

Instructional Rounds

Instructional Rounds is a practice that allows teachers to observe other educators and share feedback to learn from one another. When teachers conduct instructional rounds, they focus on defining and unpacking why a problem of practice persists—and on what they can do about it.

Goal: Instructional Rounds are designed to help promote a collaborative professional learning community for educators and offer space for teachers to reflect on their own instructional practices.

Target Audience: teachers

Champions for Implementation: teachers

Overview:

Instructional Rounds are an intentional way for educators to collaboratively improve instruction. This schoolwide practice is based on medical rounds, the primary way that doctors learn and improve their practice. Instructional Rounds typically include three common elements, all focused on improving instructional practices:

- Classroom observation
- Improvement strategy
- Network of educators

Instructions for Conducting Instructional Rounds:

Step 1: Organize a network of 10-30 members. Consider creating groups of teachers based on subjects they teach, the grade level they teach, or other criteria. These educators will be working together over time to improve student achievement. It is important to include administrators from the district and school when possible alongside classroom teachers and instructional coaches.

Step 2: Define problem(s) of practice. What are some areas that your network would like to focus on solving? Use data about student academic performance and/or social-emotional development to specify topics or domains to focus on. Consider [these example problems of practice](#) for inspiration.

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Step 3: Select a teacher to observe. It is recommended to select a member of the network that is a classroom teacher. Once the teacher to observe is selected, provide members of the network with:

- The name of the teacher they will observe during this instructional round
- The subject and grade level that they teach
- The list of teachers who are invited to observe. Consider limiting the invitation list to 3-5 teachers per session.
- A copy of the lesson plan (if available)

Step 4: Create a "focus sheet" for teachers participating in the round. This document is designed to help observing members of the network take notes on important parts of the lesson. A "focus sheet" might include:

- Problems of practice
- Specific things to look for (e.g., student engagement, instructional strategies, classroom management techniques)
- Types of notes teachers should take while observing

It should be clear that teachers are encouraged to only note what they observe during the instructional period; not to make inferences or annotate personal opinions.

Step 5: Debrief. Once the instructional period and observation have concluded, teachers should debrief with each other and discuss strong points of the lesson, effective teaching strategies, and moments that fostered student engagement. Consider the following best practices when debriefing:

- Try to begin questions with the phrase: "I am wondering..." to ensure we focus on positive reflections versus opinions
- Review notes and discuss patterns in the observed teacher's instructional habits. What specific strategies had a direct impact on student achievement? What led to students being engaged in the lesson?
- Based on what was observed, have the teachers predict what students would know and be able to do, and where they may continue to have questions and need help following the lesson.

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Step 6: After several sessions of instructional rounds, reflect on potential positive changes. After the network has observed several teachers, the group can work to identify recurring patterns that might be contributing to the problem(s) of practice.

Implementation Tips:

- Consider conducting instructional rounds that focus on the instructional practices that both impact student academic achievement *and* social-emotional learning. How does the instructor integrate SEL skills into the lesson? What are ways in which their classroom is deliberately set up to encourage collaboration or self-regulation?

Why this works

Instructional Rounds are a research-based approach to observing, analyzing, and improving teaching. When schools implement instructional rounds with fidelity, they help to support a collaborative culture by:

- Focusing collective attention on problems of practice that are based in data
- Offering all educators the opportunity to improve their instructional practices
- Promoting consistency and teamwork

Supporting Evidence:

City, E. A., Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving learning and teaching*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

MTSS Application:  **Tier 1**

Focus Areas: Growth Mindset

Developmental Stages: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School, Adult
