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## Abstract

Teacher preparation programs want to ensure accountability to InTASC and CAEP standard while simultaneously maximizing gains in the quality of instruction delivered by teacher candidates. The solution, research-based, digital observation to monitor classroom practice with expected outcomes; generate realtime data for self reflection and collaborative dialogue; and deliver instantaneous feedback for growth and continuous improvement.


The research is clear. The number one factor affecting student learning is quality of teaching ("Teachers Matter," 2012). The number one factor affecting quality of teaching is instructional conversations (Danielson, 2009). Instructional conversations must be based on data. The Digital eWalkThrough System generates these data.

# Digital Observation of Teacher Candidates: InTASC Accountability for CAEP

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## ABSTRACT

Teacher preparation programs want to ensure accountability to InTASC and CAEP standard while simultaneously maximizing gains in the quality of instruction delivered by teacher candidates. The solution, research-based, digital observation to monitor classroom practice with expected outcomes; generate real-time data for self-reflection and collaborative dialogue; and deliver instantaneous feedback for growth and continuous improvement.

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## Digital Observation of Teacher Candidates: InTASC Accountability for CAEP

### Introduction

"The conception of clinical experience as a few weeks of student teaching not only is antiquated but runs counter to our professional commitment to quality. Instead, today's teacher preparation programs are nurturing complex clinical partnerships…." (Robinson, S.P., 2015). This collaboration delivers high-quality education for students and therefore, produces beginning teachers who are classroom ready.

As these partnerships unfold, the research is clear. The number one factor affecting student learning is quality of teaching ("Teachers Matter," 2012). The number

one factor affecting quality of teaching is instructional conversations (Danielson, 2009). Instructional conversations must be based on data.

Collection of real-time data as teaching is being delivered, and as learning is taking place, is germane to the success of teacher preparation partnerships. The data generated during instructional observation will: (1) nurture self-reflection and collaborative dialogue; (2) metamorphose professional learning into differentiated, personalized support; (3) provide evidence-based feedback for growth; and ultimately, (4) transform instructional leadership.

Bottom line, teacher preparation programs want to ensure accountability to InTASC and CAEP standards, while simultaneously maximizing gains in the quality of instruction delivered by teacher education candidates. Best practice for instructional observation recommends the following:

- observation protocol based on program expectations, accreditation standards, and the unique initiatives of a particular institution;
- web-based platform that delivers instantaneous results to the observer and the teacher candidate, as well to university supervisors, administrators, and the supervising teacher; and
- data archivable for longitudinal analyses, yet available on a minute-by-minute basis to provide feedback and support for on-going improvement.

The objectives of this manuscript will include a discussion of an innovation in education based on (1) best practice in classroom observation, where instructional practice meets program expectations and accreditation standards; (2) the critical nature of access to real-time data available for self-reflection, collaborative dialogue, and professional learning decisions; and (3) feedback for growth, delivered instantaneously to drive and sustain a continuous improvement model.

## Best Practice in Classroom Observation

Research-based observation recommends “a system to monitor practice and expected outcomes; to generate dynamic data that drive decision-making; and to ensure program standards are met in a continuous improvement model (Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007; Downey et al., 2004). “A program of brief but frequent classroom walkthroughs has become an increasingly popular strategy in recent years for informally supervising teachers and observing classroom activities” (Protheroe, 2009, p.30).

Fundamentally, walk-through observations are “focused on specific ‘look-fors’…[that provide] valuable information about what’s working--or NOT working”



