The Power of Teacher Rounds: A Guide for Facilitators, Principals, & Department Chairs
By Vivian Troen and Katherine C. Boles (Corwin Press, 2014)

S.O.S.  (A Summary of the Summary )

The main ideas of the book are:

~ In order to truly transform instructional practice, teachers need to work together and hold each other accountable at the school level.
~ Teacher Rounds is an accessible yet powerful tool that engages teachers in school-based, professional learning to improve student achievement.

Why I chose this book:
Externally imposed reforms – from the Common Core to accountability systems – don’t provide the kind of guidance teachers need to improve their practice. Research shows that the best way to improve teacher practice is through collaborative, hands-on work that focuses on the real problems teachers face. Teacher Rounds provides just this type of approach. I particularly liked that Teacher Rounds is clearly about changing practice, not simply exchanging ideas.

This book provides clear, step-by-step instructions for how to implement Teacher Rounds at your school. The book contains useful tools, templates, and access to videos to make it even easier.

The Scoop  (In this summary you will learn...)

✔ How to prepare teachers to participate in Rounds, including concrete workshop ideas.
✔ The roles involved with Rounds and a detailed description of what the facilitator needs to do to facilitate Rounds.
✔ How the school leader can support and sustain Rounds and adapt it to use with the school’s instructional leaders.
✔ How to use the tools provided in the book – tools to help teachers prepare for Rounds, observe classes, debrief Rounds, and more.
✔ PD ideas to introduce Rounds to your school.
Teacher Rounds (sometimes called Faculty Rounds or just Rounds), is a strategy for groups of teachers to strengthen their instructional practices in order to improve their students’ learning. Based on “grand rounds” from the medical profession, it usually consists of one teacher teaching a lesson while the other teachers in the group observe. After the lesson, the group examines and analyzes the lesson so everyone can improve their own teaching.

Teacher Rounds is not new. The authors have been involved with a form of it since the 1980s, and in 2009 the influential book, Instructional Rounds in Education, introduced and popularized the concept of rounds in many districts. That book focused on conducting rounds throughout a district, and involved principals, district administrators, and superintendents. However, The Power of Teacher Rounds, in comparison, is a school-based approach in which teachers from a single school work together to improve instruction. By basing this practice in an individual school, more teachers can participate and they can do so more frequently. This form of rounds has a number of benefits. Not only does it promote collaboration and reduce feelings of isolation, but it helps newer and veteran teachers alike to focus on student learning, develop a shared vision of good teaching, and share successful practices.

Despite numerous school reform efforts, little has improved in schools. Why? Because most schools are set up in ways not unlike the way they were in the 19th century – teachers work alone and are primarily accountable to themselves. However, in order for true school improvement to occur, teachers need to be more collaborative and develop a sense of shared responsibility. Teacher Rounds helps to address these two issues. First, when teachers teach in front of each other they change the practice of teaching by making it more public and holding each other more accountable for effective teaching. Furthermore, by working in groups to improve instruction, Teacher Rounds creates more opportunities for teacher collaboration.

Chapter 1 – What is Teacher Rounds?

Teacher Rounds – A Form of Professional Learning
As was mentioned earlier, Teacher Rounds is based on the practice of doing rounds from the medical profession. This is when interns and the doctors mentoring them observe patients’ conditions together and later share and analyze those observations in order to discuss possible treatments. This is an important part of doctors’ training. Teacher Rounds provide many of the same benefits as medical rounds. It provides teachers with a shared experience as a foundation for conversations about effective teaching. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for teachers with different types of expertise to learn from each other when reflecting on and analyzing those shared experiences.

The Components of Rounds – A True-to-Life Story
This chapter introduces an example of one school’s experience with Rounds as a way to provide an overview of Rounds. The names are all fictitious, but it is based on the experiences of actual schools and teachers involved in Teacher Rounds. In this school – Salton High School – there are 40 teachers organized into five Rounds groups. The composition of these groups changes every year and depends on which teachers have planning periods in common. Rounds is only open to teachers with two or more years of teaching experience because it aims to help teachers develop a higher level of professional growth. Below are the steps each group goes through to conduct Rounds, along with descriptions of some of the experiences of the teachers in this particular case study.

1. Pre-Rounds Meeting: Choosing a Compelling Problem of Practice
In one particular Rounds group at the school, seven of the teachers have gone through Rounds before, and only one is new to the process. This means that those seven teachers already attended the school’s preparatory workshops in classroom observations, debriefing, developing group norms, and more. Glenda Solas, the group’s facilitator, is a veteran teacher who was selected by her principal for her experience and skill to handle the difficult job of facilitator. Glenda opens the meeting with a warm welcome and then leads them through the annual process of revising the group’s norms. Then she introduces the important goal of the first meeting – to develop a singular, compelling, problem of practice. Everyone is aware of the current challenge of meeting the Common Core State Standards, so they understand their problem of practice must align with these standards. Glenda facilitates a discussion to help the group come up with the following problem of practice, aligned to the CC Speaking and Listening Standards for Grades 6-12:

Teachers do not regularly facilitate critical thinking among and between students to make the subject matter meaningful.

