

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

Draft District ELL Coordinator Interview Protocol and Consent Form

February 2011

NEW PROTOCOL

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Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School:	Date/Time:
Interviewee:	Interviewee's Role:

Interview: District ELL Coordinator

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 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. We have collected as much information as possible through publicly available documents such as *[Interviewer: give examples of documents reviewed]*.

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 grant 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?

Different schools and districts have had different experiences and chosen different improvement strategies as a result of the SIG grants, so some of the questions may be more or less applicable to your situation. If at any point, you'd like clarification on any of my questions, feel free to interrupt me.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

NEW PROTOCOL

DISTRICT CONTEXT

1. Can you tell me a bit about the district context? How would you describe the ELL student population in your district? How would you describe the rest of the student population? (IIA.15)

Probe as necessary:

- Background on district, including size and nature of ELL population
- Ways in which ELLs are distributed across the district (i.e., do they tend to be grouped in certain areas and schools? or spread throughout the district?)
- Size and nature of ELL population (including language backgrounds and levels, levels of prior education)
- Description of any unique contextual factors that are noteworthy with regard to ELL practices, such as participation in a consortia of districts

2. What do you see as the primary strengths that ELL students bring to the instructional environment in this district? What do you see as the primary needs of ELL students in this district? How are those needs addressed? (IIIB.1, IIIB.6)

3. Does the district have specific priorities and principles that guide the work with ELL students in the district? If so, what are they? If not, what does guide this work? (IIIA.2, IIIB.6)

Probe as necessary:

- How does the ELL instruction fit into the larger vision for instruction in the district?
- How do the priorities/goals play out at elementary and secondary levels?
- What is the role of the native language in instruction for ELLs?

4. What are the main instructional programs and supports in place for ELLs in the district? Please describe any specialized classes, programs and/or instructional supports available for ELLs. (This could include bilingual program, ESL classes, sheltered content classes, newcomer classes, individual tutors, bilingual aides, etc.) (IIIB.6)

Probe as necessary:

- Describe each individually: What is the focus? Who provides the instruction? Which students participate? How long have these programs been in place? What is their perceived effectiveness? How do you know if they are effective?
- Use of native language in classes with ELL students
- Differences in programming at the elementary and secondary levels
- Specific interventions that may be available to ELLs who are struggling beyond what is in the classroom (such as, Response to Intervention or RtI)

5. Are there any district-wide programs or supports targeted for parents of ELL students? Please describe. (IIA.2, IIIB.7)

Probe as necessary:

- Which parents are targeted for these programs, who provides the support, the focus, etc.
 - Elementary
 - Secondary
- To what extent do ELL parents access them? In what ways do they benefit parents of ELLs?

- If there are other programs or supports for parents, how do ELL parents benefit from those?

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Now I'd like to ask questions about specific improvement strategies that address the needs of ELLs – that is, what the district is doing and what they are doing in the [case study schools] in order to improve the outcomes of ELL students.

6. Is there a district-wide approach to instructional improvement planned/being implemented for ELL students in the SIG schools? To what extent is the approach different from that of non-SIG schools, if at all? What specific strategies are involved in this approach? Please explain. (IIIB.6)

Things to listen for:

- Curriculum changes
- Pedagogical strategies
- Change in use of time/time for instruction (before or after or during the school day/extended day or year)
- Data use/assessments

7. For [each case study school] what instructional improvement strategies are being planned/implemented for ELL students? What is the rationale behind these strategies? (IIA.1, IIA.2, IIIB.6)

Probe as necessary:

- How prescriptive is the district on these changes? How much flexibility do schools have?

8. How will the district support these changes?

Probe as necessary:

- Are you providing different guidance for SIG schools compared to other low-performing schools in the district?
- To what extent do the instructional strategies and district support and guidance differ by intervention model (i.e., turnaround, restart, transformation)?