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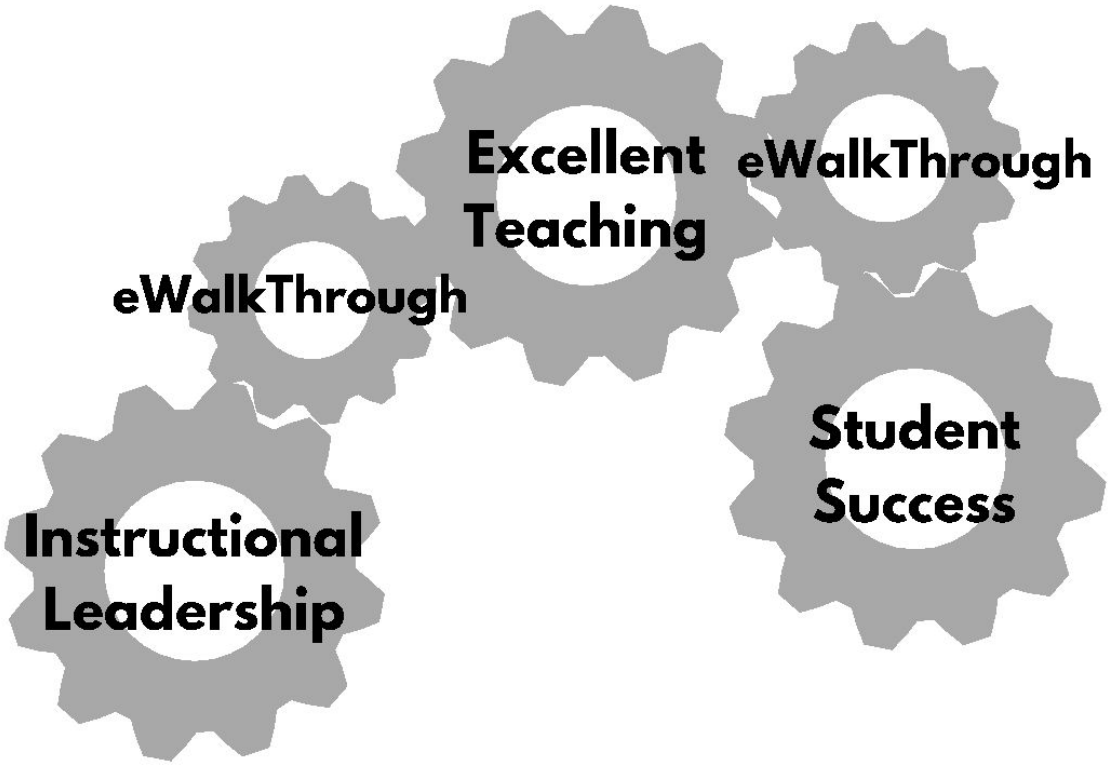
(Protheroe, 2009, p.30) in the classroom. Observers must be continually calibrated to ensure inter-rater reliability and thereby increase the likelihood of valid and reliable data collection. Because classroom walk-through observation has such potential as a catalyst to support both excellent instruction and a positive shift in learning ("Walk-Through as Powerful," 2008-2009), this process is establishing itself as best practice in educational circles (David, 2008; Hopkins, 2010).

When real-time observation data are analyzed, used to support reflection and collaborative conversations, and, ultimately, when these data become the basis to drive professional learning, the results are clear (Protheroe, 2009). Institutional initiatives are actualized. Instructional strategies improve. Students become engaged, and student success increases (see Figure 1, below).

**Figure 1 - eWalkThrough Connects: Instructional Leadership, Excellent Teaching, & Student Success**



## Standards-Based Teacher Preparation

When walk-through observation is an integral component of teacher preparation, the centerpiece of the process will be the InTASC Standards (CCSSO, 2011). These standards are the flagship of excellence in teacher preparation, and therefore the foundation of a customized protocol to support observation of teacher candidates.

Content and pedagogical knowledge expected of candidates is articulated through the ten InTASC standards. "These Model Core Teaching Standards articulate what [an] effective teaching and learning [system] looks like…one that empowers every learner to take ownership of their learning, that emphasizes the learning of content and application of knowledge and skill to real world problems, that values the differences each learner brings to the learning experience, and that leverages rapidly changing learning environments…" (CCSSO, 2011, p.3). Herein lies their justification as the driving force behind observation of teacher candidates.

## Accreditation Standards

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation Standards (CAEP, 2015) must also be integrated into the observation rubric for teacher preparation. A robust example of the potential for rich synthesis of accreditation standards within the teacher candidate observation process is CAEP Standard 4.2, Program Impact - Indicators of Teaching Effectiveness. "The provider demonstrates, through structured and validated observation instruments and student surveys, that completers effectively apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the preparation experiences were designed to achieve" (CAEP, 2015, p.13). Observation protocols must be customized to measure this fundamental component of teacher preparation.

## Access to Real-time Data

Teachers embrace feedback. They need feedback. Feedback based on data drives self-reflection and instructional conversations, the most powerful tenets of excellent teaching. The look-fors (discrete, observable data points) on the tool face (the digital rubric utilized by observers) must be crafted to generate the data needed to mentor the student teaching candidate, to provide evidence of progress toward achievement of program standards, and to provide quality assurance during the accreditation review process. Finding an efficient, data-informed model for: (1) identifying best practices in teaching and learning; (2) conducting systematic observations based on these identified data points and providing just-in-time feedback to all instructors; and (3) using the resulting data within a continuous quality improvement accreditation framework is imperative (Forsberg, P., Jenkins, S., & Gillespie, K., 2015). Hence, an innovative solution, the Digital eWalkThrough System,