To take this further, they refer to the CCSS to break their problem of practice into more focused questions such as those below.

How do we:
- encourage all students to ask probing and critical questions and consider diverse perspectives?
- help students analyze and draw valid conclusions about content being learned?
- provide opportunities for students to think, discuss, interact, reflect and evaluate content?
### 2. Preparing the Host Teacher

Now the team is ready to schedule their observation of the host teacher’s classroom. Often the facilitator volunteers to be the first host teacher so she can model and scaffold this role for others to follow. In this case, Glenda offers to go first and she fills out a **Host Teacher Preparation Form** to provide information and help the group prepare for the visit. Below is an excerpt of the form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host Teacher Preparation Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name____________ Date of Round ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Explain how the problem of practice relates to your classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide the context for the lesson. (What is the task? What is the teacher’s role? What will the students be doing?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What should the observers focus on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what extent should/would you like observers to interact with students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glenda would normally meet with the host teacher to help him or her prepare and to provide guidance with this form. As she writes in her answer to the first question, Glenda’s problem of practice connects to the group’s problem. She is teaching a lesson about Caesar Augustus and she has had difficulty moving the students beyond the basic facts to help them develop a deeper understanding of this leader’s place in history. She wonders how she can get her students to grapple with the issues, take more ownership, and be more engaged with the material. (To see how she words her problem of practice, and also to see how she fills out the rest of this form, see Appendix B in the book.) When she completes the form, she emails it to the rest of the group.

### 3. Observing the Host Teacher

On the agreed-upon date, the seven teachers enter Glenda’s third period, tenth-grade history class to observe. Some teachers are unable to attend and will watch a video of the class later. Those who do attend bring the necessary materials to record their observations (paper, computers, and worksheets) and follow the ground rules for observation the group developed. Sample rules include: observers are free to circulate, but should refrain from side conversations among themselves and observers may ask students questions but should refrain from assisting them. Groups can use a simple template to record their observations and analyses of the class (a **Rounds Observation Worksheet** will be shared later in the summary).

### 4. Debriefing the Observation

The observation debriefing is conducted at the group’s once-a-month meeting that occurs throughout the year. At the beginning of the meeting, the host teacher, in this case Glenda, reviews the goals of her lesson and discusses the strategies she used to address her problem of practice. After this, the facilitator guides the group's discussion by using the **Rounds Debriefing Protocol**. This protocol will be provided later in the summary, but it is essentially a structured way for the group to share what they observed in the lesson, what they wonder might have gone differently, and for the host to respond to comments. It is important that the facilitator ensure that everyone sticks to nonjudgmental observations first. For example, one teacher in Glenda’s group noted, “You gave students opportunities to lead a discussion and teach… and you did not comment on what they said. I kept track of how much you talked and how much the kids talked. I can show you the table.” After this, teachers share their wonderings. One teacher in this group wondered, “I know you wanted to introduce the idea of analysis to the students, but I was wondering why analysis came quite late in the lesson.” At the end of the meeting everyone shares what they learned and concretely what they plan to change in their own practices before the next meeting.

### 5. Committing to a Change of Practice

At the meeting, teachers commit to altering their practice in some way based on what they have learned. For example, at Glenda’s meeting one teacher said, “I’m going to try something to get students to participate more – maybe start by asking clarifying questions and have only kids answer the questions.”

### 6. Preparing for the Next Rounds Meeting: The Cycle Continues

At this point, the group asks for the next teacher to volunteer to be the observed host teacher. The team schedules a period to observe this new host’s lesson sometime before the next monthly Rounds meeting, and Glenda schedules a time to meet with the host to assist him with his Host Teacher Preparation Form.

### 7. Sharing Records of Practice

To demonstrate that teachers have implemented their commitments to alter their practice, they will create a “Record of Practice.” This is basically an artifact that captures the changes they’ve made. These can include lesson plans, discussion prompts, assessments, student work, Smart Board notes, and videos. It is helpful for the facilitator to model a sample record of practice. During the part of each subsequent meeting, teachers briefly share their **Records of Practice**. However, to provide a more in-depth review, the team should devote two entire Rounds meetings a year to examine one record from each teacher.

Overall, it takes time for teachers to create effective, long-lasting change in their classrooms. The Rounds process provides a supportive environment that encourages teachers to take risks as they experiment with new approaches to improve instruction.
Chapter 2 – Why do Rounds?

This chapter outlines some of the benefits of conducting Teacher Rounds.

