

Appendix F to OMB Clearance Package
Case Study Focus Group Materials

District Informational Brochure



The National Evaluation
of Title III Implementation

District Information Document

What is the National Evaluation of Title III Implementation?

The National Evaluation of Title III Implementation, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Policy and Program Studies Service, is the first Federal study to take an in-depth look at the implementation of Title III at the state and local levels. This study is unique in that it goes beyond examining states' implementation of Title III provisions to take a closer look at how these provisions play out at the local level to shape the education of English Language Learners (ELLs).

To this end, during the fall of 2009, the study is complementing its state-level research activities – which include interviews with all 50 states' Title III directors, reviews of state policy documents, and analyses of several states' student achievement data – with the following district-level data collections:

- (1) A nationally-representative *survey* of Title III-funded districts and consortia
- (2) In-depth *case studies* of several Title III-funded districts, nested within 5 states

Why is this study important?

This study is designed to provide Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, other policymakers, and educators with an up-to-date, in-depth look at how states and districts across the nation are implementing Title III provisions as of 2009–10. The study will inform the next reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA)* and provide important information about English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, ELP assessments, annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs), and activities designed to improve outcomes for English language learners.

Findings from the study will be released in a series of three evaluation briefs and two reports, which will be publicly available on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site. Executive summaries of the study reports will also be sent to participating state and district Title III officials.

Is participation in the study required?

District administrators are required to participate in the study as a condition of receiving Title III funds. Individuals' participation in the principal, teacher, and parent liaison focus groups is voluntary.

How were districts selected?

Districts that received Title III funds during the 2008-09 school year were randomly selected for participation in the survey. Several of these districts were selected for participation in the case studies based on numerous factors, including their size, locale, and ELL student population.

What are the benefits for participating?

Your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of how states and local agencies are implementing Title III policy and programs for ELL students.

Your participation will ensure that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners have access to important information about the implementation of Title III from the perspective of local school districts and educators.

Participating states and districts will receive executive summaries of the study reports.

Case study districts will also receive:

- a dedicated study site coordinator who will serve as the single point of contact for the district;
- small tokens of our appreciation for district focus group participants; and
- a web-based briefing on the study results.

What will the survey require?

The Web-based survey can be accessed anytime online and should take about 45 minutes to complete. It can largely be completed without reference to district or Title III records.

What will the case studies involve?

The districts participating in the case studies will be visited for two days by a professional, experienced team of researchers who will conduct:

Interviews with:

- District ELL or Title III Coordinator
- District Curriculum and Instruction Director
- District Assessment Director

Focus Groups (4-8 participants) with:

- Elementary and secondary school principals/resource staff
- Elementary and secondary school teachers
- Parent liaisons and parents

Each interview or focus group should take approximately 60 minutes. No special preparation is needed. Questions will focus on participants' daily work experiences and will be easily answered. Our study site coordinator will work to schedule our two-day visit at a convenient time and place for the district and will attempt to schedule our focus groups at a time and place adjacent to existing staff and parent meetings outside of school hours to reduce disruptions to the school day and the need for travel.

What kinds of questions will be asked?

The survey and case study site visits will feature questions about how districts:

- use state ELP standards;
- assess ELLs for identification, placement, and academic progress;
- monitor student participation and progress in language instruction programs;
- respond to Title III accountability designations;
- ensure teacher quality and continued professional learning regarding ELL instruction; and
- assist schools in differentiating instruction for diverse types of ELLs.

Will district-provided information be confidential?

You and your district's or school's identities will be protected; immediately after we collect your responses, your name and the district's or school's name will be dissociated from the data. Your responses will be used to summarize findings in an aggregate manner (across groups of subgrantees), or will be used to provide examples of program implementation in a manner that does not associate responses with a specific site or individual. The study will identify states in its reports.

What will be done to ensure the quality of the research?

The research team will assume responsibilities designed to protect the participants and to ensure that the data collection activities are of the highest quality and lowest burden possible. These responsibilities include:

- Assuring the confidentiality of participants involved in data collection activities through an approved data security plan;
- Undergoing thorough IRB (institutional/ethical) review related to data collection activities;
- Obtaining Office of Management and Budget clearance for the data collection. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is XXXX-XXXX;
- Piloting surveys and protocols with state and district respondents in order to refine and improve the content and procedures of the data collection instruments used in the full study;
- Periodically presenting the study design and results for review by an expert technical advisory panel that includes a teacher of ELLs, a district Title III administrator, a state Title III director and several nationally-known experts in methodology and English language acquisition and enhancement.

Who is conducting the study?

