

Appendix G. Preschool Teacher and Program Staff Interview and Focus Group Protocol

Study on Sustaining the Positive Effects of Preschool

Preschool Teacher/Program Staff Interview/Focus Group Protocol

Interviewer _____ Focus Group ID # _____

Site _____ Date/Time _____

Introduction

My name is _____, and I work for American Institutes for Research (AIR). We've been contracted by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct case studies on sites that are implementing particular programs to support early elementary students.

As you may know, the purpose of the study is to document characteristics of programs and policies in early elementary school that support student growth and development, such as PK–3 alignment, differentiated instruction, and other programs designed to sustain the advantages of preschool. We are interested in learning more about the theoretical or practical background of these programs, how they are implemented, how they are sustained and supported/funded, and their outcomes.

I want to reassure you that your *responses to this interview will be used only for research purposes*. Though your site's name will appear in the final report, we will not provide your name in any reporting or to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law. Because we are producing case studies of only a small number of named sites, it may be possible for a reader to identify you based on the data that we report, even though your name will not be used. If there is information that you do not want shared directly in any reporting, please let me know. I will now give you a consent form that provides more details about the study and your rights as a participant.

Do you have any questions about the study?

I plan to audio record this session, solely for our note-taking purposes. Only research staff will use the audio recording, and we'll destroy it when the project is done. Is that okay with you?

Role and Previous Education-related Experience

1. I'd like to start by asking each of you to tell me your name, and what age or grade you teach [or what role you play in the program]?

Connections to Elementary

Our research is focused on making connections between early elementary school and earlier preschool experiences.

2. Do you know *where* the students in your class will attend elementary school? Do most students attend the same school?

Approach to Program or Strategy and Implementation

My next questions focus very specifically on [PROGRAM]. One purpose of this study is to help other districts and schools think about whether a similar program could work in their context.

3. I understand this program involves [BRIEFLY DESCRIBE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROGRAM]. Can you tell me more about all the activities involved?
 - a. What does this look like in your classroom?
 - b. What do you think are the most important aspects or features of this program?
4. Let's talk about when the program was first rolled out at your [school/preschool/center]. For those of you that were at the school then, what changes in staffing, policy, curriculum, or other areas were required?
 - a. What did teachers need to get started, in terms of training, guidance, or extra resources?
 - b. What did you stop doing, or how did you make time, to begin this initiative?
5. How do you or your pre-K colleagues communicate with parents about the program elements, goals, or vision of [PROGRAM]?
 - a. What messages do you emphasize?
 - b. What methods of communication do you use?
 - c. What questions about [PROGRAM] have you gotten from parents, if any?
 - d. Do parents play an active role in [PROGRAM]? How? Is there training for parents on their role?

PK–3 Alignment

I'd like to talk a little more about PK–3 alignment efforts in your district.

6. Are assessments aligned, connected, or coordinated across grades? If so, how?

If not mentioned, ask:

- a. What assessments are used? How often are they given?
 - b. How is the information from assessments used?
 - c. Does your district use a Kindergarten Entry Assessment? If so, which one? Do you receive the results of assessments for children that attended your preschool?
7. How are standards in different grades and in preschool related or aligned? How are curricula or other materials or resources related or aligned?
 8. How do you know what other teachers in preschool or kindergarten through Grade 3 are doing in their classrooms?
 - a. Is there time to meet? When? Is the time sufficient?

- b. *If they meet:* Which teachers do you meet with regularly? Do you meet only with preschool teachers or also with elementary school teachers?
9. Does your preschool/center have any other collaborative efforts with elementary schools?
- a. *If these collaborations exist:* What types of activities does this collaboration involve?
10. How do you receive training or support to align instructional practices across Grades PK–3?
- a. Can you describe any ongoing training?
 - b. Do teachers have dedicated time to meet with teachers in other grades?
 - c. How is data used and shared across grades?
 - d. How, if at all, are preschool teachers included in this training and support?
 - e. What is helpful about the support, and what would you change?

Other Specific Interventions or Supports

11. Are there any other programs or supports for early elementary students, designed to sustain the effects of preschool or otherwise support their learning and development, that we have not yet talked about?

If yes, ask questions 12-16:

12. What role do you play in the program?
- a. Is this a role you applied for? What skills are needed for the position?
13. How do you work with other teachers or staff at your center? At the elementary school?
14. What type of student participates in [PROGRAM]?
- a. What type of student is eligible and ineligible to participate?
 - b. Are you specifically providing services to certain subgroups of students?
15. What guidance do you receive from the district about the program’s goals or activities?
16. How much autonomy do you have in implementing program activities?

Outcomes

17. What effect, if any, do you think [PROGRAM] has had on student outcomes in kindergarten through third grade?
- a. *If interviewee reports effect:* For which outcomes have you seen gains and how are these documented? Have you seen gains for any particular student groups?
 - b. *If no effect:* What do you think are the barriers to seeing more gains?

Success, Challenges, and Sustainability

18. Overall, what is working well with this [PROGRAM] at your school?

19. What aspect of [PROGRAM] needs strengthening? Why?
 - a. What do you know of plans to try to strengthen it?
20. What challenges have you had in implementing this program, and what steps did you take or may still be needed to address them?
 - a. Are there any challenges in meeting both the requirements of the funder or administrator of your preschool program, and the requirements and goals of [PROGRAM]?
21. Is this an approach that will or should continue for the long term, in your opinion?
22. Are there resources you need to continue your work with [PROGRAM]?
23. One purpose of this study is to help other districts and schools potentially begin a similar program. What advice would you give to such districts or schools? Are there certain resources, structures, or capabilities that need to be in place for a program like this to succeed?
24. Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me today in regard to [PROGRAM]?