Rounds Promotes Critical Collaboration and the Sharing of Successful Practices
An article in The New York Times highlighted a collaborative effort among 23 heart surgeons. These doctors agreed to observe each other in the operating room and then share their knowledge, insights, and strategies. Two years later, the death rate for this group of surgeons fell by a significant amount: 24%. Such a dramatic change in both individual and institutional practice came from simply emphasizing teamwork and communication over solitary practice. If teachers hope to decrease their own “fatality” rate when it comes to student learning, they need a form of professional development that is grounded in their particular challenges and relies on collaboration rather than solving their problems of practice alone. Furthermore, when teachers present lessons to each other they make their teaching practices public. This is a concrete way for both experienced and new teachers to pass along their knowledge and successful teaching practices to other teachers.

Rounds Helps Develop a Shared Vision of Good Teaching
Rounds is an excellent means of helping teachers develop a common vision of good teaching because it actively involves teachers in the process of observing and analyzing actual teaching – not simply talking about teaching. This can be particularly valuable for newer teachers. Rather than simply claiming that “Our school values child-centered teaching” or “hands-on learning,” teachers can communicate these principles by demonstrating them so others can see them in action. Instead of describing effective teaching, teachers get involved in seeing how teachers effectively manage classes, present materials, relate to children, and more.

Rounds is a Low-Cost, High-Impact Strategy to Implement the Common Core
The Common Core State Standards alone will not improve teaching and learning. Teachers need to develop a deep understanding of the instructional shifts they need to make to meet these new standards. Rounds has proven effective in helping teachers learn how to design and teach lessons with the requisite level of rigor to meet the Common Core standards. In addition, because the facilitator is one of the teachers, there are no outside consultants or costs needed to implement Rounds.

Chapter 3 – Roles of Rounds Participants

The Entire Group
The group consists of teachers with at least two years of teaching experience, who are committed to improving the practices of everyone in the group. While it may be challenging at first if the group does not have the same language to discuss teaching or the same expectations for teaching, the group must be committed to focusing on instruction and improving practice.

The Facilitator
For any Rounds group to function effectively, there must be a leader. The facilitator may be chosen by the principal or by colleagues in the group. At any rate, the facilitator has the important task of creating an environment in which the participants feel safe enough to take risks, share individual challenges, and work to improve their practice. The role requires several skills –modeling and teaching participants the Rounds steps, guiding productive conversations, and serving as a resource for both support and instructional ideas. It takes a skillful leader to bring the group to a deeper level of discussion about teacher practice and to keep the focus on changing practice, not simply exchanging ideas. This means the leader must move beyond affirming good ideas to actually holding individuals accountable to themselves as well as to one another. At times, teachers in the Rounds group may feel frustrated, defensive, and insecure. It takes a skilled facilitator to carefully navigate these complex situations in a way that does not erode the trust of the group.

Because the facilitator role is a difficult one, principals may wish to have facilitators meet together monthly to help them develop their expertise, share their dilemmas, and support one another. These meetings focus on topics that facilitators commonly need to address, such as: How to help teachers focus on the relevant data in their observations? How to keep comments analytical rather than advisory? How to know when and how hard to push teachers? To explore these questions, groups of facilitators may want to watch videos of Rounds meetings that come with the book or discuss case studies from each others’ Rounds meetings from the book.

The Host Teacher
Every teacher in the Rounds group takes a turn to serve as the host teacher and have the others observe his or her class. As was mentioned earlier, host teachers meet with their facilitators to prepare for their observations. Although there is a Host Teacher Preparation Form, this does not mean it is a simple process to prepare. In fact, for it to be successful, the host teacher must understand that this is a complex process involving deep reflection and preparation. The host teacher should be able to articulate how she will specifically address the group’s problem of practice in the observed class. Furthermore, she must be able to envision what the teacher and students will be doing and how the problem of practice will play out in class. The host teacher should be clear that she must present an authentic problem and not simply showcase what is going well. After the class, the host teacher has an opportunity at the debriefing meeting to learn from others by listening and taking notes, and then responding and sharing what she has learned.
Chapter 4 – How Facilitators Prepare for Rounds

While the previous chapters painted an overview of what Rounds look like, this chapter describes more of the details a facilitator would need to know to both prepare for and implement Rounds.