The National Evaluation of Title III Implementation is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Policy and Program Studies Service and is being conducted by:

- The **American Institutes for Research (AIR)** (www.air.org), leads the study with Dr. Jennifer O'Day serving as principal investigator. AIR is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization in Washington, DC with a 50-year history of conducting applied research and providing technical assistance in the areas of education, health, workforce and international development.
- **The Windwalker Corporation** (www.windwalker.com), is a small business located in Virginia that is experienced in conducting on-line surveys and surveys on topics related to English language learners.
- **edCount, LLC.** (www.edcount.com), is a small business in Washington, DC that specializes in standards, assessments, and accountability policy with a staff that includes several former ESL educators and Title III administrators who are experienced in case study research methods.

For more information, please contact:

- Survey Director: Howard Fleischman, Toll Free: x-xxx-xxx-xxxx howard.fleischman@windwalker.com
- Case Studies Director: Laura Golden, Toll Free: 1-866-803-1604, lgolden@air.org
- Project Director: Dr. James Taylor, (202) 403-5607, jtaylor@air.org
- U.S. Department of Education Project Officer for the Study, Liz Eisner, 202-260-1109, ELIZABETH.EISNER@ED.GOV

Evaluation of State and Local Implementation of Title III Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Systems Informed Consent

Purpose

The Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS), Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education (ED) requests clearance for the data collection for the Evaluation of State and Local Implementation of Title III Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Systems. The purpose of the study is to provide an up-to-date, in-depth picture of implementation of No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) Title III provisions across the nation as of 2009-10. To this end, the evaluation will employ multiple lenses through which to view the patterns and complexities of implementation at both the state and district levels.

To assist with the evaluation, we are asking school staff to participate in focus groups. Depending on your role at the school level, you will be asked about topics such as class instruction and use of texts, school and district context, and supports to the intervention programs. The focus groups are designed to last no more than one hour.

Risks and Discomfort There are few anticipated or known risks in participating in this study. Risks may include possibly feeling coerced to take part in the interviews, however you should know that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You will not be penalized in any way for not participating. If you decide to participate, you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Benefits

Your participation in the evaluation will contribute to an understanding of how local agencies are implementing Title III policy and programs for English language learners.

Confidentiality

We will treat the information that you supply in a confidential manner. Only selected research staff will have access to data. We will NOT present results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. No personally identifiable information, such as name or school/district affiliation, will be disclosed to anyone outside the project, except as required by law.

More Information

If you would like more information about this study, you may contact the Project Director, James Taylor, at the American Institutes for Research at (202) 403-5000 or at jtaylor@air.org. For questions regarding your rights as a subject participating in this research, please IRB at IRBChair@air.org, toll free at 1-800-634-0797.

Informed Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Position: _____

District/School Name: _____

**Evaluation of State and Local Implementation of
Title III Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Systems
Focus Group Protocol: Principals and Resource Teachers**

State:

District:

Participants, Positions, and Schools:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Date:

Facilitator:

Note-taker:

Introductory Script for Principal/Resource Teacher Focus Group: Good morning [afternoon]. First of all, thank you so much for being here and for being willing to participate in this study. My name is [name] and this is [name of the other site visitor], we are researchers from American Institutes for Research [and Ed Count], an organization that conducts research about education.

Before we start, I'd like to provide a little background on our work, and answer any questions you might have. We are conducting this study for the US Department of Education in order to examine the implementation of Title III of the *No Child Left Behind* act. As you are probably aware, Title III is the portion of the law that addresses the instruction and assessment of students who are learning English. In order to better understand how states and districts are responding to the law and how this law is put into practice at the school level, we will be talking with leaders from the school district office, school principals, teachers, and parents in several school districts across the country.

This is a focus group of school administrators and resource teachers who work with ELL students and their teachers. During our conversation, I'll be asking you about such topics as: your roles as resource teachers and school administrators, approaches to instruction for English language learners at your school, the capacity of teachers at your school to address the needs of ELLs, assessment and accountability for ELL students, the resources you draw on in meeting the needs of the ELLs, the role of parents of ELLs, and the challenges you face.

Are there any questions right now about the study or about why we are here?

Next, I'd like to say a few things about the process for this discussion. During our session today, I'll be asking you some questions and [other site visitor] will be taking notes. If you don't mind, I would like to record our conversation simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the recording; it would just be for own reference. If you would like us to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be OK?

I want to assure you that all information you provide today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name or your school's name, and will not attribute any quotes. Our study will identify the states that we visit, but will not disclose the names of the districts and schools in each state. We will not share what we discuss with other people in this district. Whatever you express in this room stays in this room. We're asking you to make the same commitment—to keep what is said in this room confidential and not repeat it to others in your district or at your school. That way people can feel safe being honest. Agreed?

