

**Appendix M:
School Board Member
Interview Protocol and Consent Form
for the Study of
Weighted Student Funding (WSF) and
School-Based Budgeting (SBB) Systems**

School Board Member Interview Protocol

District: State:	Interviewer:
Interviewee(s):	Date/Time:

Introduction

Key points to convey to the respondent:

- This is a study conducted by American Institutes for Research on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the study is to investigate the funding policies associated with school-based budgeting systems to see whether implementing such systems lead to changes in the way in which resources are allocated. Specifically, it examines: the structure of SBB systems; the outcomes of such systems in terms of the level of principal autonomy, transparency of resource allocation, empowerment of school stakeholders in the decision-making process, and equity of resource distribution; the interactions of SBB systems with school choice policies; and the challenges districts may have face in implementing these systems.
- **This is not an evaluation of your district’s performance. Rather, this is an exploratory investigation to learn more about the different experiences districts have had in developing and implementing their SBB systems.**
- As part of this study, we are conducting case studies of nine study districts that have implemented WSF systems, which include interviews with district and school staff, as well as an in-depth analysis of audited fiscal files and budget data. In addition, we are administering a nationally representative survey of district officials and school principals to better understand the perceptions of practitioners in both SBB and non-SBB districts and schools regarding their funding and resource allocation practices.
- The study’s results will be discussed in a final report that will be available publicly. Given the interest in learning from the specific experiences of districts implementing WSF systems, we will name the case study districts; however, we will not include any information in our public reporting that identifies schools or individuals. In addition, while staff from the U.S. Department of Education will see notes from our interviews, the notes we share will be reviewed and edited to ensure that we do not include any information that could identify individuals or specific schools. The study team will make sure that access to all data with identifiable information is limited to members of the study team. We will not provide information that identifies you or your school(s) to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.
- We know that you are very busy, and we appreciate your time. We anticipate that this interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

- We would like to record this conversation so that we can be sure we have an accurate record of our conversation. We will not share this recording with anyone outside the research team, and we will delete the recording after the final report is complete. Is that okay with you?
- Your participation is completely voluntary—you may skip any question you like with no consequence. Through the course of the interview, if we touch on topics that you believe to be sensitive for any reason, please bring that to our attention, and we will not include these comments either in public reporting or in discussions with the U.S. Department of Education.

Do you have any questions for us about the study?

If asked why or how the district was selected for the study:

- The districts for the study were selected because they are all using a WSF system to allocate funds to schools. We aimed to include a set of case study districts that are diverse with respect to geographic location, age of WSF system, and formula design.

District Context

I would like to start with some questions about your district’s context and history so that I can better understand your district and the schools it serves.

Question	
<p>1. How would you describe your district to someone who has never been there before, including your district’s strengths and challenges?</p>	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the district’s recent successes? • How would you describe the degree of teacher and staff turnover? • What are your students’ greatest or most unique needs?

Initial Implementation of WSF

Note to interviewer: Items marked with ‘*’ indicate topics that require the respondent to reflect on circumstances and activities before and around the initial implementation of the WSF system. If the respondent was not employed by the district at the time or does not recall historical details, consider reframing the item to focus on *current* implementation or skip the item, as appropriate.

Question	
<p>2. Are you aware of how the WSF system came about in your district? If so, how was the school board involved? *</p> <p>3. As far as you know, what issues was your district intending to address by introducing a WSF system? *</p> <p>[For districts with mature WSF systems only] Have the aims of the system changed at all since then? If so, how and why? *</p>	<p>Listen for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility/autonomy of general funds, categorical funds; equity with which general or categorical funds are distributed to schools • School choice • Per-pupil allocations; actual versus average teacher salaries; staff mobility • Transparency, predictability; innovation • Staff and community engagement

<p>4. How did other members of the board react to this proposed change? District staff? School staff? Others in the community? Has the response changed over time? If so, how? *</p>	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the district experience a problem of schools feeling like there were “winners” and “losers” under the WSF system, as some schools got more money and others got less? • Was there any opposition to the new WSF system? If so, from whom (principals, teachers parents)? What were their objections?
--	--

Ongoing Implementation of WSF / Decision-making Process

Question	
<p>5. What, if any, involvement [does/will] the school board have in reviewing and modifying the weights in the WSF formula?</p> <p>6. What is the school board’s role in your district’s annual planning and budgeting process?</p> <p>Who are the key stakeholders involved in your district’s annual planning and budgeting process? What are their roles?</p> <p>7. How well do district-level staff, school-level staff, and the public understand the WSF system? How prepared are they to make decisions about program planning, budgeting, and resource allocation?</p>	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [If school board has involvement in reviewing the WSF formula] What recommendations has the school board made? <p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [If applicable] How do your responsibilities compare to those you had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under the previous system? * - Since the WSF system was implemented? * • As part of the process, do you conduct a needs assessment? What other data are used? [Note to interviewer: Needs assessment refers to a systematic process to identify the district’s educational strengths and the areas that need to improve and is used to prioritize the areas that most affect student achievement] <p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [If not clear understanding] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What do they know? What do you wish they knew? – What perceptions or misperceptions do they have? • [If not prepared] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What additional resources or supports do you think schools need to successfully implement the WSF system? Are there any plans to provide these? • What training has the district provided to school staff? Are there other supports from the district or other sources that you think would be helpful for school staff? If yes, on what topics?