Step 1 - Laying the Groundwork for Rounds

1. Establish Norms
   It is easier to help the group start engaging in productive behaviors rather than correcting corrosive ones later. To do this, begin by developing a set of norms to which everyone agrees. Norms are simply guidelines for how members will communicate and interact with each other. Below are just a few examples, but your group must choose which norms fit best for them:
   - Communication Norms – Listen without interrupting, ask questions, no cell phones, keep discussions confidential
   - Relationship Norms – Assume good intentions, don’t shoot down the ideas of others, embrace mistakes as opportunities

2. Learn How to Observe: Conduct a Rounds Observation Workshop
   Observing seems like a simple skill, but it is actually quite complex. In addition, teachers have a history of working alone so they may feel vulnerable being observed. For these reasons, it is important to practice classroom observations before your group begins Rounds. The book provides an outline for a one-hour Rounds Observation Workshop in the Appendix. This workshop consists of four steps:
   a. Have the group discuss the difference between a description and an observation.
   b. Show a sample teaching video (the book comes with an 8-minute video of a 3rd grade class). Then have teachers fill out the worksheet below and make sure they include very specific observations before they write interpretations in the third column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher actions, quotes</th>
<th>Student names, actions, quotes</th>
<th>Interpretations/Questions/Analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   c. Debrief the video and observations. What did the group notice about the teacher, the students, and the task? Make sure the group starts by focusing on the descriptive facts only.
   d. Wrap up by discussing the importance of starting with descriptive facts before moving on to interpretation.

Step 2 – Conducting the Introductory Rounds Meeting

It is vital to be as prepared as possible before beginning the Rounds process. Create a detailed agenda with the four steps below and have all copies and materials ready before conducting this initial meeting. Allocate about one and half hours for this first meeting.

MEETING AGENDA

1. The Purpose of Rounds – The facilitator can review the introductory chapters of this book, but should be prepared to describe in his or her own words, the goal of rounds. While Rounds aims to improve teacher practice, the ultimate goal is to improve student learning. Furthermore, ensure that the group understands this process is not evaluative.

2. The Steps in the Rounds Process – After discussing the purpose, the facilitator should outline the steps the group will take. First the host teacher will share in writing what she will be teaching and how she wants the group to observe, then everyone will observe her class and take notes. After this, the group will meet to debrief the lesson, share what everyone learned, and commit to applying what they learned. Before the next meeting, everyone will keep track of the changes they’ve made to their practice through a Record of Practice which they will share at the next meeting. Then the cycle continues again.

3. Choosing a Compelling Problem of Practice – Before guiding the group through the process of choosing a common problem of practice, keep in mind that some teachers may think it would be better to have individual problems of practice. However, the facilitator must explain the importance of choosing a mutual one so teachers can learn from each other. Then to help the group come up with a problem of practice, explain the three criteria that ensure the problem of practice is a compelling one. It should be:
   a. a high-leverage aspect of teaching, meaning that a small change will lead to significant improvements in learning
   b. actionable – a change that is do-able in small steps
   c. relevant to the instructional core, that is, produces a change in students, teacher practice, and the content

   To help the group find a shared problem of practice, start by suggesting where they might look: either the Common Core or the school’s own expectations of good teaching are good places to start. Another idea is to provide the group with questions that might help them identify a common problem of practice, such as:
   - Are students engaged in high- or low-level tasks?
   - Do teachers do most of the talking and thinking in class?
   - Are students able to articulate their thinking in writing?
   - Do teachers enact a high-level curriculum in a low-level way?
   - Is student understanding in math procedural or conceptual?
   - How do we engage students of all abilities and different needs in high-level vs. low-level tasks?
Next, provide some concrete examples of problems of practice. There are four examples on pp.43-44 and another on p.131. Below is one of those sample problems of practice.

**Students are not given opportunities to engage in critical thinking and problem solving with other students to make the subject matter meaningful. How do we:**
- encourage all students to ask critical questions and consider diverse perspectives?
- help students analyze and draw conclusions about content?
- provide opportunities for students to think, discuss, interact, and evaluate content?
- provide opportunities for students to learn and practice skills in meaningful contexts?

After providing the criteria for a problem of practice, several examples, and questions to consider, ask the teachers individually to brainstorm five possible issues that might serve as the group’s problem of practice. The facilitator then works with all of the ideas to help the group come to consensus around one problem of practice that meets the three criteria and which is an authentic problem the group can thoroughly explore and address through Rounds. With the book, there are two videos of groups going through this process.

4. The Tools for Rounds and Next Steps
Once the group decides on a problem of practice, the facilitator should introduce the tools the group will be using to conduct Rounds. The group already practiced using one tool, the **Rounds Observation Worksheet** in the workshop above. The facilitator should now introduce the protocol the group will use to debrief their observations (see p.6 of this summary) and explain the types of artifacts teachers can collect as their **Record of Practice** when they implement new practices (such as, a lesson plan, discussion prompt, assessment, student work, Smart Board notes, etc.) Finally, the facilitator should close the meeting by offering to serve as the first host teacher, and setting times for that first observation and a debriefing meeting soon after.

Chapter 5 – How to Implement Rounds – More Details for Facilitators

Although the previous chapters introduced the steps in Rounds, this chapter provides more details for the facilitator.

