A FREE CSAS FIELD TOOL

The Literacy Walkthrough Tool

The walkthrough tool our partner principals carry: student-focused look-fors by domain, the 48-hour feedback frame, and the weekly rhythm planner. Ten minutes a day, five classrooms a week.

INSIDE THIS TOOL

- Student-focused look-fors by domain
- The 48-hour feedback frame
- The weekly rhythm planner

READ THIS FIRST

Watch the students, not the teacher

Most walkthrough tools point the clipboard at the teacher, which is why teachers dread them and why they change so little. This tool points it at students. Every look-for in these pages starts with what students are doing and saying, because student behavior is the only evidence that instruction landed.

Three commitments make this tool work, and they are promises to your staff, not preferences:

The commitment	What it means in practice
Non-evaluative	Nothing on these pages feeds a rating or a file. Say that out loud to staff, and keep the promise. The first time a walkthrough note shows up in an evaluation, the tool is dead in your building.
Short and frequent	Ten minutes per classroom, five classrooms a week, beats a marathon observation day once a semester. Patterns come from frequency.
One domain per week	Walk every room looking at the same domain. Five rooms through one lens shows you a school pattern; five rooms through five lenses shows you nothing.

THE QUESTION THIS TOOL ANSWERS

Not "is this teacher good?" but "is the instruction we trained for reaching students, in how many rooms, and what is the one move that would help most?"

IN EVERY CLASSROOM, WHATEVER THE DOMAIN

All students respond, not one hand at a time. Texts are in students' hands. Instructional minutes are protected from start to finish.

Foundational skills and fluency

Domain 1: Phonemic awareness and phonics

- [ ] Students respond many times per minute: choral, partner, and individual turns, not one raised hand at a time.
- [ ] Students blend and segment sounds orally, then meet the same sounds in print.
- [ ] Students decode unfamiliar words with the taught pattern, not pictures or guessing.
- [ ] Students read connected decodable text that matches this week's pattern.
- [ ] Students spell (encode) the pattern as well as read it.
- [ ] When a student errs, the correction is immediate and specific, and the student responds again.

EVIDENCE NOTES: WHAT STUDENTS SAID AND DID

Domain 2: Fluency

- [ ] Students reread the same text for a purpose; no round-robin reading.
- [ ] Students read with phrasing and expression, not word by word.
- [ ] In partner reading, both students have a job: one reads, one tracks and checks.
- [ ] Students chart their own rate and accuracy and can say what they are working on.
- [ ] The text gives practice, not frustration: accuracy is high enough to build fluency.

EVIDENCE NOTES: WHAT STUDENTS SAID AND DID

Vocabulary, knowledge, and comprehension

Domain 3: Vocabulary and knowledge building

- [ ] Students use the target words in their own sentences, spoken and written, not just matched to definitions.
- [ ] Students meet words inside rich text, not as an isolated list.
- [ ] Students connect today's text to the topic the class has been building for weeks.
- [ ] Every student produces language: turn and talk, response frames, whiteboards.
- [ ] Students break words into meaningful parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

EVIDENCE NOTES: WHAT STUDENTS SAID AND DID

Domain 4: Comprehension and writing about text

- [ ] The text is at the center: students have it in hand and return to it for answers.
- [ ] Students answer with text evidence and can point to the line that proves it.
- [ ] Students write about what they read, not only talk about it.
- [ ] Questions climb from literal to inferential to the author's craft.
- [ ] Striving readers reach grade-level ideas through the read-aloud and discussion, and still receive decoding support in the supplemental band, never instead of this block.

EVIDENCE NOTES: WHAT STUDENTS SAID AND DID

PART 2 | FEEDBACK WITHIN 48 HOURS, EVERY TIME

The 48-hour feedback frame

A walkthrough that ends in silence is an inspection. Feedback delivered within 48 hours, while the lesson is still fresh for both of you, is what turns ten minutes in a doorway into coaching. Three parts, in this order, every time:

1. **One strength, named by its effect on students.** "When you had everyone respond on whiteboards, every student practiced every item." Name the teacher move and the student result it produced.
2. **One wonder, asked as a real question.** "What would happen if the partners switched jobs halfway?" A wonder invites thinking; a disguised directive invites compliance.
3. **One next step, with support attached.** Name the move, then offer the help: a model lesson, a coaching visit, the materials. A next step without support is just a to-do.

Feedback note

TEACHER AND CLASSROOM

DATE OF WALKTHROUGH

DOMAIN FOCUS

THE STRENGTH: WHEN YOU... STUDENTS...

THE WONDER, ASKED AS A QUESTION

THE NEXT STEP, AND THE SUPPORT THAT COMES WITH IT

DELIVERED BY (WITHIN 48 HOURS)

HOW IT WAS DELIVERED

☐ Face to face ☐ Written note ☐ Both

PART 3 | FIVE CLASSROOMS, ONE LENS, EVERY WEEK

The weekly rhythm planner

Protect the time the way you protect a parent meeting: on the calendar, named, and moved only for a true emergency. One domain per week, so patterns emerge.

WEEK OF

THIS WEEK'S DOMAIN FOCUS

- ☐ Phonemic awareness and phonics
- ☐ Fluency
- ☐ Vocabulary and knowledge
- ☐ Comprehension and writing

Day	Classroom	Time	Feedback due (48 hr)
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

End of week: find the pattern

WHAT DID I SEE IN THREE OR MORE ROOMS? (PATTERNS, NOT NAMES)

THE ONE SCHOOLWIDE MOVE THIS SUGGESTS FOR THE NEXT STAFF MEETING OR PD BLOCK

SHARE THE PATTERN BACK

Tell staff what you saw across rooms, strengths first, no names attached. A faculty that hears the pattern trusts the walkthroughs, and a faculty that trusts the walkthroughs opens its doors.

WHEN YOU WANT A PARTNER IN THE WORK

This habit is what we coach beside principals

The Center for Student Achievement Solutions helps districts implement the Science of Reading through side-by-side coaching, leadership development, and multi-tiered systems of support. We walk classrooms with principals, calibrate the look-fors together, and practice the feedback conversations until the habit holds without us.

WHAT THE HABIT PRODUCES

In a Brooklyn community school district, all 11 elementary schools paired walkthrough routines like this one with CSAS coaching for three consecutive years. Kindergarten students reading on grade level rose from 25 percent to 86 percent, verified by Acadience screening data.

Three ways to go deeper

1. **Read the blog.** New implementation guidance for superintendents, principals, and teachers every Tuesday and Thursday at studentachievementsolutions.com/blog.
2. **Calibrate with a colleague.** Walk the same three rooms with another leader, compare notes, and reconcile what you each counted as evidence. Calibration is what makes the data trustworthy.
3. **Walk your building with us.** A 30-minute strategy call, no obligation: tell us what your walkthroughs are showing, and we will leave you with next steps either way.

Schedule a strategy call

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