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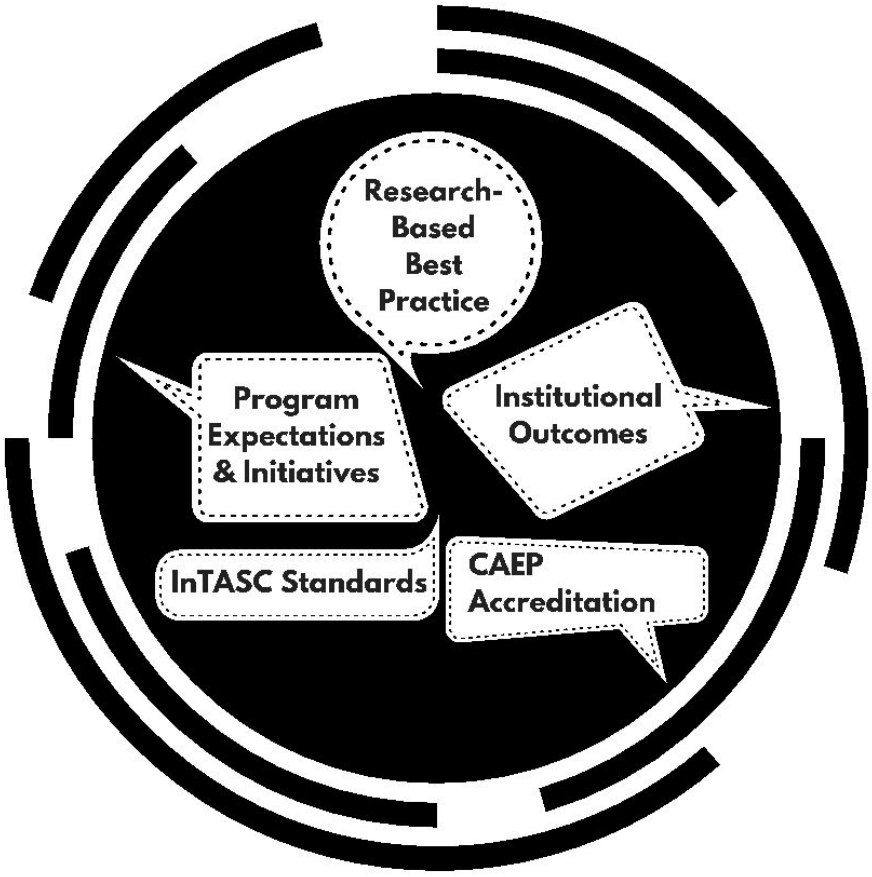
(www.structuredwalkthrough.com) was conceived…a research-based, best practice observation model. Teacher educators need a customized, comprehensive, and user-friendly method to observe teacher candidates; they get it with eWalkThrough, a robust, web-based tool that supports real-time observation.

**Figure 2 - eWalkThrough: Model for Designing Look-fors**



As the look-fors are designed (see Figure 2, above), teacher educators should consider:

- Do these look-fors capture what excellent instruction looks like as prescribed by InTASC and CAEP standards?
- Does this eWalkThrough tool face prioritize what should occur in the classroom when expectations meet practice?
- Does the prescribed set of look-fors provide clarity and, therefore, confidence to teacher candidates as they deliver instruction?

## Self-Reflection

The eWalkThrough observation process nurtures metacognition or thinking about thinking. Self-reflection should center on questions that engage metacognition:

- What was the most effective component of the lesson?
- What would I do differently if I could re-teach this lesson?
- How can I better serve all students in my next lesson?

Self-reflection is the foundation of ever-increasing levels of instructional excellence. A fundamental precept of the Digital eWalkThrough System is that a teacher candidate will (1) review the data; (2) reflect on the data; and (3) adjust professional practice based on the data. Ideally, this 3-step process will also include collaborative conversations (as discussed below) with instructional leaders.

## Collaborative Dialogue

eWalkThrough observation should result in collaborative dialogue. Because real-time data can be accessed on a minute-by-minute basis, these conversations can be objective, relevant, and therefore, meaningful. This dialogue can best be described as rich, professional conversations with a two-fold purpose:

1) Encourage self-reflection among all parties (teacher candidate, university supervisor, supervising teacher, and others as selected)
2) Inform professional practice for on-going instructional OR program design and development (including instruction by the candidate; mentoring by the supervising teacher or university supervisor; or adjustment of the teacher preparation program).



