

Appendix F: Reading Specialist Interview Protocol and Consent Form

Striving Readers Program Evaluation

Reading Specialist Interview Protocol

Interviewer _____ Interviewee

ID# _____

Site _____

Date/Time _____

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview about the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program. In this study, we're interested in obtaining a sense of current literacy instruction across various grades at this school. We're interested in the materials teachers use for reading and writing instruction, their instructional practices, and the larger, building-level approach to literacy. I'd like to ask you some questions to get your perspective on literacy instruction and the supports you provide.

Key points to convey to the respondent:

- This is a study conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Abt Associates, and the Instructional Research Group on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the study is to understand the implementation of the SRCL grant program at the state, district, school, and classroom levels.
- **This is not a compliance study; our purpose is solely to provide policymakers and the general public with insight regarding local experiences with the SRCL program.**
- We are conducting site visits to SRCL schools in a subset of districts. Also, we are administering surveys of district officials and school principals to collect data from a wider range of respondents. In addition to the school visits and surveys, our team is reviewing state and district documents available to guide the implementation of the SRCL program for subgrantees and schools.
- The study results will be discussed in a final report that will be available to the public. We will not include any information in our public reporting that identifies your district or school. However, officials at the U.S. Department of Education will know that districts in your state participated in this study.
- We know that you are very busy, and we appreciate your time. We anticipate that this interview will take approximately 45 minutes.
- We would like to record this conversation so that we can be sure we have an accurate record. 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?
- You may discontinue your participation in this interview at any time. 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.

Role and Previous Education-Related Experience

Note to the interviewer: Although reading specialists may provide support in more than one school, this interview should focus on the interviewee's experiences at the school you are visiting.

1. How many years have you been a reading specialist at this school? At other schools? What was your experience in education prior to this role?
2. In one or two sentences, how would you describe this school to a colleague from another district?

Reading Specialist Activities

3. What are some of your specific responsibilities as a reading specialist at this school?
 - *Listen for, and probe if necessary:* observing teachers/classrooms, modeling instructional strategies, co-teaching, leading staff meetings, identifying/developing literacy instructional materials, providing literacy-related professional development, working on reading with small groups of students
4. *If the interviewee mentions instructional coaching responsibilities:* Who do you provide coaching support to? All teachers, or a subset?
 - How much coaching do you provide?
 - Does the level of coaching support vary across grades? By teachers' level of experience or effectiveness rating?
5. What topics do you provide coaching on (e.g., curriculum, differentiating instruction, working with English learners (ELs))?
6. *If the interviewee mentions instructional coaching responsibilities in Q3:* Which students do you provide literacy instruction to? How are these students identified for support?
7. Have your teaching or coaching activities changed this year compared to last year, either in the amount of time you spend with individual teachers or the focus of your coaching?

Approach to Program or Strategy and Implementation

8. Can you describe this school's literacy programming and practices? Are there specific areas of literacy that are the focus at different ages?
9. When students enter this school, how prepared are they for on-grade-level instruction in reading and writing? *Probe:*
 - *If elementary school:* In your opinion, do they enter ready for kindergarten-level literacy instruction? To what degree does your school participate in any literacy activities that promote alignment from early childhood through the early grades?

- *If middle school:* In your opinion, do students enter from elementary schools ready for middle-school-level literacy or English language arts instruction? What are any gaps or struggles with acquiring proficiency in reading and/or literacy as they progress through the grades?
 - *If high school:* In your opinion, do students enter from middle schools ready for high-school-level literacy demands and English language arts instruction? What are any gaps or struggles with acquiring proficiency in reading and/or literacy as they progress through the grades? Will they be adequately prepared to meet literacy demands as they leave secondary school?
10. To what degree do teachers draw upon specific interventions, programs, and curricula? What are these programs?
- Do you feel like these resources are sufficient and age-appropriate?
 - How well do teachers use these resources? Have they received the professional development and training needed to use the programs the way they are intended?
11. Have you received training on helping teachers implement these programs?
- Had you used this literacy program/intervention previously?

