

# Study of School Turnaround (SST)

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## Draft Elementary School Teacher Interview Protocol and Consent Form

February 2011

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## Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School(s):	Date/Time:

### Interview: Elementary School Teacher

#### Introduction

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this morning/afternoon. Before we start, I'd like to provide a little background on our work, and answer any questions you might have for me.

#### *Study of School Turnaround (SST)*

As you probably know, I work for an independent non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research, and we are under contract with the U.S. Department of Education to study how School Improvement Grant (SIG) implementation unfolds, and more specifically, the decisions and strategies schools, districts and states undertake, and the constraints they face as they work to implement intervention models intended to improve student outcomes. Study is taking place in 5 states, 12 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collect information on SIG implementation experiences from a diverse array of SIG grantees

#### *Privacy*

I want to assure you that all information obtained today will be treated in a manner that carefully protects your privacy, in accordance with the Education Sciences Institute Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Subsection (c) of Section 183. 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 your name or your district or school affiliation, will be disclosed to anyone outside the project. We also will not share what you and I discuss with other people in this district. Our study will identify the states that we visit, but will not disclose the names of the districts or schools in each state. Also, you should know that your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to respond to any questions you do not want to. Please let us know at any time if you would prefer not to participate.

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 privacy. Please take a minute to read it and let me know if you have any questions.

#### *Recording*

If you don't mind, I would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the tape, it would just be for my own reference. If you would like me to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be OK?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**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 (except where noted)** it is likely that the respondents will cover many of these issues when responding to your initial inquiry. Keep the tone conversational and comfortable.

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## TEACHER BACKGROUND

**1. [Interviewer: This question will only be asked in fall 2010, or the first time a teacher is interviewed if he or she is new in subsequent years.] I'd like to start by talking a bit about your background, including how long you've been a teacher. (IIIA.7, IIIA.8)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- How many years have you worked at this school? In what capacities, e.g., dept. chair, coach, group leader, technology mentor?
- What do you currently teach at this school (grade/subject area)?
- How many years have you worked in this district?
- [If teacher is new], Where were you teaching prior to this school? How were you recruited?
- [If teacher serves additional role(s) (e.g. instructional leader)] What are your responsibilities for those role(s)?

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## YOUR CLASSROOM

**2. I'm interested to learn about your students. How would you describe the students in your class? (IIIA.11)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- What is the range of student backgrounds and abilities?

**3. What are your goals for your students this year? What do you want them to accomplish by the end of the year and how will you know if you have succeeded? (IIIB.1, IIIB.6)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- Could you give me some examples of how you know you are successful with the students in your classroom?
- Have your goals changed at all over the past year or two? Why?
- In a typical class period, how likely is it that you are you able to meet your goals for that class?
- What proportion of your students typically are able to meet the class goals?

**4. How do you decide what you teach, especially given the range of students you've described?**

**5. What instructional/curricula approaches do you rely on most? Do you intend on making any changes in your approaches? (IIIB.6a, IIIB.6b)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- What pedagogical approach, e.g., direct instruction vs. constructivism
- What curriculum, e.g., content area, scope and sequence
- What strategies do you use for meeting the needs of specific groups of students, e.g., ELLs, special education students, the lowest performing students

**6. What types of challenges do you face with regard to improving your students' outcomes like achievement? (IIIA.11)**

**7. Please describe the students who are struggling in your class. How do you address their needs? [If teacher has multiple classes, s/he can refer to each class] (IIIA.10)**

**Probe as necessary:**

- What kinds of problems do students have? Academic problems, i.e., keeping up with material? Behavior problems?

**8. What kind of academic and social supports are currently in place to help the students in your class succeed? (e.g., tutoring, after-school programs, wraparound services [or community-based intervention] services) (IIIA.10)**

**Probe as necessary:**

- Are these services helpful? Why or why not?
- Are there additional supports that you think need to be put in place for students?
- What programs are there for ELL and special education students?

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## **YOUR SCHOOL**

**9. Now let's talk about the whole school. Can you tell me a bit about your school? How would you describe this school to someone who has never been here before? What are its key strengths and challenges? (IIIA.1, IIIA.5, IIIA.7, IIIA.9, IIIA.10, IIIA.11, IIIA.12)**

**10. Is there a clear set of goals for the school as a whole? If so, what are your school's goals? In particular, what are your school's improvement goals? (IIIA.1, IIIA.7, IIIA.9, IIIA.10, IIIA.11, IIIA.12)**

**Probe as necessary:**

- Where do the goals come from and how do they affect what you do in your classroom?
- Do the goals include academic and behavioral standards?
- Does the school have high expectations for its students?
- Is responsibility for school improvement goals shared among all staff?

**11. How would you describe the teaching staff at this school? What are their strengths and weaknesses as a staff? (IIIA.7) [If not clear, ask which teachers are being referred to, i.e., which grade, subject, etc. and make sure to ask about their peers in the same grade.]**

**Probe as necessary:**

- Are there staff members with whom you plan or teach lessons or assess your students? What does this working together look like?

**12. How would characterize the leadership of this school? Who are the key leaders, and what do they do to move the school forward and support you as a teacher? To what extent do you think they are effective in leading particular aspects of the school?**

*[Interviewer provide examples: the principal, leadership team, other teachers, coaches, etc.]*  
(IIIA.9, IIIA.12, IIIB.4, IIIB.5)

**Things to listen for: [Leadership in]:**

- Providing instructional leadership?
- Spending sufficient time in classrooms?
- Developing vision or goals for the school?
- Creating opportunities for professional learning?
- Motivating teachers and students?

- Evaluating teachers?
- Building relationships with parents and others outside the school?
- Making sure that things run smoothly on campus?