This session will give you a chance to express your opinions. We want you to feel comfortable in saying what you really think and feel, as your ideas and opinions are important to us. It is OK to disagree with one another. We'd like to hear everyone's perspective. If you do not feel like responding to a question, you do not have to.

I'd like to ask you to sign a consent form before we begin. It outlines some of the issues I've just mentioned with regard to anonymity and confidentiality. Please take a minute to read it and let me know if you have any questions.

Are there any questions before we get started?

***Note to interviewer:** Throughout the interview, possible probes are set aside following each general question. Asking these questions may help to move the interview pace or may prompt a less talkative respondent. However, **do not feel you need to ask each of these probes**; it is likely that the respondent will cover many of these issues when responding to your initial inquiry. Keep the tone conversational and comfortable.*

Background

- 1. To start, I'd like to ask each of you to introduce yourselves by saying your first name, your school, and your role at the school. Also, please say one or two sentences describing the ELL students at your school.**

Listen for:

- Roles regarding leadership for instruction and/or promoting professional learning
- Size of ELL population, language backgrounds, language levels, and levels of prior education (particularly at secondary level where some ELLs may come into the system with limited prior schooling).
- Presence of any significant subpopulations within the ELL population and their characteristics (such as refugee populations, influx of newcomers, significant border population, etc.).

ELL programs and practices

- 2. Next, I'd like to get a sense of the overall approach to ELL instruction at each of your schools. Are there designated programs, specialized classes, supports and/or curriculum that are used school wide? How/why were they selected? Are there any strategies or programs that you have found to be particularly effective? (1.1.7) (3.2.3.5) (4.3.3)**

Probe for:

- Any programs or curricula indicated by district officials, if not mentioned

Listen for:

- Whether there is a mandated/intended curriculum in place
- Use of native language in classes with ELL students
- Interventions available to ELLs who are struggling (such as, after school program, tutoring, mentoring, academic counselors, Response to Intervention, etc.)
- *For elementary schools*, whether there is a designated ELD time during the school day and a description of what takes place during that time.
- Influences on selection, such as district mandates, state standards, and/or TA provided.
- Perceived effectiveness of practices mentioned (evidenced by)

3. *If not already mentioned:* **Next, I'd like to ask you more about X.** [As appropriate, probe further on any specific strategies or approaches mentioned by district level staff for which we'd like to get the school level perspective (if not already mentioned above).]

Probe for:

- What is the focus? Who participates?
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)
- Support/influence from the district

State standards

4. **To what extent are you and the staff at your school familiar with the state ELP standards? How do you use them? To what extent do you find them useful in guiding instructional decisions at your school?** (1.1.6) (1.1.8) (1.1.9)

Probe for:

- Ways in which standards are useful
- How standards could be improved (to be more useful)

Listen for:

- Extent to which (and ways in which) school leaders use state ELP standards and content standards in planning, etc.
- Extent to which (and ways in which) ELL instruction incorporates/addresses state ELP standards and content standards
- How staff learn about the ELP standards and how they access them. (For example, are they sitting in a binder on the shelf? On the internet? Etc.?)
- Any ways in which district officials indicated that state standards are utilized

Teacher capacity

5. **Do you feel teachers at your school have the skills and knowledge needed to be successful with the ELL students at your school? Why/why not?** (4.5.4) 4.5.5)

Listen for:

- Extent to which the most skilled teachers the ones teaching the classes with the largest numbers of ELLs
- Distribution of HQTs in classes with the most ELLs
- Teacher attitudes toward teaching ELL classes. Do they tend to request such classes or avoid them?

- o Any incentives for encouraging the most skilled teachers to teach classes with ELLs (or disincentives).
- o Challenges, such as turnover, resistance to change, etc.

6. How do you go about recruiting and retaining teachers who are knowledgeable in their content area and language instruction? Do you receive any assistance from the district? (4.5.4) (4.5.5)

Listen for:

- o Any recruitment and retention practices mentioned by district officials
- o Extent to which ELL qualifications are a factor in recruitment and which ELL qualifications are considered
- o Any challenges associated with recruiting the teachers needed and how they are addressed

Professional learning

7. Do teachers at your school engage in professional learning that specifically addresses ELL instruction? If, so what? What is the district’s role? (1.1.9) (4.5.7) (4.3.3)

Listen for:

- Professional development initiatives identified by district officials
- Any differences in what mainstream vs. ELL teachers receive.
- Supports provided by district and/or any assistance provided by state
- Use of state standards
- Perceived effectiveness (evidenced by)

