

- Discuss the purpose of the learning walk (e.g., improvement of instruction), the nature of the activity (e.g., descriptive, not evaluative), and the content focus (e.g., observing student engagement, teacher levels of questioning).
- Decide on who will be observed (ask for volunteers or ask teachers with specific expertise or experience to volunteer).
- Develop a learning walk guide with specific questions or look-fors that address the focus of the observation (e.g., high-level teacher questioning, student grouping options, and so on). Sample overarching questions that might guide observations include: What is the literacy environment in the room (e.g., evidence of student work, books and other material)? What are students doing, and can they talk about their work (e.g., do they understand the task and reason for it)? What is the teacher doing to implement effective literacy instruction?
- Establish procedures for the learning walk. Observers should stand to the side, but if students are working at seats, observers can talk informally with them. Observers should not talk with each other as they observe. The learning walk is not for evaluative purposes.
- Schedule walks. Generally, teachers may be able to observe in at least two classrooms during one of their planning periods. The literacy leader and at least two or more teachers should observe, so a team of teachers can learn from each other.
- Spend ten minutes or so in the classroom and then debrief in the hallway. If possible, include the classroom teacher in this debriefing. Address the focus of the learning walk. What questions do you have of the teacher?
- In a later group or grade-level meeting, there can be more extensive discussion of the observation with the focus on application. What can teachers take back to their classrooms?
- Send a thank-you note to each teacher who was observed.

Figure 7.4: Steps in initiating learning walks.

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