**Step 1: Facilitator Prepares the Host Teacher**
Helping the host teacher fill out the **Host Teacher Preparation Form** provides a genuine opportunity for the facilitator to coach the teacher in thinking more deeply about the problem of practice and how to address it. Here is this form (introduced in Chapter 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host Teacher Preparation Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name______________ Date of Round_____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Explain how the problem of practice relates to your classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide the context for the lesson (What is the task? What is the teacher’s role? What will the students be doing?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What should the observers focus on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what extent should/would you like observers to interact with students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is the facilitator’s job to ensure that the host is clear about the task because it is the task that predicts performance. The task is also what holds students accountable for their learning. The host teacher should be able to explain how the lesson addresses the problem of practice and which new strategies s/he will try to address this problem. Again, this is not a time for the teacher to put on a dog and pony show; rather it is a time to attempt to address an authentic problem in the class.

Furthermore, while teachers may be hesitant to have the observers interact with the students, try to show them the benefit of gathering data from students with questions such as, “How is the work you’re doing connected to the goal of the lesson?” or “What’s hard for you in this lesson?” Make sure the teacher fills out the **Host Teacher Preparation Form** with enough time for the facilitator to make comments so the host teacher can revise the form. Pages 54-56 in the book show an example of a facilitator’s comments on one of these forms. The book contains several videos of facilitators preparing host teachers to fill out this form and discussing the class they will present.

**Step 2: Rounds Group Observes the Host Teacher’s Class**
Once the **Host Teacher Preparation Form** has been filled out, it should be emailed to the group a few days before they observe the host teacher’s class so they can study it. Now they are ready to use the **Rounds Observation Worksheet**, introduced in Chapter 4, to observe and take notes during the class.

**Step 3: Teachers Meet to Debrief the Observation**
In preparing for the teachers to debrief the observation, the facilitator should treat the agenda like a lesson plan. This means copying all of the forms mentioned as well as the agenda, and taking the time to think through the agenda. Chapter 1 introduced this agenda, but below are more details about the steps:
During this meeting, the facilitator’s role is vital for the following reasons. First, the protocol is tightly timed, so it is up to the facilitator to ensure that participants don’t ask questions or make comments that stray from the problem of practice or the agenda. Second, the facilitator ensures the group focuses on descriptive observations, not judgments, as a first step. Teachers often jump to conclusions without honestly looking at the data first. By suspending judgment, they will be able to look more accurately at what is occurring in the classroom and therefore be in a better position to suggest solutions. Finally, perhaps the most important role of the facilitator is to remind everyone that all conversations are simply the prologue; the real task of the group comes when everyone commits to ways they will bring their teaching practice to the next level. The facilitator helps the group focus on the important question, “How will you measure what you’ve committed to, and how will you report on it in the next Round?” Not only must all teachers commit to a change, but they must also commit to how they will record these commitments. Below are some examples of artifacts they might use to record these changes they’ve made. It is helpful for the facilitator to first model his/her own Record of Practice.

**Examples of Artifacts That Serve as a Record of Practice**

- Lesson plans
- Discussion prompts
- Assessments
- Student work
- Videos
- Smart Board Notes

**Step 4: Group Conducts the Next Rounds Meeting and Starts by Sharing a Record of Practice**

At the group’s first meeting, no one has yet committed to any changes, but by the second meeting everyone has made a plan to improve their practice in some way. Each meeting opens with Honoring Commitments (see the Rounds Debriefing Protocol above). The facilitator begins the meeting by asking everyone what they have tried in their classrooms. Usually there is only time for one or two teachers to share at each meeting, but all of the Records of Practice should be uploaded to the school’s website to be shared before the meeting. Below is an example of one teacher’s commitment and the Record of Practice to capture it:

**Commitment:** “In my class, participation is not where I want it to be. So I plan to call on every student in the class by using cold calling. I will let the students know I am planning to do this to increase their role in the class and so every student will speak at least once during the class discussion. I plan to track the comments they make and whether students are raising their hands more often as a result of this intervention for my Record of Practice.” About four times a year, have the team develop a list of teaching strategies that successfully address the problem of practice that they agree should be in a classroom. The items on this list will serve as the common criteria teachers will strive to meet in addressing the problem of practice. Below are some examples:

**Sample List of Common Criteria to Address a Problem of Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students talk to one another and challenge each other’s ideas.</td>
<td>• Asks really good questions rather than telling students what to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students reference one another’s ideas.</td>
<td>• Doesn’t answer his or her own questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students take initiative to check their own work.</td>
<td>• Asks higher-level questions (uses Bloom’s Taxonomy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More knowledgeable students in a group help others.</td>
<td>• Provides opportunities for students to work in groups and independently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Record of Practice:** [Then at the next meeting, the teacher reports back] “Since our last meeting, I have started calling on every student every day in class. This intervention has totally changed the dynamic in my class. Students can’t just zone out and some students have become more participatory. For example, some students who never raised their hands now raise their hands. I told the kids I was going to do this, and they had no problems adjusting to it. I was worried they wouldn’t think it was fair or would be embarrassed. Next year I will try this in the beginning of the year to get more people participating and to change the culture of my class. Students now understand that I expect them to do the intellectual work.”

