' PD activities and serve as a tool for reflecting on practices. It is through reflection that learning can occur, and pedagogical knowledge is developed. Kheirzadeh and Sistani (2018) stated that reflective journaling affords teachers control over their learning by increasing their awareness of their approaches and ways by which to refine them.

For school administrators and teachers, keeping a running record in the walkthrough evidence folder will allow for documentation, monitoring, and evaluation of teachers' progress and identification of needs for instructional improvements.

Conclusion

This white paper aims to communicate to FSD instructional leaders a summary of the basic qualitative study findings analyzed from data collected from 12 FSD teachers through semistructured interviews. The data analysis uncovered three themes that

synthesized teachers' perception of CWs. Based on findings and teachers' recommendations a structured CW cycle was developed. The CW cycle include pre- and postobservation meetings once every 2 months during established STPT and maintaining an electronic walkthrough evidence folder. The purpose of the preobservation meeting is to engage teachers and administrators in determining the purpose, "look-fors', time and duration of observation that provides the structure for the CW and clarifies the expectations (Kachur et al. 2013b). The identification of the purpose for the observation will then help determine the observer conducting and providing the feedback. To address teachers recommendations for follow-up discussions, the postobservation meeting will provide opportunities for CW participants to engage in instructional dialogue that include feedback and next steps. The walkthrough observation folder intends to promote self-reflection that addresses the recommendations made by the teachers. Gorkan (2018) asserted that reflective practice can influence teachers' behaviors that may improve instruction. The evidence folder will facilitate archiving observation data, feedback and next steps that allow teachers and administrators to monitor and evaluate progress and identify teachers' instructional needs. The proposed CW cycle aim to provide teachers with different opportunities to engage in ongoing collaborative dialogue and active self-reflection to enhance their content and pedagogical knowledge and practices.

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Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions

Date/Time of Interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee (pseudonym):

Researcher: The purpose of this interview is to gather information related to my project study on teachers' perceptions of classroom walkthrough's influence on instructional practices. Your participation and willingness to take part in the study is greatly appreciated. The recorded interview will last between 20-30 minutes.

A reminder that

1. Participation is voluntary and as participants, you have the option to opt out of the study at any time and may refuse to answer any questions during the interview.

2. Confidentiality measures will include removing any participant's identifiers, and you will be assigned a pseudonym and will not be identified by name in any of the reports.

3. Pseudonym will be given to the research site so its identity will remain protected.

4. All records associated with the study will be secured in a password-protected file in a safe at my home and on my personal computer that can only be accessed by me.

Interview Questions:

RQ: What are the secondary teachers' perceptions of classroom walkthrough?

1. What is your experience with the classroom walkthrough process? How do your experiences influence your attitude towards the walkthrough process?
2. What does engaging in a classroom walkthrough cycle mean to you?

3. Do you find participating in classroom walkthrough process useful in planning for instruction? Why or why not? If so, how?
4. Please share an example how engaging in walkthrough cycle influenced your instructional practices?
5. Please share an example how engaging in walkthrough cycle influenced student achievement.
6. Tell me about the type of feedback you received after you classroom walkthrough observation.
7. Do you use feedback from classroom walkthrough to adjust your instructional practice? If so, how? If not, why?
8. How do you evaluate/measure the effectiveness of your changed instructional practices based on the feedback you received?
9. Do you find feedback provided by school administrator (please do not mention names or job titles) conducting the walkthrough helpful? Why or why not? Should classroom walkthroughs be conducted exclusively by your evaluator (please do not mention name or job title)? Why? Who else would you like to conduct it? Why?
10. Do you find engaging in a classroom walkthrough cycle beneficial as it relates to classroom instructional practices? If so, why? If not, what changes would you make to the process to influence instructional practices?
11. Describe one limitation of walkthroughs.
12. Describe one benefit of walkthroughs.

The following questions may be used to probe answers:

- Give an example of …
- Tell me more…
- Describe…
- How did you feel in that situation…?
- What do you mean when you say…
- Explain that to me a little bit more.

Appendix C: Classroom Walkthrough Observation Form

Classroom Walkthrough Observation Form

Preobservation (5-10 minutes)

Date of Preobservation:	Purpose of Observation:	Date of Observation :
Supervising Administrator:	Observer:	Classroom #:
Teacher:	Look –Fors:	Period/Time:
Content		

Observation (10-30 minutes)

Focus On	Observer Feedback/Questions
Instruction: Curriculum: Learner Classroom Environment:	

Peer Observation Focus On:	Observer Reflection:

Postobservation (10-30 minutes)

Date of Postobservation:	Teacher:
Date of Next Preobservation:	Observer:
Discussion	**Next Steps**

Appendix D: Open-Ended Questionnaire

1. What is your perception of the CW cycle?
2. How did you use feedback you received after observation to adjust your instructional practices?
3. What instructional adjustment and/or strategies resulted from engaging in CW CW cycle?
4. What aspect of the CW cycle did you find helpful in regards to improving your instructional practices?
5. What challenges did you experience engaging in the CW cycle?
6. What short- or long- term measurable outcomes (District benchmarks, placement tests) can you attribute to higher student achievement resulting from instructional adjustment made as result of engaging in CW cycle?
7. What suggestions/feedback can you provide to improve the CW cycle?