Question	
<p>8. How transparent is the current resource allocation process to stakeholders, including school board members, principals, teachers and other school staff, parents, and other community members?</p>	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What steps, if any, has the district taken to increase transparency?</i> • <i>[If applicable] What successes or failures have you encountered in attempting to increase transparency?</i>

Effect of the WSF System

Question	
<p>9. How has the distribution of funding under the WSF system affected the opportunities of students with particular educational needs to succeed relative to others?</p> <p>10. What, if anything, did the budgeting/planning process allow schools to do that they would not have been able to do otherwise? We are specifically interested in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting students with special subgroups • Using different programs or instructional practices 	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For which groups of students? • Has the budgeting/planning process created an incentive for schools to attract students who require additional resources to educate? Why or why not? Has it created any disincentives? <p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were any additional non-academic supports added? • How much have these changes varied across schools within your district? • What steps, if any, has the district taken to promote different programs or instructional practices? Are there any future plans? • Are there any specific instructional or related services needed to meet the needs of the students in your district that are lacking?

Concluding Questions

I would like to end this conversation with a few questions about “lessons learned” to date about the implementation of the WSF policy.

Question	
<p>11. What has gone well with the current WSF system? Can you describe any factors that may have enabled these successes?</p> <p>12. What challenges has your district faced in implementing a WSF system? How well has your district been able to address these challenges, and how? *</p>	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [For districts with mature WSF systems] Have the successes in implementation changed over time? If so, in what ways? * <p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining buy-in from district- or school-level staff, unions, school board, parents, other community stakeholders? • Technical capacity? • Were there any unpredicted challenges?

Question	
<p>13. Are there any district-, state-, or federal-level policies that promote or create barriers to more effective implementation of the budgeting/planning policy for your school? If so, what are they?</p> <p>14. Does your district have a school choice policy? How is it structured? Are there ways in which the WSF system supports or discourages school choice? If so, please describe.</p> <p>15. What changes would you like to make to the budgeting/planning process or the funding formula to improve its implementation or its benefits to schools? Why?</p> <p>16. Is there anything I haven't asked you about the district's budgeting/planning process or the WSF system that you would like to comment on?</p>	<p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is there an impact from:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – [If applicable] <i>The district's collective bargaining agreements?</i> – <i>District mandates and policies, such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>Hiring and placement policies?</i> » <i>Use of average versus actual salaries in charging against school budgets?</i> – <i>State school finance system?</i> – <i>State charter school policies?</i> – <i>Other federal or state policies (e.g., accountability, curriculum and standards)?</i> <p><i>If so, what do you feel is the impact?</i></p> • <i>For those policies that have created barriers, have you been able to find ways of overcoming the issues they present?</i> • <i>What, if anything, would you like to see changed about these policies?</i> <p>Probe for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In what ways, if any, does the district consider school choice in the implementation of the WSF system?</i> • <i>Do the following enter into school assignment decisions?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Sibling preference (if student has a sibling in school already)</i> – <i>Neighborhood school (if school is close to home)</i> – <i>Other</i>

Thank you so much for your assistance with this important project!

Study of Weighted Student Funding Systems and School-Based Budgeting Systems Informed Consent

Purpose

American Institutes for Research (AIR), under contract with the Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS) of the U.S. Department of Education, is conducting a study of the funding policies associated with school-based budgeting (SBB) systems to see whether implementing such systems lead to changes in the way in which resources are allocated. Specifically, it examines: the structure of SBB systems; the outcomes of such systems in terms of the level of principal autonomy, transparency of resource allocation, empowerment of school stakeholders in the decision-making process, and equity of resource distribution; the interactions of SBB systems with school choice policies; and the challenges districts may have face in implementing these systems.

To assist with the study, we are asking district and school staff to participate in interviews. You will be asked about the following topics: how your funding formula is structured, your role in budgeting and resource allocation decision making, and challenges and successes in WSF implementation. The interview is designed to last approximately 60 minutes.

Risks and Discomfort

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

Benefits

Your participation in the study will contribute to an understanding of the implementation, advantages, and challenges of SBB systems for use by state and federal policymakers to support districts.

Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to respond to certain questions or discontinue the interview at any time.

Privacy

Responses to this data collection will be used only for research purposes. No part of the study involves evaluation of any individual. The reports prepared for the study will identify the case study districts; however, we will not associate responses with specific schools or individuals. We will not provide information that identifies you or your school(s), except as required by law. If there is information that you do not want shared directly in any reporting, please let me know.

We would like your consent to record the interview. Recordings will be kept in a secure location and will not be accessed by anyone outside of the study team. The audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. You can participate in the interview but decline to have it recorded. Additionally, if you elect to have the interview recorded, you may stop the recording at any time.

More Information

If you would like more information about this study, you may contact the Project Director, Jesse Levin, at the American Institutes for Research at 650-376-6270 or jlevin@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.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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: _____

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is ###-####. The time required to complete this interview is estimated to average 45 minutes. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimates(s) or suggestion for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, 20202-4651. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this form, write directly to:

Policy and Program Studies Service,
Office of the Deputy Secretary, US Department of Education,
400 Maryland Avenue, SW,
Washington, DC 20202.