Chapter 6 – Year-End Wrap-Up

After leading your group through all of the cycles of Rounds throughout the year, you will want to know if your group actually accomplished its goals. Did all of the work the teachers put in lead to improved student learning? This is the question you want to pose to your group at an end-of-year wrap-up meeting.

At this final meeting, each teacher will present and analyze his or her Records of Practice to demonstrate how they have impacted student learning through the implementation of new teaching practices. The goal is to have teachers reflect on the following questions: How can we measure the effectiveness of the professional learning we have been engaging in throughout the year? What has been the impact on student learning? To answer these questions, have the group consider the phases they have gone through:

Phase 1: Rounds group develops a list of teaching strategies they want to see in classrooms that will serve as common criteria for addressing the problem of practice. After each Round, the list is modified and refined with the goal of presenting a vision of what effective teaching at the school looks like to the entire faculty.
Phase 2: The Rounds group uses these criteria to determine if teaching efforts are moving in the right direction.
Phase 3: Each teacher, with a partner in the group, presents his or her Records of Practice, including student work, that demonstrates how the teacher has implemented the common criteria and how student learning has improved.

To Prepare for the Final Meeting
A month before the final meeting, the facilitator should send an email to the group with an “assignment” to help each teacher prepare for a final presentation of his or her year’s work in Rounds. It is helpful if this email:

- asks them to analyze their Records of Practice from throughout the year and come with evidence of a change in their teaching practice based on this year’s problem of practice
- reminds them of the common criteria the group has developed which outlines the teaching strategies to strive for
- reminds them how they might demonstrate a change in their teaching (assignments, assessments, discussion questions, etc.)
- asks them to meet for an hour with a colleague from the group to analyze their Record of Practice that reflects a change in their teaching practice (Which criteria did the teacher work on and how? How does the artifact relate to the problem of practice? How does the artifact represent progress in student learning? What is different about the teacher’s practice now?)

In addition to this email, another way to prepare for the final year-end meeting is to use the video (included with purchase of the book) of one teacher presenting and analyzing her artifacts and assessing her success in changing her practice at the year-end meeting. Facilitators can use a video like this in three ways. They can view it alone or with other facilitators (as part of a study group) to serve as a model if they have never facilitated an end-of-year meeting. Or they can bring it directly to the teachers in their own Rounds group and show it to them as a model of how this meeting might run. Note that this is not an example of a perfect presentation. Use the video as an opportunity to critique how the teacher could have done a better job of collecting artifacts and could have improved her final presentation. Also note that the book includes the artifacts the teacher in the video uses in her final presentation so the facilitator can copy these and the teachers can use them to follow along with the video.

Prepare Reflective Questions
Finally, the facilitator should prepare questions to help teachers reflect on their year-long work in Rounds. Below are some samples:

1. I used to think Rounds would be… Now I think…
2. If you had known at the beginning of the year what you know now about Rounds, what would you have done differently?
3. In what ways did you improve your teaching this year?
4. In what specific ways would you like to grow your teaching practice next year?
5. Given the list of common criteria (indicators we are moving toward improved teaching practice) the group has developed, how would you refine and prioritize this list so it will be ready to share with the entire faculty?

Chapter 7 – Using Rounds Cases for Deeper Learning

A number of professions use case studies as a means of improving practice – from physicians to those in business. To help principals, facilitators, and Rounds participants improve their use of Rounds, it is useful to look at some examples of the dilemmas that arise when conducting Rounds. Case studies provide a means for studying real issues that arise with Rounds and engaging in high quality analysis of how to address these challenges.

To maximize the benefit of case studies, facilitators should examine them together as part of a monthly facilitators’ study group. However, not all schools are able to conduct these monthly meetings. In this situation, the Rounds group can analyze the case studies to improve their work together or the facilitators can examine case studies individually as a way of sharpening their own facilitation, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. The book provides three case studies you can use, along with a structure and questions to aid in analysis. Below are overviews of the case studies so you can determine if any or all would be helpful in your practice.
Case 1
This first case presents the part of the initial Rounds meeting when the group decides on a common problem of practice. Even though the facilitator, Carl, is an experienced 9-year teacher and mentor who is a natural choice for the role of facilitator, this case makes it clear how hard even the first step in Rounds can be. One teacher expresses a preference to have each teacher choose an individual problem of practice. Then the group starts to engage in a discussion of a wide variety of potential problems of practice from students not backing up their arguments in discussion, to scaffolding, to concerns about a required textbook. In addition to these divergent ideas, some of the teachers jump into proposing solutions for each other’s dilemmas – a step that is well outside of the goal of this first meeting. Furthermore, some of the teachers seem to be blaming the students rather than questioning their own practice. How will this facilitator focus the discussion and guide the group toward one common problem of practice?