8. If time permits: As a school leader, where do you turn for assistance on ELL issues? (4.5.7) (4.3.3)

Listen for:

- Supports provided by district and/or any assistance provided by state
- Perceived effectiveness (evidenced by)
- External expertise the school has access to, such as local university or PD provider, and internal expertise, such as experts at the district and school levels

Title III Accountability

- 9. As you may be aware, under Title III of NCLB, your district has specific targets associated with ELL progress—referred to as Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives, or AMAOs. Have these targets been clearly communicated to you? What information do you get on how your district is doing with regard to these targets? How does this impact your work at your school?** (2.1.5) (3.2.3.1) (3.2.3.2) (4.3.3)

Listen for:

- Accountability measures identified by district officials
- Any specific actions taken in response to AMAO status, any changes in ELL practices over time associated with AMAO status
- Any assistance associated with missing AMAO targets

- 10. If time permits (this is also asked of teachers): In addition to the state-mandated assessments, are there any other measures you use for assessing the progress of ELLs at your school (including progress in content areas and language development)? How do you use the information you get from these measures?** (1.1.6) (2.7.1) (5.1.1)

Listen for:

- Whether school tracks progress toward English language proficiency and measures used
- Measures used, such as district-mandated assessment, teacher observation, etc. and extent to which these measures are mandated.
- Any changes over time in types of data tracked and how used
- How data is used to drive instruction
- Use of state ELP standards and content standards in development of formal and informal assessments

Resources

- 11. Next, I'd like to get a sense of the kinds of resources (financial, human, or other) you draw on in addressing the needs of ELL students at your school. Do you receive financial resources that are targeted for ELLs? What other resources do you draw on?** (4.1.1) (4.1.2)

Listen for:

- Resources identified by district officials
- Whether school receives Title III money and how used
- Any challenges associated with securing resources needed

Parent involvement

If a parent liaison focus group has not been scheduled, ask:

12. How would you describe the role of parents at your school? Are there any programs or supports that specifically target parents of ELL students? (3.2.3.10)

Listen for:

- Supports that benefit ELL parents, such as parent outreach programs, parent classes, language classes, parent liaison, etc.
- Ways in which the unique needs of ELL parents are accommodated (such as, communication in home language).
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)

Challenges

13. What challenges and constraints do you face in addressing the needs of ELL students at your school? And how do you address them? Are there any state or district policies that would be helpful in addressing those challenges? (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)

**Evaluation of State and Local Implementation of
Title III Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Systems
Focus Group Protocol: Teachers**

State:

District:

Participants, Positions and Schools:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Date:

Facilitator:

Note-taker:

Introductory Script for Teacher Focus Group: Good morning [afternoon]. First of all, thank you so much for being here and for being willing to participate in this study. My name is [name] and this is [name of the other site visitor], we are researchers from American Institutes for Research [and Ed Count], an organization that conducts research about education.

Before we start, I'd like to provide a little background on our work, and answer any questions you might have. We are conducting this study for the US Department of Education in order to examine the implementation of Title III of the *No Child Left Behind* act. As you may be aware, Title III is the portion of the law that addresses the instruction and assessment of students who are learning English. In order to better understand how states and districts are responding to the law and how this law is put into practice at the school level, we will be talking with leaders from the school district office, school principals, teachers, and parents in several school districts across the country.

This is a focus group of teachers who have ELL students in their classes. During our conversation, I'll be asking you about such topics as the approaches you take to providing instruction, how you assess the progress of your students, any professional learning you are involved in, and the role of parents at your school – all with a particular orientation toward your ELL students.

Are there any questions right now about the study or about why we are here?

Next, I'd like to say a few things about the process for this discussion. During our session today, I'll be asking you some questions and [other site visitor] will be taking notes. If you don't mind,

I would like to record our conversation simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the recording; it would just be for own reference. If you would like us to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be OK?

I want to assure you that all information you provide today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name or your school's name, and will not attribute any quotes. Our study will identify the states that we visit, but will not disclose the names of the districts and schools in each state. We will not share what we discuss with other people in this district. Whatever you express in this room stays in this room. We're asking you to make the same commitment—to keep what is said in this room confidential and not repeat it to others in your district or at your school. That way people can feel safe being honest. Agreed?

This session will give you a chance to express your opinions. We want you to feel comfortable in saying what you really think and feel, as your ideas and opinions are important to us. It is OK to disagree with one another. We'd like to hear everyone's perspective. If you do not feel like responding to a question, you do not have to.

I'd like to ask you to sign a consent form before we begin. It outlines some of the issues I've just mentioned with regard to anonymity and confidentiality. Please take a minute to read it and let me know if you have any questions.