Differentiated Instruction

12. To what degree are assessments used to determine students' needs for different types of reading instruction or remediation?
- How well do teachers use the information from the assessments?

Outcomes

13. To what degree are you familiar with this school's use of Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (or SRCL) funds?

If answer indicates familiarity:

14. In what ways has the SRCL funding changed the literacy instruction in this school this year?
- What did that grant pay for in terms of reading programs, interventions, or practices? How did your school choose the SRCL-funded programs, interventions, or practices?
 - To what extent do you think these programs or practices meet the needs of students in this school?
 - Were there any problems or challenges with the SRCL-funded programs, interventions, or practices?
15. What proportion of students in this school are proficient or very proficient on the state reading test? What are your school's goals for improving reading proficiency?

16. Do you think changes in the literacy program because of the SRCL funding will improve the reading performance of students in the school?
17. Does your district have an overarching literacy plan (for the district)?
 - *If answer indicates familiarity:* To what degree do principals help develop that plan? Do principals obtain close knowledge of the literacy plan? What does the plan cover and focus on? How often is the plan updated? In what ways are the goals of the district literacy plan different or similar to your school goals?
 - *If relevant:* In what ways does that plan play a role with SRCL funding or planning?
18. What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the school's overall approach to literacy in terms of being comprehensive and meeting student needs? What are the gaps or challenges?

Thank you so much for your time!

Striving Readers Program Evaluation Interview: Informed Consent

Purpose

American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the independent and external evaluator contracted by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to conduct the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program evaluation. The purpose of this study is to provide information to policymakers, administrators, and educators regarding the following: grant award procedures, technical assistance, continuous improvement procedures, and literacy interventions at the school level.

In an effort to gather insight about SRCL implementation, we are administering surveys, conducting interviews, and observing classrooms. Online surveys will be administered to all SRCL subgrantees, and a sample of principals and teachers in SRCL-funded schools. We will also conduct interviews with state-level grantee administrators and a sample of principals, reading specialists, and teachers. Interviews will focus on the award process, literacy interventions' evidence of effectiveness, strategies for serving the largest number of students, technical assistance from states and districts, professional development plans, and use of assessments to identify student needs, inform instruction, and monitor progress.

Risks and Discomfort

There are no anticipated or known risks in participating in this evaluation. Your responses will have no adverse effect on your position in any way and your participation is voluntary. **This is NOT an evaluation of you personally but an attempt to understand how states, districts, and schools implement the SRCL literacy initiative.** If there is any question that you do not want to answer or you feel uncomfortable about, please let me know and we can skip it.

Benefits

Your participation in the evaluation will contribute to an understanding of the implementation processes associated with a large-scale SRCL initiative. Findings from the interviews will help policymakers and educators to improve the support of federal grant programs and literacy instruction.

Confidentiality

We will keep the information you share during this interview confidential and we will not identify you, your school, or your district in any reports or to anyone outside the research team. Your responses are protected from disclosure by federal statute (P.L. 107-279, Title I, Part E, Sec.183). All responses that relate to or describe identifiable characteristics of individuals may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purposes, unless otherwise compelled by law. All documents or audio recordings from this interview will be kept in secure data files to be accessed only by staff on the research team. Audio recordings will be kept until the end of the project and then permanently deleted. In public reports, we may include quotes from interviews but we will not identify any respondents and will mask any potentially identifying details.

Voluntary participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Your invitation to participate in this interview does not represent an obligation to participate. We value your insight and hope you will agree to an interview. However, if you do not want to participate, please let Kerstin Le Floch (klefloch@air.org) know as soon as possible.

More Information

If you would like more information about this evaluation, you may contact the project director, Jessica Heppen at AIR, at 202-403-5488 or at jheppen@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: _____

State/District/School: _____