

# The Organizational Portrait

## *A Leader's Guide to Reading Instructional Patterns Across Your Schools*

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*Your instructional data is painting a portrait of your organization. Most leaders have never been taught to read it that way.*

When walkthrough data comes in, the default habit is to sort it by teacher. Who is strong. Who needs support. Who is struggling. That approach produces individual responses: more coaching here, a hard conversation there. But it misses almost everything the data is actually trying to tell you about your organization as a system.

This brief introduces a framework for stepping back from individual data points and seeing the organizational picture that emerges when you look at walkthrough and evaluation evidence as a whole.

## Three Types of Organizational Patterns

### **Structural Patterns**

How time, resources, roles, and systems are organized. Structural patterns show up in your data when you notice that instructional quality correlates with things like planning time allocation, class size variation, or how coaching resources are distributed. If teachers with common planning time consistently show stronger instruction than those without it, your data is revealing a structural condition.

### **Cultural Patterns**

What the organization signals about what matters. Cultural patterns show up when your data reveals that certain instructional practices thrive in some teams and not others, even when both teams have similar resources. The difference is often cultural: one team has developed shared norms around instruction, while the other has not. Your organization's culture is visible in your walkthrough data if you know how to look for it.

### **Leadership Patterns**

How leaders' own behavior shapes instructional conditions. Leadership patterns are the most important and the most uncomfortable to examine. They show up when your data reveals that instructional quality tracks closely with leadership attention. Buildings where the principal is visibly present, consistently

focused on instruction, and relentlessly aligned in their feedback tend to produce different data than buildings where leadership attention is scattered.

## Reading All Three at Once

Most leadership teams have looked at their data through one of these lenses. Very few have looked through all three at once. When you do, the organizational portrait becomes much clearer. You stop seeing individual teacher issues and start seeing the system that produces them.

The next time your team reviews walkthrough or evaluation data, ask: what is this data telling us about our structures, our culture, and our leadership? The answers will be more honest and more useful than anything you learn from sorting the data by teacher name.