Case 2
The second case focuses on a different step of the Rounds process — the meeting between the facilitator and the host teacher to fill out the Host Teacher Observation Form and prepare for the upcoming observation. In this case, the teacher, Jason, is a newer teacher and the problem of practice is, “How can I make concepts and skills clear and accessible to students?” Jason is focused on changing the structure of his class from whole-group to small-group as a way to get more students to participate. He believes if students are more engaged in the material, then they will better understand it. However, the facilitator, Alicia, has been in Jason’s class before and believes that part of the problem is that Jason needs to do more to make the concepts and skills he is teaching clearer. However, Jason seems set on changing the structure of the class without taking any ownership for what he will do to clarify the goals, the task, or the learning the students need to master. How can this facilitator find a balance between pushing the teacher toward addressing the problem of practice and guiding that teacher toward self-discovery?

Case 3
The third case deals with a principal who pushes the Rounds groups to skip steps in order to streamline the process. The principal, Claudia, has been at the school for eight years and has always run the school’s professional development. She wants the teachers to take more ownership for their own learning and sends a teacher, Renee, to a summer workshop on Teacher Rounds. When Renee returns and begins to implement Rounds at the start of the school year, the principal says, “There seem to be a lot of extra steps in this Rounds process” and complains about the slow pace. Even though Renee knows that Rounds is no quick fix, she is powerless to do anything as the principal decides they should skip several steps. Because the principal takes over several of the steps, it is not a surprise that teachers do not buy into the process, and by the end of the year, they do not feel that they have improved their teaching. How can this principal be convinced that implementing Rounds will take time, but once put into place carefully, it can lead to significant change over time?

How to Examine and Analyze Cases
The book provides questions specific to each of these cases, but below is a general structure to discuss and learn from each case.

Step 1: Read the Case (10 minutes)
Distribute copies of the case and give everyone 10 minutes to read it through and highlight anything they believe is significant.

Step 2: Establish the Facts of the Case (10 minutes)
As a whole group, make a list of just the facts of the case, including what you know about the individuals involved. Refrain from judgments or inferences in this step.

Step 3: Analyze the Case (20 minutes)
Some general questions to discuss in this step are: What is this case about? What key information do you know and what would be helpful to know? What is the essential problem here? What advice would you give to any of the people in the case and how they might have responded differently? One idea at this point is to consider role-playing an interaction between two of the group members to see how the situation might have turned out differently.

Chapter 8 – Role of the Principal
The principal or school leader is vital to the success of Teacher Rounds. This chapter briefly outlines the important roles the principal can play to either strengthen existing Rounds groups or begin Rounds for the first time.

Lay the Groundwork for Establishing Rounds
If the principal is fully committed to implementing Rounds, then she needs to put her money where her mouth is. This means setting aside sacred time in the schedule for Rounds to meet and ensuring that teachers are provided with coverage so they can observe each others’ classes. It also means investing personal time to oversee the program, provide ongoing support once it is up and running, and even personally intervening if problems occur.
Chapter 9 – Rounds Adapted for Instructional Leaders

In this chapter, the authors introduce a way to adapt Rounds so department chairs can hone their skills as “teacher developers” by improving their skills in classroom observation and teacher feedback. However, this approach to Rounds works with any leader in the school who is observing teachers and providing feedback in order to improve teacher practice, not for evaluation. In the book these are called Department Chair Rounds (DCR). Below is a description of DCR and how it differs from Teacher Rounds.

With DCR, the goal is to improve the ability of those participating to observe a teacher’s class skillfully and provide useful feedback. Given that observations and debriefings are often quick, and involve nuanced and in-the-moment problem solving, it is useful for those observing and debriefing with teachers to improve these skills. The steps are the same as with Teacher Rounds, but the content is different. Rather than participants observing a class, DCR participants watch a video of one teacher leader’s debriefing session with a teacher to help him or her sharpen the ability to improve the practice of teachers. The group also watches a video of that teacher’s lesson, not to critique the teacher, but to be able to better analyze the leader’s observations of the class. Everyone watches these two videos in preparation for meeting as a group.

All of the steps are the same as with Teacher Rounds – a facilitator is chosen, the group chooses a common problem of practice, the facilitator works with the host to fill out a Host Preparation Form, everyone observes the videos, and the group debriefs using the same agenda as teachers do in Teacher Rounds. It is important to note that the common problem of practice is not a problem with teaching, but rather an issue the leaders are having in helping to improve the practice of teachers. Sample problems of practice for a DCR are:

- How do I determine whether to take a more directive or more collaborative stance with a teacher?
- What approaches can I use to help a teacher who understands how to improve but doesn’t seem to be able to make the improvements a habitual part of his or her teaching practice?
- How can I help a teacher who is talented in a limited range of teaching practices but who struggles with expanding those practices because the new ones never seem to work as well as the old familiar ones?
- How do I ensure there is a clear plan after each debriefing and the teacher understands that plan?

