

Instructional Rounds Toolkit

Pre-Rounds Information

Instructional Rounds is a disciplined way for educators to work together to improve teaching and learning. It is not evaluative; it is observational and reflective.

Purpose:

To identify patterns in instructional practice aligned with a school-wide focus question. The goal is to inform professional learning and support a shared understanding of high-quality instruction.

Focus Question Examples:

- How are students engaging with academic vocabulary during instruction?
- What opportunities are students given to process their thinking?
- How do teachers use questioning strategies to promote critical thinking?

Pre-Rounds Prep:

- Select a consistent focus question tied to instructional priorities.
- Schedule classroom visits and notify participating teachers.
- Provide training or review of non-evaluative observation norms.
- Prepare a shared observation tool or recording format.

Observation Tool

Observer Name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Grade/Subject: _____

Focus Question: _____

Observed Evidence (Objective Description)	Connection to Focus Question / Patterns Noted

Notes: Use descriptive, non-judgmental language. Record what students and teachers say or do, not your interpretations.

Post-Rounds Debrief Protocol

Debrief Goal: To surface patterns—not individual teacher practices—and reflect on the implications for school-wide improvement.

Debrief Steps:

1. Review the focus question.
2. Share descriptive evidence without naming classrooms or teachers.
3. Identify patterns that emerged across observations.
4. Discuss implications for professional learning or next steps.
5. Document themes and share a summary with leadership or PLCs.

Group Reflection Prompts:

- What did we see students doing?
- What did we see teachers doing to support student learning?
- How does this align with our instructional goals?
- What support or training might be needed to move practice forward?

Lesson Study Guide & Planning Packet

Overview for Administrators

Lesson Study is a collaborative professional learning structure where teachers work together to plan, observe, and refine a lesson. It promotes deep instructional understanding, supports student learning, and fosters a culture of professional inquiry.

Steps to Lead a Lesson Study

1. Identify a Focus Area:
Choose a specific instructional goal or challenge aligned with school-wide priorities.
2. Form a Collaborative Team:
Include 3–5 teachers who teach the same or similar content.
3. Schedule Planning and Observation Dates:
Block out time on the calendar for collaborative planning, classroom observation, and post-lesson reflection.
4. Provide Research and Resources:
Share relevant articles, student data, or instructional frameworks that support the chosen focus.
5. Facilitate the Planning Meeting:
Guide the team to collaboratively design a research lesson that targets the focus area.
6. Observe the Research Lesson:
Ensure non-evaluative observation with a focus on student thinking and behavior.
7. Lead the Debrief:
Use a structured reflection process to discuss what was observed, student learning, and possible revisions.
8. Support Next Steps:
Encourage iteration or share results with the broader staff through a PLC or PD session.

Lesson Study Planning & Reflection Tool (for Educators)

Teacher Team Members:

Grade Level / Subject:

Focus Area / Learning Goal:

Research & Rationale (brief notes or citations):

Lesson Plan Outline:

Observation Notes (student responses, engagement, misconceptions, etc.):

Post-Lesson Reflection:

- What went well?
- What surprised you?
- What might you revise next time?

Next Steps / Implementation Plan:

Popcorn Pedagogy Leadership Blueprint

What This Routine Does for Educators

Popcorn Pedagogy builds community and fosters idea-sharing in a low-risk format. It empowers educators by giving all voices airtime and surfaces instructional wins across the building.

How to Do It: Step-by-Step

1. Choose a prompt relevant to teaching and learning.
2. Invite staff into small groups (3–5 people).
3. Each person shares a response without interruption.
4. Groups capture patterns or key takeaways.
5. Share out highlights with the whole group.
6. Capture ideas in a shared document or board to revisit later.

Key Considerations

- Time-bound (5–10 minutes at the start of meetings).
- No need for substitutes or rescheduling.
- The facilitator should rotate or be pre-assigned.
- Prompts should stay fresh and relevant to current work.

Ideas for Launch and Sustainability

- Model it during a faculty meeting.
- Use the leadership team to try it first.
- Post takeaways on a visible board or internal newsletter.
- Use participation as a way to identify informal teacher leaders.
- Consider follow-ups or competitions

Lesson Study Leadership Blueprint

What This Routine Does for Educators

Lesson Study promotes in-depth instructional reflection and collaborative ownership of student learning. Teachers collaborate to design, teach, and revise lessons, building collective expertise.

How to Do It: Step-by-Step

1. Identify a shared instructional focus (e.g., questioning, modeling).
2. Form a small team (2–4 teachers).
3. Co-design a lesson that targets the focus area.
4. One teacher teaches the lesson while others observe.
5. Team debriefs using agreed-upon evidence.
6. Refine the lesson and repeat if desired.

Key Considerations

- Requires time during the day or use of substitutes.
- Needs strong facilitation and trust.
- Can be embedded into PLC structures.
- The observation tool or focus should be pre-agreed.

Ideas for Launch and Sustainability

- Start with volunteers or early adopters.
- Pair with district PD initiatives.
- Document the process and share wins.
- Schedule 1 per semester to build the habit.

Instructional Rounds Leadership Blueprint

What This Routine Does for Educators

Instructional Rounds promote a shared understanding of teaching and learning by observing classroom instruction through a non-evaluative, evidence-based lens. It empowers educators to identify patterns and align practice to shared goals.

How to Do It: Step-by-Step

1. Select a focus question aligned to school goals (e.g., 'How are students engaging with academic language?')
2. Create a small team of observers (admin, coaches, teachers).
3. Visit classrooms briefly (5–15 min) with a shared observation tool.
4. Gather non-judgmental evidence (not interpretations).
5. Debrief and identify instructional patterns, not people.
6. Use findings to inform future PD or schoolwide practices.

Key Considerations

- Requires schedule coordination and potential coverage.
- Observers need training in non-evaluative observation.
- The focus question should stay consistent across rounds.
- Consider privacy and transparency, teachers should know the goal.

Ideas for Launch and Sustainability

- Pilot with leadership or coaches first.
- Use the data to open up reflective dialogue (not mandates).
- Invite teachers to join over time.
- Show how results connect to larger campus goals.

Collaboration Hours Leadership Blueprint

What This Routine Does for Educators

Collaboration Hours give teachers dedicated, protected time to co-plan, reflect, and analyze student work. This routine strengthens team dynamics and ensures strategic focus on student learning.

How to Do It: Step-by-Step

1. Designate a weekly or biweekly time in the master schedule.
2. Assign collaborative goals or focus areas (e.g., writing rubrics, lesson alignment).
3. Provide protocols or structures to guide discussion.
4. Include time for looking at student work, planning, and reflection.
5. Capture outcomes and next steps in a shared tool.
6. Celebrate and highlight progress regularly.

Key Considerations

- Requires admin support and schedule protection.
- Avoid overlap with other meetings (e.g., compliance).
- Provide light facilitation, especially early on.
- Set norms for confidentiality, focus, and shared airtime.

Ideas for Launch and Sustainability

- Start with one grade level or department.
- Model with leadership team first.
- Use exit slips or shared notes to monitor impact.
- Spotlight success stories during staff meetings.