Are there any questions before we get started?

***Note to interviewer:** Throughout the interview, possible probes are set aside following each general question. Asking these questions may help to move the interview pace or may prompt a less talkative respondent. However, **do not feel you need to ask each of these probes**; it is likely that the respondent will cover many of these issues when responding to your initial inquiry. Keep the tone conversational and comfortable.*

Teacher Focus Group

This protocol is intended to be used for conducting a focus group with teachers. The group is expected to include mainstream and ELL teachers (although it is expected that all teachers will have at least some ELLs in their classes).

Two focus groups will be conducted in each district – one for elementary level and one for secondary. It is expected that the secondary focus group will likely include teachers from the same school (although different subject areas), whereas the elementary group may include teachers from multiple schools. This protocol will need to be tailored to the group.

Background

- 1. To start, I'd like to ask each of you to introduce yourselves by saying your first name and the subjects and grades you teach. Also, please specify your role in teaching English language learners, if you have one.** For example, if you are a content area teacher (or classroom teacher), do you have ELLs in your classes? Do you teach any specialized classes for ELLs (such as ELD classes, sheltered content classes, etc.)? Etc.? (This question should be tailored toward whether this is a secondary or elementary group.)

Listen for:

- How many ELLs teachers have their classes, their language levels and backgrounds
- How ELLs are grouped into various classes – are all newcomers grouped into one class? Are ELLs evenly distributed throughout the classes? Grouped by language? Etc.?

ELL Instruction

- 2. Next, I'd like to get a sense of how you go about addressing the instructional needs of individual ELL students in your classes. What strategies and resources do you draw on to make the content accessible for your ELL students? Is there a specific approach you are expected to use for serving ELL students?** (1.1.8) (3.2.3.5) (3.2.3.7) (3.2.3.8)

Listen for:

- Ways in which instruction is differentiated for ELLs (pre-teaching, flexible grouping, instructional scaffolds)
- Incorporation of ELD into content area instruction (including use of academic language)
- Use of native language in classes with ELL students
- *For elementary schools:* whether there is designated time for ELD instruction and what takes place during that time
- Any specific approaches indicated by district officials

- Use of state standards (content and ELP)

Curriculum and materials for ELL instruction

- 3. Is there are particular curriculum or set of materials that you are expected to use (in content area and/or language instruction)? If so, how do you use them?** (1.1.8) (3.2.3.9)

Listen for:

- Specific curricula or materials that are used for ELL instruction and whether mandated
- Any programs or curricula indicated by district officials
- Use of bilingual materials and how used
- Perceived effectiveness (evidenced by)
- Time provided to plan collegially by grade-level and/or for grade level articulation for ELL support
- Use of state standards (content and ELP)

State standards

- 4. Are you familiar with the state ELP standards? If so, how useful do you find them and how do you use them in your instruction?** (1.1.6) (1.1.7) (1.1.8) (1.1.9)

Probe for:

- What teachers find useful and not useful about the standards.

Listen for:

- Level of familiarity with state standards how they are used for ELL instruction
- How teachers learned about the ELP standards and how they access them. (For example, are they sitting in a binder on the shelf? On the internet? Etc.?)

Assessment

- 5. Next, I'd like to ask how you know that your students are learning what you want them to learn. What measures (formal and informal) do you use to assess your students' progress in the content areas and in their language proficiency?** (1.1.6) (1.1.8) (1.1.9) (2.7.1) (5.1.1)

Listen for:

- Use of the state ELP test and other measures for assessing language progress, and the frequency with which the assessment are given

- Use of state ELP standards and content standards in development of formal and informal assessments
- Measures used, such as district-mandated assessment, teacher observation, etc. and extent to which these measures are mandated.
- Any changes over time in assessments used and/or how used
- Any district-wide measures mentioned by district officials

6. How do you use the information you get from those assessments? (2.1.5) (2.7.1)

Listen for:

- How data is used to drive instruction

7. If time permits: I know that your state uses _____ as the assessment of English language proficiency and _____ as the assessment of content area learning. Are you aware of how your school’s ELLs are doing on these state tests? What kinds of information do you receive on your students? When do you receive it? How do you use it? (3.2.1) (5.1.1)

Listen for:

- Any actions/consequences associated with school’s performance, perceived effectiveness of those actions, and ultimate impact on students
- Teachers’ awareness of AYP and AMAO status

Teacher capacity

8. How did you come to be assigned classes with ELL students? Do you feel prepared to teach the classes you’ve been assigned? (4.5.2) (4.5.5) (4.5.7)

Listen for:

- Ways in which qualifications in content area and language instruction are considered in assigning teachers to classes with ELLs
- Attitudes toward being assigned ELL classes

Professional learning

9. What kinds of professional learning do you engage in regarding ELL instruction? (1.1.9) (4.5.7) (4.3.3)

Listen for:

- Follow-up to professional development
- Whether professional development is part of a systemic model of improvement
- Professional development initiatives identified by district officials

- Any differences in what mainstream vs. ELL teachers receive
- Supports provided by district and/or any assistance provided by state
- Use of state standards (1.1.9)
- Perceived effectiveness (evidenced by)

Parent involvement

If a parent liaison focus group has not been scheduled, ask:

10. In what ways are the parents of your ELL students involved in their child's education? Are there any programs or supports in place at your school that benefit parents of ELL students? (3.2.3.10) (3.2.4)

Listen for:

- Supports that benefit ELL parents, such as parent outreach programs, parent classes, language classes, parent liaison, etc.
- Extent to which parents access the supports
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)
- Ways in which the unique needs of ELL parents are accommodated (such as, communication in home language).

ELL practices

11. If time permits: Are there any practices you or your school have implemented that you feel have been particularly successful with your ELL students? What are they and why do you think they have been successful? (3.2.3.7) (3.2.3.8) (3.2.3.9) (3.2.3.10)

12. As appropriate, if not already mentioned: Next, I'd like to ask you more about X. [Probe further on any specific strategies or approaches mentioned by district level staff for which we'd like to get teachers' perspectives (if not already mentioned above). Examples could include curricular approaches, a particular ELL methodology that is being promoted, a bilingual program, a parent outreach program, or any other practices that might be of interest.]

Probe for:

- What is the focus? Who participates?
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)
- Support/influence from the district

Challenges

13. What challenges and constraints do you (and your school) face in addressing the needs of ELL students? How can the state or district help you address these challenges? (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)

**Evaluation of State and Local Implementation of Title III Standards, Assessments, and
Accountability Systems
Focus Group Protocol: Parent liaisons and parents**

State:

District:

School:

Participants, Positions, and Schools:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Date of Interview:

Facilitator:

Note-taker:

Introductory Script for Parent Focus Group: Good morning [afternoon]. First of all, thank you so much for being here and for being willing to participate in this study. My name is [name] and this is [name of the other site visitor], we are researchers from American Institutes for Research [and Ed Count], an organization that conducts research about education.

Before we start, I'd like to provide a little background on our work, and answer any questions you might have. We are conducting a study of Title III of the *No Child Left Behind* act for the US Department of Education, which is the part of the law about how schools and districts are educating students who come to school speaking a language other than English. The law requires that states and school districts put in place certain practices to help these students learn English while they are also learning mathematics and other subjects. In order to better understand how states and districts are responding to the law, we will be talking with leaders from the school district office, school principals, teachers, and parents in several school districts across the country. This is a focus group of parents and staff who work with parents.

We have not started the formal study yet. Before we do that, we want to be sure that we are asking the right questions and asking them in a way that is clear and useful. The purpose of this session is to try out our questions so we can get a first glimpse at the school environment and classroom context from your perspective. During our conversation, I'll be asking you about such topics as the role of parents at your school, programs and supports for parents, ways in which

parents are involved, and communication between the school and parents – all with a particular orientation toward the parents of students who are learning English.

At the end of the session, we would also like to discuss whether the questions were clear for you or not. During the session you can ask us about anything that is unclear. You could also write down some notes about any issues or confusions with the questions and talk to us about it at the end. We appreciate your help in making this a better study.

Are there any questions right now about the study or about why we are here?

Next, I'd like to say a few things about the process for this discussion. During our session today, I'll be asking you some questions and [other site visitor] will be taking notes. If you don't mind, I would like to record our conversation simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the recording; it would just be for own reference. If you would like us to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be OK?

I want to assure you that all information you provide today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name, or your school's name, and will not attribute any quotes. Our study will identify the states that we visit, but will not disclose the names of the districts and schools in each state. Whatever you express in this room stays in this room. We're asking you to make the same commitment—to keep what is said in this room confidential and not repeat it to other parents or staff at the school or students. That way people can feel safe being honest. Agreed?

This session will give you a chance to express your opinions. We want you to feel comfortable in saying what you really think and feel, as your ideas and opinions are important to us. There are no right or wrong answers. It is OK to disagree with one another. We'd like to hear everyone's perspective. If you do not feel like responding to a question, you do not have to.

I'd like to ask you to sign a consent form before we begin. It outlines some of the issues I've just mentioned with regard to anonymity and confidentiality. Please take a minute to read it and let me know if you have any questions.