With this chapter come several videos, including one in which a history department chair debriefs with a teacher after observing her lesson, and another in which a DCR group of department chairs meets to debrief and give feedback to that History Department Chair. These videos can be used to help visualize what this type of Rounds process might look like.

Overall, whether you use Rounds to improve teacher practice or to improve the practice of teacher leaders, it is important to remember that deep and lasting change will not come overnight. However, by implementing cycles of Rounds, you will be providing a platform for teachers to work together, tap into each other’s talents, and provide each other with built-in, regular feedback which will slowly, over time, lead to continued improvement.
PD Ideas to use with *The Power of Rounds*

Note that the PD ideas below are for *introducing* Rounds, not for maintaining, supporting, evaluating, or improving Rounds.

**I. Introduce Teachers to Teacher Rounds**

**A. Plan an introductory discussion:**
If you are considering having your teachers implement Teacher Rounds, set a meeting date and start with an introductory discussion.

1. Ask teachers what they already know about instructional/school rounds, Teacher Rounds, and even medical rounds.
2. Based on what you’ve learned from the book, provide an overview of the purpose of Rounds as well as the steps involved.
3. Ask teachers, in groups, to come up with a list of what they see as the benefits and challenges of Teacher Rounds.
4. As a large group, discuss these benefits and concerns. If they haven’t already, mention the benefits outlined in Chapter 2.
5. To help them think more concretely about how Rounds might benefit them, ask what problems of practice they might want to address in a Rounds group.

**B. Prepare teachers for Rounds in an initial Rounds meeting:**
Once you have a group (or several groups) of teachers committed to participating in Rounds, and a facilitator has been chosen for each group, there are a number of PD ideas already suggested in the book that facilitators can use to launch these groups:

1. At the first meeting, help the group outline norms for how the group will function
   - Provide sample norms for the group to look at (find some on the Internet or see p.4 of the summary).
   - Have the group brainstorm a list of possible norms.
   - Come to consensus on no more than five norms for the group.

2. At the first meeting, help the group strengthen skills in observing – see the Rounds Observation Workshop on p. 4 of the summary
   - Discuss the difference between description and observation.
   - Watch a sample teaching video (use one of your own or the book comes with access to one).
   - Fill in the *Rounds Observation Worksheet* while watching the video (see p. 4 of the summary for this worksheet).
   - Debrief the video, share observations, and discuss the importance of starting with descriptions before interpretations.

3. At the first meeting, help the group identify a common problem of practice
   - Provide examples of problems of practice (one is on p.5 of the summary and more are on pp. 43-44 and p. 131 of the book).
   - Provide the criteria for a problem of practice. It must be: *high-leverage, actionable, and relevant*.
   - Give suggestions for where to look: CCSS, the school’s own definition of good teaching, or use the questions below:
     - Are students engaged in high- or low-level tasks?
     - Do teachers do most of the thinking and talking in class?
     - Are students able to articulate their thinking in writing?
     - Do teachers enact a high-level curriculum in a low-level way?
     - Is student understanding in math procedural or conceptual?
     - How do we engage students of all abilities and different needs in high-level vs. low-level tasks?
   - After the three steps above, ask the teachers individually to brainstorm five possible ideas for the group’s problem of practice. Then help the group come to consensus around one problem of practice that meets the three criteria and which is an *authentic* problem the group can thoroughly explore and address through Rounds.
   **NOTE:** If it is useful for the facilitator or the group, watch the book’s two videos of groups identifying a common problem.

**II. Introduce Instructional Leaders to Rounds**

One chapter in the book shows how Rounds can be used to help department chairs improve their ability to observe and give teachers useful feedback on their teaching. This approach can be used with any instructional leader or teacher leader at the school tasked with improving instruction through observation and feedback: instructional coaches, assistant principals, grade-level team leaders, etc.

**A. Introduce Rounds to leaders**

Go through the same five steps in Part A above, but with leaders who wish to improve observation and feedback of teachers.

**NOTE:** Consider showing the leaders the 6-minute introductory video about Rounds for leaders that comes with the book.

**B. Prepare instructional leaders for Rounds**

Again, follow the same three steps as above (outline norms, strengthen observations of leaders giving feedback, decide on a common problem of practice – see the samples on p.9 of the summary), but remember the content is different. The leaders will be watching a video of a leader in action (the book comes with a video of a history department chair giving feedback to a teacher) and will practice writing down their observations of this instructional leader’s skills in classroom observation and teacher feedback. After the group shares their observations of the debriefing on the video, it may be helpful for the group to see another short video of an excerpt of a group of department chairs debriefing their observations of the history department chair’s post observation with this teacher.