

Establishing an Intervisitation Protocol for your School Community

Overview

As part of the Teacher Career Pathways Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT) role, PCTs ensure that teachers in their school community have the opportunity to engage in classroom intervisitations for colleagues to better understand their school's local effective practices, and in turn, use the practices to strengthen instructional skills and knowledge.

Intervisitations, as articulated in the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) [Handbook for Professional Learning](#), focus on a specific instructional practice, require feedback, and are concentrated on a pre-determined outcome. To this end, PCTs assess their school's use of intervisitations by facilitating conversations with their colleagues and school leaders to investigate the most successful and robust practice of intervisitations uniquely for their school context. Because there are a wide variety of contexts and effective practices in schools, intervisitations are diversly structured and utilized from school-to-school.

There are two purposes for peer-to-peer intervisitations— (1) studying peer practice; or (2) reciprocal peer mentoring (NYCDOE, 2014). In this resource, all case study schools use intervisitations for the purpose of studying peer practice, which involve a visiting teacher learning an instructional strategy from a host teacher. For example, a team of teachers may visit a host teacher's classroom to observe their skill of providing high-quality, timely feedback to students.

About the Toolkit

Each resource in the TCP Toolkit is uniquely made for Teacher Career Pathways teacher leaders to support and develop an understanding of how specific practices have been implemented in a diverse range of schools. Every resource includes a summary of lessons learned, commonalities in practice across schools, and key artifacts that were integral to each school's success. All information and data was gathered through multiple interviews and school visits with of the critical stakeholders defined by the teacher leader. It is strongly suggested that the specific structures and artifacts showcased should be used as a support to help plan for the long term in developing routines and methods of professional learning, and customized based off of the needs of your school community.

Key Attributes of Impactful Intervisitation Protocols

Based on the study of three schools' intervisitation structures, there are four commonalities in practice the schools continually refine and employ to cultivate effective intervisitation protocols. While these practices greatly differ when implemented because of school context and needs, they highlight key steps and structures schools should consider when PCTs are starting or refining intervisitations at their school. Of key importance, teacher leaders and school leaders at all schools conducted more than one professional learning session before implementing intervisitation protocols, as well as continually ask for staff feedback, in order to build investment and familiarity of the practice with their school community.

1

An intervisitation protocol is centered on a **specific instructional need** in the school community.



2

To structure intervisitations for the whole school, there is an **intervisitation schedule** that details the host and visiting teacher.



3

To focus and conduct non-evaluative intervisitations, have a **structured note-taking template** for colleagues to use.



4

To reflect and mobilize local effective practices, plan a **debrief protocol** after each intervisitation.



When examining each school's protocol in this resource, we explore integral artifacts that illustrate the following common practices between the schools: intervisitation schedule, note-taking template, and debrief protocol. The specific instructional need in the school community that purposes each school's intervisitation protocol is explained and articulated on the following page. Every artifact is contextualized with the steps that PCTs took to create and implement it in their school community.

Contd. Key Attributes of Impactful Intervisitations Protocols

- 1 An intervisitation protocol is centered on a specific instructional focus for the school community.**
 PCTs at the case study schools actively and routinely engage with school leaders to determine the instructional focus of the intervisitation protocol before implementing or planning them. Often times schools choose a domain of the Danielson *Framework*, such as Creston Academy’s focus on visiting teachers viewing strategies under Domain Two “Classroom Environment.” By having an actionable and integrated instructional foci in educators’ professional activities, school leaders and PCTs articulated from the case study schools that instructional strategies became more aligned and robust as intervisitations became embedded into the school culture.
- 2 To embed and structure intervisitations into the school community, there is an intervisitation schedule that details a time and date for the day host and visiting teacher.**
 All teachers in the case study schools were familiarized with the scheduling and invested in intervisitations before it was asked of them to conduct one. The schedule was also co-created with the school leader to properly embed it into the school’s schedule and ensure that they can help facilitate making the conditions available to make the intervisitation happen with ease. At America’s School of Heroes, intervisitations are scheduled after each three-week professional learning cycle to spread new instructional strategies that teachers learned during the sessions. Some schools schedule debriefs on a separate day than the intervisitation, while others schedule it right after the intervisitation.
- 3 To focus and conduct non-evaluative intervisitations, provide an observation tool for colleagues to record their low-inference notes.**
 An observation tool for visiting teachers are purposed to support and ground the focus of the intervisitation. For instance, at Academic Athletic Excellence, the observation tool asks the visiting teacher to notate everything they see and hear teachers and students doing in support of the lesson. Before every school implemented their intervisitation protocol, PCTs held a professional learning session titled, *Learning to See, Unlearning to Judge*. This session explicated an essential premise of the visits, that teachers are solely observing practice objectively and using the strategy to inform their instructional expertise.
- 4 To reflect and mobilize local effective practices, plan a debrief protocol after each intervisitation.**
 As the intervisitation protocol becomes more ingrained in school culture, teacher leaders and school leaders work together in continually ensuring that the debrief conversations concretely move teacher practice in the school. Each school uses the debrief conversation in different ways, such as with the host teacher or with a group of visiting teachers in the same grade-subject band. Another common element of the debrief protocol is not only using the observation notes to guide the debrief conversation, but considering how to use what the visiting teacher observed into their instructional practice.

TABLE: Description of Case Study Schools

School	Intervisitation Details	School Profile	Instructional Focus
AMERICA’S SCHOOL OF HEROES Queens, District 27, M.S. 137	Focus: Assessment Strategies Description: Intervisitation connects as a key activity for schools’ professional learning sessions. Visiting teachers are subject-grade groups.	Principal: Laura Mastrogiovanni PCTs: Elaine Cleary, Danielle Mattina, Gina Marrero, and Maria Frangella Teacher Leaders: 10 Teachers: 63 Students: 1,892	“Teachers across disciplines will design and implement appropriate, ongoing formative and summative assessment strategies to assess learning and provide students with substantive feedback that promotes academic progress.”
CRESTON ACADEMY Bronx, District 10, M.S. 447	Focus: Structures and Routines Description: New teachers are the visiting teachers as part of their new teacher mentoring	Principal: Mellissa Miller PCTs: Deidre-Ann Spencer and Lesley Lemos Teacher Leaders: 7 Teachers: 36 Students: 477	“If teachers facilitate engaging, differentiated, small group discussions that utilize higher-order questioning and accountable talk, then students’ reading comprehension and performance in all content areas will improve leading to higher performance on all assessments.”
ACADEMIC ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE Manhhatan, District 3, M.S. 256	Focus: Differentiation and Scaffolding Description: New teachers are the visiting teachers as part of their new teacher mentoring	Principal: Brian Zager PCTs: Jessica Fazekas, and Michelle Camilo Teacher Leaders: 3 Teachers: 15 Students: 140	“If we conduct learning walk cycles and professional development on scaffolding and differentiation techniques for all learners, then teachers will develop a shared understanding of strategies, observe implementable strategies, and utilize said strategies in their classrooms which will lead to increased student outcomes (10% increase) of the lowest 1/4 performing students (majority ELL and SPED) as measured on the state ELA and MATH exams.”