Are there any questions before we get started?

Guión en español para el grupo focal de padres de familia y personal escolar: Buenos días. Primero que nada les queremos agradecer su presencia y su disposición para participar en este estudio. Mi nombre es [nombre] y esta(e) es [nombre de la otra persona]. Somos investigadores del American Institutes for Research [y de Ed Count], una organización (son organizaciones) que lleva(n) a cabo investigación en materia educativa.

Antes de empezar, les platicaremos un poco sobre nuestro trabajo y si existen algunas preguntas con gusto las contestaremos. El proyecto que estamos llevando a cabo es sobre (Título 3) *Title III*, dentro del programa de *No Child Left Behind* para el departamento de educación. El rubro de *Title III* se refiere a cómo las escuelas y los distritos están educando a los estudiantes que ingresan a la escuela hablando algún otro idioma diferente al inglés. La ley estipula que los estados y los distritos escolares pongan en práctica ciertas medidas para que ayuden a que estos estudiantes aprendan inglés y que al mismo tiempo aprendan matemáticas y las otras materias. Para entender mejor cómo los estados y los distritos han respondido a los requerimientos de la ley, tendremos entrevistas con los responsables de los distritos escolares, directores de escuelas, maestros, y con padres de familia en varios estados del país. Este es un grupo focal para padres de familia y para el personal que trabaja con los padres de familia.

No hemos empezado el estudio formal. Antes de iniciar dicho estudio, necesitamos estar seguros de que estamos haciendo las preguntas indicadas y preguntándolas de una manera clara y útil. El propósito de esta sesión es probar las preguntas para tener una primera noción del ambiente escolar y del contexto de los salones de clases desde su perspectiva. Durante nuestra conversación, les haré preguntas sobre el papel de los padres de familia en su escuela, los programas y los apoyos que existen para los padres de familia, maneras en las que los padres de familia se involucran con la escuela, y la comunicación entre la escuela y los padres de familia. Estos temas orientados a los padres de familia de alumnos que están aprendiendo inglés.

Al final de la sesión, también nos gustaría discutir sobre las preguntas. Queremos saber si las preguntas fueron claras o no. Durante la sesión nos pueden preguntar sobre cualquier cosa que no sea clara, y también pueden tomar nota si algo les parece confuso y lo platicaremos al final. Les agradecemos mucho su ayuda con la cual podremos mejorar este estudio.

¿Tienen alguna pregunta sobre el estudio o sobre por qué estamos aquí?

A continuación les mencionaremos la mecánica para la discusión. Durante nuestra sesión, yo les haré las preguntas y mi compañero(a) tomara nota. Si no les molesta, nos gustaría grabar la conversación para poder completar nuestras anotaciones. Nadie fuera de nuestro equipo de investigadores escuchará la grabación, solamente será para nuestra propia referencia. Por favor háganoslo saber si en algún momento les gustaría que dejáramos de grabar. ¿Les parece?

Queremos asegurarles que toda la información que compartan con nosotros será totalmente confidencial, y solamente se usará para los fines de este estudio. No usaremos su nombre, o el nombre de la escuela, y no los identificaremos con ninguna cita o frase. Nuestro estudio

solamente identificará los estados que visitaremos, pero no señalará los nombres de los distritos ni de las escuelas que visitaremos. Lo que se diga en este cuarto, se queda en este cuarto. Por lo que les pedimos que ustedes también se comprometan a lo mismo: que aquello que se diga en este cuarto sea confidencial y no lo compartan con otras personas, padres de familia o personal de la escuela, o alumnos. De esta manera ustedes se pueden sentir a salvo de ser honestos.

Esta sesión es una oportunidad para expresar sus opiniones. Queremos que se sientan cómodos en compartir lo que realmente piensan y sienten, ya que sus ideas y opiniones son muy importantes para nosotros. No existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Esta bien no estar de acuerdo con todas las personas del grupo. Queremos escuchar la perspectiva de cada uno de ustedes, pero si no quieren responder alguna pregunta, no tienen que hacerlo.

Ahora por favor, les pido que firmen la forma de consentimiento antes de que empecemos. En dicha forma se resumen algunos de los puntos que hemos mencionado con respecto al anonimato y confidencialidad del estudio. Por favor tómense un minuto para leerla y pregúntennos si tienen alguna duda.

¿Tienen alguna pregunta antes de empezar?

