

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

Draft Union Representative Interview Protocol and Consent Form

February 2011

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Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School:	Date/Time:
Interviewee:	Union Name/Affiliation:

Interview: District Union Representative

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, we are part of an independent research team contracted by the U.S. Department of Education to study the implementation of the School Improvement Grants (SIG), which are funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus package). 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. 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. The study team, in consultation with ED, selected [list selected schools in district] for the study. Because teachers' unions can play an important role in this process, we want to gain your perspective on the implementation of the SIGs.

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.

RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background in schools? How did you come to be a union representative? Is this a full-time position for you?

[Note: There are different types of union representatives; some might be full-time positions, some might be part-time (especially in smaller districts). You may need to tailor the remaining interview questions based on this context.]

DISTRICT CONTEXT

2. I'd like to start by asking you to tell me more about your district. How would you describe your district to someone who has never been here before, including the primary issues it is facing, its educational priorities, its teaching staff? (IIA.6, IIA.13, IIA.15)

Things to listen for:

- The characteristics of teachers?
- The schools, and differences among schools?
- External instructional and professional supports (after school programs, universities, etc.)?

3. What would you say are this district's top three strengths? Top three challenges?

4. To what extent is teacher turnover a problem in this district? In particular schools? *[In the case study schools?]* What do you think are the main reasons teachers leave the district or particular schools? (IIA.8)

5. Why do you believe *[the case study schools]* are low-performing? What has contributed to their low performance year and after? What has hindered improvement? How is this different from other low-performing schools in the district?

6. What do you think it would take for *[each case study school]* to improve?

UNION-DISTRICT RELATIONSHIP

7. How would you describe the union's relationship with the superintendent and other district officials? With principals? (IIA.12)

Things to listen for:

- What are the biggest strengths and challenges in this relationship?
- How much do district and union officials collaborate?

Probe, if necessary:

- On what issues or in what areas does the union work with the district?
- Has this relationship changed in recent years?

SIG REFORM STRATEGIES AND UNION INVOLVEMENT

[Site visitors will have definitions of the models to refer to as necessary.]

8. [Number] schools in this district are now implementing major reforms through the School Improvement Grant program. To what extent was the union involved in decisions about which schools to include in the SIG application and which intervention models (for example, converting to charter, or replacing teachers and the principal) they should implement? (IIA.12, IIB.1)

Probe, if necessary:

- *[If the union was not involved]:* Did the union ask to be involved in these decisions?
- Were teachers involved? How were they involved?

9. How would you describe the intervention model chosen for *[each case study school]*? To what extent do you believe these are aligned with the challenges you believe these schools face?

10. Separate from the intervention models themselves, how would you describe any new specific instructional strategies being implemented in *[each case study school]*? To what extent do you believe these are aligned with the challenges you believe these schools face? (IIIB.6)

Probe, if necessary:

- Do you think these new reforms—the intervention models and the new specific instructional strategies-- will be successful in each school? Why or why not?

IMPACT ON STAFF

11. Do you believe teachers in this district have the capacity and support necessary to be successful implementing these reforms? What support is the district providing to staff? Is the state providing any direct support to schools? What additional support do you believe will be necessary? (IB.4, IIB.7)

Things to listen for:

- Additional professional development being provided to staff
- What districts are looking for in recruiting new teachers
- Differences between elementary and high school needs

12. I understand some SIG school(s) in this district recently had many of their faculty replaced. Was the union involved in the decision to do this? Was the union involved in choosing which staff was to be replaced? In hiring new staff? How were they involved? (IIA.12, IIB.5)

Probe, if necessary:

- Where did staff who were let go from *[this school/these schools]* go?
- Does the new staff have the skills needed to meet the needs of students in these schools? To implement the new reforms?
- How was new staff recruited? Were there any challenges in hiring new staff for these schools? Could you describe these challenges?

13. [Note: Ask if any schools turned charter] I understand [number] SIG school(s) are now operating [as charter schools/under a new management organization]. Was the union involved in this decision? How were they involved? How did this decision impact teachers in your school? In the district overall? (IIA.12, IIB.1)

14. Over the past year, have there been any recent changes to how teachers are assigned to schools or positions? How would you describe these changes? (IIB.5)

Probe, if necessary:

- Has the district added any incentives for teachers to work in particular schools?
- Have there been any new retention or recruitment efforts?

15. Have there been any recent changes in or discussions about the district's approach to teacher compensation? Please describe. What was the impetus for these changes? What has been the union's involvement in these discussions or decisions?

CLOSE

16. Is there anything else regarding these reforms or the School Improvement Grant program that you would like to comment on?

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

**Study of School Turnaround
Informed Consent: Union Representative 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 union representatives 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: _____

Union: _____