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## Professional Learning Decisions

eWalkThrough data are at the fingertips of instructional leaders. These data provide the evidence needed to ensure sound decision-making surrounding professional learning plans. Professional learning at all levels can now become powerful, differentiated coaching. Mentoring can be refined to meet the precise and unique needs of a particular teacher candidate or team of candidates. Teacher educators can design individualized support to move current practice to ever increasing levels of rigor, relevance, and therefore, excellence.

## Feedback for Growth

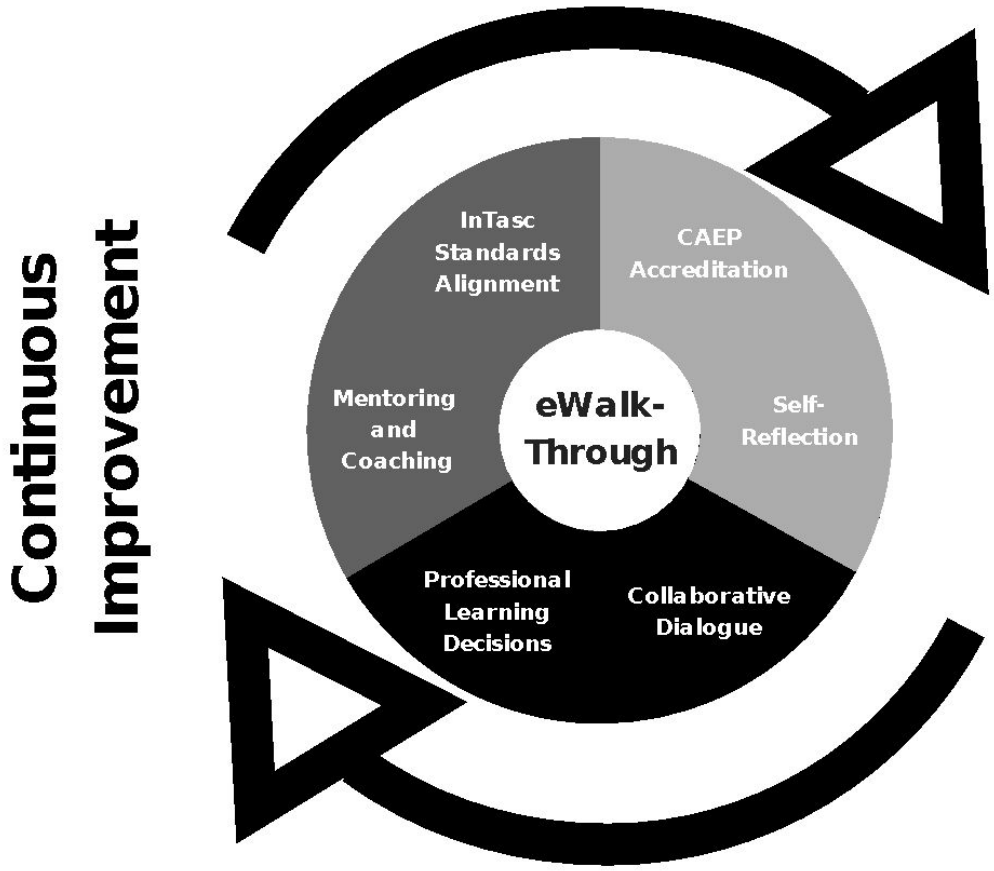
The challenge continues to deliver high-quality instruction that results in high-levels of student success. The Digital eWalkThrough System is a powerful and resource efficient solution for generating observation data to support this process. Real-time data are stored within the tool and can be disaggregated to answer the discrete questions posed by teacher educators or teacher candidates. eWalkThrough will generate summary reports and provide immediate feedback to identified recipients. Data are archived to support longitudinal analyses and can be externally ported to the institution.

## Continuous Improvement Model

The eWalkThrough process should be an integrated component of a comprehensive teacher preparation program (Kaucher, 2013). “When walk-throughs are disconnected from larger improvement efforts, teachers tend to dismiss them as drive-bys or gotchas” (David, 2008, p.2). Authentic connection between institutional or program priorities and the customized eWalkThrough look-fors is paramount. “This connection should be reflected in the specific data that observers collect, the thoughtfulness and quality of the protocols, and the way the results are used” (David, 2008, p.2).

Once these connections are clearly established, it becomes critical that the total package be communicated among all constituencies and stakeholders. The Digital eWalkThrough System is most effective when the purpose is transparent and clearly understood by all parties. Teacher preparation programs that implement the innovative Digital eWalkThrough System with fidelity will enjoy the powerful, continuous improvement model innate to the process (see Figure 3, below).

Figure 3 - eWalkThrough: Continous Improvement Cycle

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