‘How-to’ Guide
LEARNING WALKS

WHAT ARE LEARNING WALKS?
- a group of teachers visiting multiple classrooms at their own school
- focused on the walkers’ goals/needs aligned with school/team priorities e.g. monitoring the effectiveness of a school-wide literacy strategy, investigating student vs teacher talk time across different year levels
- aims to foster conversation about teaching and learning in order to develop a shared vision of high quality teaching that impacts on student learning

WHAT ACTIONS ARE INVOLVED?

PHASE 1
Pre-walk meeting with facilitator and group
- establish and clarify focus of the walk
- revise expectations, protocols and schedule of agreed visits

PHASE 2
Observation of learning
- groups of 2-4 teachers
- facilitated by a group-nominated leader
- visit classrooms and observe evidence related to the agreed focus (approximately 10 minutes per classroom)
- discreet interaction with observed teacher and/or students may occur if appropriate

PHASE 3
Short debrief immediately following observation (often outside the classroom visited)
- group engages in reflective conversation
- group shares observations (detailed, non-judgemental), identifies patterns, poses questions
- reflect on observations in relation to own practice

PHASE 4
Repeat observations and debrief conversations in successive classrooms until scheduled visits completed

PHASE 5
Final debrief and feedback
- review evidence, link to earlier debriefs and questions raised
- share findings formally or informally, as agreed, to the participants and the whole school

WHY LEARNING WALKS?
- increases teachers’ awareness of practices occurring within their school
- builds whole-school sense of accountability for quality of teaching and learning
- encourages improvement through openness and sharing of practice
- supports teachers to implement effective practices observed in other classrooms
- may help address differences between classes within a school

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?
- driven by teachers within the school with support from the leadership group
- deliberately short visits, followed by immediate debrief
- use of group-established agreements and protocols
- emphasis on learning from the observed teacher, with a lesser focus on providing feedback
- observers receptive to learning and gaining insights into their own professional practice through observing others

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER?
- avenues for formal reporting of outcomes may not be clear
  > implement shared agreements for outcomes to be reported to staff and/or leadership to ensure learning is shared across the school
- may be perceived as a one-off observation
  > establish structures for participants to follow-up and implement learning
- Learning Walks could be perceived as threatening and should not be used as summary judgement of individuals
  > provide opportunities for teachers to ‘opt-in’ to walks

Where can I find out more?
Using Teacher Learning Walks to Improve Instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2014)
Learning-Walk Continuum (Finch, 2010)