9. How are these instructional improvement strategies for ELL students different from changes you've tried to make in the past, or from previous instructional approaches? (IIA.1, IIA.2)

STAFF

Now I'd like to know more about the teachers in your district, the extent to which you believe they are prepared to teach ELLs, the ways in which they are distributed in schools across the district, how your district goes about recruiting and retaining the teachers you need, and professional development that is provided for these teachers.

10. To what extent do you feel teachers have the skills and knowledge needed to successfully teach the ELL students in this district? Where are they strong? In what areas do they need to improve? (IIB.5, IIIA.7, IIIB.3)

Probe as necessary:

- Extent to which district has a pool of qualified teachers

- Any differences at the elementary and secondary levels
- Any differences between capacity of content teachers and ELL teachers
- Any changes in teacher capacity over time

11. How do you ensure that ELL students are taught by teachers who are knowledgeable about both content and ESL instruction? How are those teachers who are best able to address the needs of ELL students distributed across schools in the district? (IIB.5, IIIB.3, IIIB.6)

Probe as necessary:

- Distribution of high quality/effective teachers in classes with the most ELLs
- How teachers are assigned to classes with ELL students
- Any policies or practices for assigning teachers to schools (particularly schools with large numbers of ELLs)
- Extent to which stronger teachers are in schools with largest numbers of ELLs

12. How does your district go about recruiting and retaining teachers who are knowledgeable in the content area and English language instruction? (IIIB.3, IIIB.6)

Probe as necessary:

- Extent to which the district pays attention to ELL qualifications in recruiting teachers
- Challenges associated with recruiting teachers with the needed skills and how addressed

13. What are the main types of professional development available for teachers in your district, specifically focused on issues related to ELL students? What is the district's role in providing these opportunities? How, if at all, do these activities differ for SIG schools and other district schools? (IIB.7, IIB.8)

Probe as necessary:

- A description of PD related to ELLs: What is the focus (and how it relates to the priorities expressed earlier)? Who provides? Intensity? Perceived effectiveness? What has been the impact on instruction? What has been the impact on academic achievement? Etc.?
- Differences at the elementary and secondary levels
- Differences in what is provided for ELD teachers vs. content area teachers
- Is any PD mandatory? Are there incentives to participate in PD?

SCHOOL SUPPORT AND MONITORING

I know that SIG schools are trying to implement a lot of ambitious change strategies. I'd like to talk a bit about support that is provided to SIG schools for ELL students as they go through this change process.

14. If I were a principal in a SIG school in your district, can you tell me what type of support I would receive for ELL students, whether from the state, the district, or an external support provider? (IIA.10, IIB.5, IIB.7, IIB.8, IIIB.3)

Probe as necessary:

- What is emphasized at [each case study school]?
- To what extent is this support for ELL students different from that of non-SIG schools, if at all?
- Has the district hired additional staff for the purpose of supporting SIG schools?

Things to listen for:

- Professional development for principals/leaders (e.g., form, content, intensity?)

- Intensity of support services (how often?)
- Fit between support provider and school needs
- Consistency/coherence with school's SIG intervention model

15. As a district leader, where do you turn for assistance on ELL issues or to build your own professional knowledge in this area? (IIB.7, IIB.8)

USE OF FUNDS

I'd like to talk about the use of SIG funds for ELL students in the case study schools in your district.

16. To what extent do you expect that the SIG funds will be used to support or stimulate specific improvement strategies for ELL students (e.g., instructional coaches, additional/new teachers, professional development, student supports, etc)? Are there any restrictions on how [case study schools] are allowed to use the SIG funds? (IIB.2, IIB.3)

17. What other sources of revenue will be used to support improvement efforts for ELL students at [case study schools in the district]? Are the different sources applied to different strategies? (IIB.2)

CLOSE

18. Taking into account everything we've discussed, what are your thoughts on the progress of ELL students in your district? What do you think you would need to ensure greater progress for these students?

19. Is there anything I haven't asked you about the SIG grant program and ELL students that you'd 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: District ELL Coordinator 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 districts 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 districts 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: _____