**13. To what extent can staff/teachers at this school get involved in the decision making? What avenues are available to teachers to provide their input? Please describe.**

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## **IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

*Note to the interviewer: Teachers may not be familiar with all aspects of the strategies the school is adopting, in which case the phrasing of these questions may need to be modified to refer to the school's improvement efforts this school year more generally.*

**14. Are there some core improvement strategies or approaches that the school as a whole is following to reach its improvement goals? What are they and do you think they are appropriate or likely to be effective?**

**15. Can you describe some of the specific improvement strategies that you know are, or will be, adopted at your school this school year (or as part of the SIG grant)? (IIIB.3, IIIB.4, IIIB.5, IIIB.6, IIIB.7, IIIB.8)**

***Things to listen for:***

- Are there specific processes or strategies the school is expected to implement in:
  - Instruction/curriculum
  - Meeting the needs of specific groups of students, e.g., ELLs, special education students, the lowest performing students
  - Use of time (e.g., during, before or after school) for training, common planning time, implementing programs, etc.
  - Staff; additional positions; support staff, e.g., additional counselors
  - Professional development
  - Use of data/assessments
  - Student supports
  - Community/parental involvement
  - School climate (e.g., discipline, safety)

***Probe as necessary:***

- Are these strategies similar or different from prior practice?
- Do you know why your school is embarking on these strategies?
- How are the improvement strategies prioritized?

**16. How have you heard about the schools' plans for implementing these different strategies? What is the process for informing teachers about reforms and/or new developments? (IIIA.12, IIIB.3, IIIB.4, IIIB.8)**

**17. What has been your role in selecting, developing, or implementing any of these strategies? Which strategies in particular? (IIIB.5, IIIB.7)**

**18. What types of supports have you received or are available to you to implement these strategies? (IIB.6, IIB.7, IIB.8, IIIA.10, IIIB.6, IIIB.8)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- What kind of support do you receive from external providers/organization?

- What kind of support do you receive from the district? From the school?
- What kind of support do you receive from the state education agency?
- Tell me about the professional development you have participated in this year (e.g., content, frequency, format i.e., embedded in the school day)

**19. Do you feel prepared to implement these new improvement strategies? (IIIB.3a, IIIB.3d, IIIB.3g)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- How have the supports you just described prepared you?
- Have the new strategies placed any greater demands on you as a teacher? If so, how? Has it required you to put in more time or effort, or work harder? How about other teachers?
- What preparation did you get in advance (e.g., orientation meetings; professional development)?
- How clear was the guidance that was provided to implement the strategies?
- Are you going to continue to develop your skills to implement the strategies? How?

## **REFLECTIONS**

**20. I'd like to turn to your thoughts about teaching at this school. What do you like about this school? Can you provide me with examples that would make teaching better at this school? (IIIB.3f)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- Are there monetary or other incentives for you to stay at this school?
- How likely is it that you will stay at this school?

**21. I know these improvement initiatives in your school are relatively new, but do you have any reflections on the strengths and weaknesses so far? [*Interviewer provide examples of how the SIG resources have been used based on improvement strategies discussed in the earlier questions*]**

***Probe as necessary:***

- Do you feel that certain components might be more difficult to implement than others?
- What are some of the challenges to implementation?
- Do you feel that these initiatives will help the school improve?
- Is there an innovation or strategy that you feel the school should implement but is not? Please describe.

**22. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your classroom, your school, and/or the improvement strategies that I haven't asked you?**

**Thanks again for your time. We very much appreciate your participation in this important study.**

## **ELL STUDENTS**

*These questions focus on the ways that teachers in SIG schools seek to meet the needs of ELL students. They will be asked of elementary school teachers who have ELL students in their class.*

**1. How were ELL students assigned to your class? Do you feel prepared to teach ELL students? (IIIA.13, IIIB.3, IIIB.6)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- 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

**2. 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? (IIIB.6)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- 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
- Whether there is designated time for ELD instruction and what takes place during that time
- Any specific approaches indicated by district s or external providers

**3. 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? (IIIB.6)**

**4. Do you receive any support regarding ELL instruction? Any professional development specific to ELL students? Please describe the support and who provides it. (IIIB.3)**

***Probe as necessary:***

- Are there any differences in what mainstream vs. ELL teachers receive?

**Study of School Turnaround  
Informed Consent: Teacher Interview**

**Purpose**

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) requests clearance for the data collection for the Study of School Turnaround (SST). The purpose of the study is to document over time the intervention models, approaches and strategies adopted and implemented by a subset of schools receiving federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds. To this end, the evaluation will employ multiple data collection strategies.

To assist with the evaluation, we are asking teachers to participate in interviews. You will be interviewed about topics related to the change process, the quality of support, and the level and quality of implementation of improvement strategies. The interviews are designed to last no more than one hour.

The data collected will be used solely for research purposes. Results from the research study will be reported in annual reports as well as special topic focused research briefs.

**Risks and Discomfort**

There are few anticipated or known risks in participating in this study.

**Benefits**

Your participation in the evaluation will contribute to an understanding of how schools are working to turn around schools.

**Freedom to Withdraw**

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may pass on any question that is asked and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

**Privacy Considerations**

We will treat the information that you supply in a manner that carefully protects your privacy, in accordance with the Education Sciences Institute Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Subsection (c) of Section 183. 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 district/school affiliation, will be disclosed to anyone outside the project.

**More Information**

If you would like more information about this study, you may contact the Project Director, Kerstin Carlson Le Floch, at the American Institutes for Research at 202-403-5649 or at [klefloch@air.org](mailto:klefloch@air.org). For questions regarding your rights as a subject participating in this research, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [IRBChair@air.org](mailto:IRBChair@air.org) or 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:** \_\_\_\_\_