

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

Draft Instructional Coach Interview Protocol and Consent Form

February 2011

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Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School:	Date/Time:
Interviewee:	

Interview: Instructional Coach

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. As you probably know, I work for an independent non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research, and we are conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Education on the implementation of the School Improvement Grants (called SIG) under ARRA.

The 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 implementation of the SIG from a diverse array of SIG grantees. More specifically, we want to learn about the change process that schools go through as they are working to turn around a history of low performance. Because external support providers play an important role in this process, we want to gain your perspective on the SIG program.

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. There are two copies, one is for your records, and the other, to be signed by you, is for me to keep in my files.

If you don't mind, I would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team will hear the recording; it is only for my own reference to improve the accuracy of my notes. 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**; 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

[Note: If the instructional coach interviewed is a peer coach, tailor the questions appropriately.]

Questions 1 and 2 will only be asked in fall 2010, or the first time a coach is interviewed if he or she is new in subsequent years.

1. I'd like to start by talking a bit about your background. What were your teaching experiences before working as an instructional coach? How long have you been a coach? (IIIA.7, IIIA.8, IIIC.5)

Things to listen for:

- How many years have you worked at this school? In what capacities?
- How many years have you worked in this district? In what capacities?
- *[If coach is new]*, Where were you working prior to this school? How were you recruited to work at this school?
- How were you recruited to be a coach/learn about being an instructional coach?
- Do you have a particular area of expertise [later, listen for the extent to which coach's expertise fit the school challenges]

2. Did you receive any specific training(s) to be an instructional coach? (IIIB.3, IIIB.3.g, IIIC.4)

Probe, if necessary:

- Who conducted the training? How long did it last?
- How long ago did you receive this training?

3. What kinds of ongoing training or professional development for instructional coaches have you participated in over the past year? (IIIB.3g)

- What ongoing training is required for your job?
- Do you formally or informally communicate with other instructional coaches in the district, state? How frequently? What do you discuss?

COACH ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4. I'd like to know about your role in the school and your relationship with the teachers. What can you tell me about your responsibilities and how you provide support to teachers? (IIIB.3, IIIB.6, IIIC.4)

Probe, if necessary:

- What are your goals for working with teachers? What do you want them to learn or to accomplish?
- How do you know if you have been successful with the teachers you work with?
- Can you describe when and how you work with teachers? (*What context, how frequently*)

5. How do you (or others) determine which teachers to work with? (IIIB.3)

Probes, if necessary:

- Who determines which teachers you work with?

- Do you work with teachers who have not been determined high quality/effective? If so, how is teacher quality/effectiveness determined? E.g., student achievement, classroom observations, other?
- Do you work with teachers with particular characteristics – novice teachers, teachers with large number of ELL and special ed students, teachers of a certain grade?
- How many teachers do you work with? How well do you get to know each one of them?

SCHOOL CONTEXT

6. Now let's talk about the whole school. Can you tell me a bit about this school? How would you describe this school to someone who has never been here before? What are its key strengths and challenges? (Potentially IIIA.1, IIIA.2, IIIA.7, IIIA.9, IIIA.10, IIIA.11, IIIA.12)

Things to listen for:

- Familiarity with history/prior reforms of the school
- Awareness of social context of the school
- Fit between perceived challenges and coach's skill set/experience
- Stability of leadership

7. As an instructional coach, to what extent are you satisfied with the support you get from the school leadership? Teachers? Please explain the ways in which support is evident or not evident.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Note to the interviewer: Coaches 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.

8. 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? (IIIB.3, IIIB.4, IIIB.5, IIIB.6, IIIB.7, IIIB.8)

9. Can you describe some of the specific improvement strategies that are being, or will be, adopted this school year? (IIIB.3, IIIB.4, IIIB.5, IIIB.6, IIIB.7, IIIB.8)

Things to listen for:

- Are there specific processes or strategies the schools are expected to implement?
 - Leadership
 - Instructional/curricula approaches
 - Meeting the needs of specific groups of students, e.g., ELLs, special education students, the lowest performing students
 - Additional staff positions; support staff, e.g., guidance counselors
 - Professional development
 - Use of data/assessments
 - Discipline policies
 - School safety
 - Student supports
 - Community/parental involvement
- How are these strategies similar or different from prior practice?

- Do you know why this school is embarking on these strategies?

10. What is your role in the implementation of these strategies? Do you feel prepared to implement these new improvement strategies? (IIIB.3, IIIB.4, IIIB.5, IIIB.6, IIIB.7, IIIB.8)

Probes:

- [If not already addressed] What preparation did you get in advance of implementing these strategies?
- [If not already addressed] How clear was the guidance that was provided to implement the strategies?
- What is /was your role in preparing and guiding teachers as they implement these strategies?

11. Do you think teachers in your school are prepared to implement these strategies? (IIIB.3a, IIIB. 3d, IIIB.3g)

Things to listen for:

- Have the new strategies placed any greater demands on teachers? On you? If so, how?
- With what teachers is implementation most likely to be successful_(probe for experienced vs. novice teachers, differences among content areas and grade levels, other)

REFLECTIONS

12. To wrap up, I'd like to reflect on how you feel about acting as an instructional coach in this school. What do you like about working here? What do you find difficult or frustrating? (IIIB.3f)

Probes:

- Are there monetary or other incentives for you to stay at this school?
- What could make your job easier or more satisfying?
- How likely is it that you will stay at this school?

13. I know these improvement initiatives are relatively new to your school, 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, if necessary:

- Do you feel that certain components might be more difficult to implement than others?
- What are some of the challenges to implementation?

14. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your role in this 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 study.

**Study of School Turnaround
Informed Consent: Instructional Coaches 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 instructional coaches 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. For questions regarding your rights as a subject participating in this research, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 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: _____