***Note to interviewer:** Throughout the interview, possible probes are set aside following each general question. Asking these questions may help to move the interview pace or may prompt a less talkative respondent. However, **do not feel you need to ask each of these probes**; it is likely that the respondent will cover many of these issues when responding to your initial inquiry. Keep the tone conversational and comfortable.*

Focus group of parent liaisons and parents

This protocol is intended to be used for conducting a focus group with parent liaisons and parents of ELLs. Each parent liaison will be encouraged to invite one or two parents to participate. The group is expected to include parent liaisons and parents represented by multiple schools within a district. This protocol will need to be tailored to the participants in the group.

Background

1. **To start, I'd like to ask each of you to introduce yourselves by saying your first name, the school(s) you are associated with, and whether you are a parent or parent liaison.**
 - *If you are a parent*, please say the grade levels of your children and language(s) you speak at home.
 - *If you are staff*, please say your position and your role with regard to parents of ELLs.

Parent involvement

2. *For parents:* **Can you describe the ways you are involved in the education of your child(ren)?** (This could include a range of ways, such as help with homework, attending parent conferences, maintaining native language at home, volunteering in classroom, etc.) (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)

Listen for:

- Role of parents in decision-making at the school and what types of decisions they are involved in
3. *For parent liaisons:* **How would you describe the role of parents at your school? In what ways are the parents of ELL students involved in the education of their children? In the school? What are the challenges that parents face?** (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)

Communication with parents

4. *For parents:* **How do you communicate with your child's teachers (and/or other school staff)? What do you communicate about? How often?** (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)

Listen for:

- Frequency with which parents communicate with teachers and usefulness

- Types of information that parents receive on how their child is doing in school
- Ways in which the unique needs of ELL parents are accommodated (such as, communication in home language)

5. *For parents:* **What information do you receive about your child's school? Do you know how well the school meets the standards? How is that information communicated to you? How often?** (3.2.4)

Listen for:

- Ways in which the unique needs of ELL parents are accommodated (such as, communication in home language).
- Usefulness of the information parents receive

6. *For parent liaisons:* **In general, what information do parents receive about their child's school and about how their child is doing in school? How is that information communicated to them? How often?** (3.2.4)

Listen for:

- Ways in which the unique needs of ELL parents are accommodated (such as, communication in home language).
- Usefulness of the information parents receive

School practices

7. *For parents:* **Next, I'd like to ask about your goals for your child, particularly your goals with respect to learning English and your home language. Do you expect that your child will continue developing the home language or concentrate on learning English only? How does the school help your child in learning English (and/or home language)?** (3.2.3)

8. *For parents:* **Does your child participate in any special programs for students who are learning English? Are those programs helpful?** (3.2.3) (3.2.4)

Probe for:

- Role of home language
- Extent to which parents have a choice in the program offerings available

9. *For parents:* **Do you have a choice about what program(s) your child is enrolled in? How did you make that choice?** (3.2.3.6) (3.2.4)

10. For parent liaisons: I'd like to ask broadly about any practices in place at your school that benefit ELL students. What are the practices and how are they beneficial? (3.2.3)

Probe for:

- Specific strategies or approaches mentioned by district staff for which we'd like to get the perspective parent liaisons. This could include instructional approaches that are relevant for ELL students, as well as specific parent practices, such as a parent outreach program, district parent center, translation and other services for parents, etc
- What is the focus? Who participates?
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)
- Support/influence from the district

Listen for:

- Role of home language
- Extent to which parents have a choice in the program offerings available

Supports for parents

11. For parents: Do you participate in any programs, classes or supports for parents at your school? How do they help you? (This could include parent outreach programs, parent classes, language classes, parent liaison, etc.) (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)

Probe for:

- Programs and supports that specifically target parents of ELLs
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)

12. For parent liaisons: Are there any additional programs, classes or supports available for parents at your school? In what ways do they benefit parents of ELLs? Are there any programs that specifically target ELL parents? (This could include parent outreach programs, parent classes, language classes, parent liaison, etc.) (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)

Listen for:

- Which parents are targeted for these programs, who provides the support, the focus, etc.
- Extent to which parents access the supports
- Ways in which the unique needs of ELL parents are accommodated (such as, communication in home language).
- Perceived effectiveness (measured by)

- Differences in supports for elementary parents vs. secondary parents
- Any district-wide parent supports identified by district officials

Goals and challenges

13. *For parent liaisons:* What are your primary goals and priorities in the work you do with parents (particularly ELL parents)? In what ways have you been able to realize those goals? What are the challenges and constraints you face? How does the district (or state) help you address those challenges? (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)

14. *For parents, if time permits:* Do you face any challenges/difficulties/barriers in becoming involved in the education of your child(ren)? Do you face any challenges/difficulties/barriers in realizing the goals you have for your child(ren)? (3.2.4) (3.2.3.10)