April 2014

AIR®
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Study of School Turnaround: Spring 2012 Data Collection Instruments

April 2014

Contents

Page

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

_____

District Administrator Interview Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

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

Interview: District Official

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 [or recall], I work for an independent non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy 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 6 states, 24 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 want to continue learning about the change process that schools go through as they are working to turn around a history of low performance. Because district administrators 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 research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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.

[Like last time we talked,] 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?

Note to interviewer: In many districts, we will be interviewing multiple district administrators, depending on their role. We also will likely be interviewing the same person as before. Tailor the protocol according to the respondent's role and your previous discussions.

Questions for administrators not interviewed before are indicated by an "N".

While many questions ask about differences between SIG and non-SIG schools, also, as appropriate, make sure you probe to understand any differences between the district's SIG schools, especially the study schools.

Let the district administrator know which topics that you will be covering at the beginning of the interview.

DISTRICT CONTEXT

1. [N] **What are your responsibilities as** *[position title]*? **Do you have any particular role in the SIG schools? If so, please describe.** *[if interviewed previously]* **How, if at all, have your responsibilities changed since we last spoke?**

2. **What were the district's main priorities for <u>this school year</u>? How were these different from last year/in the fall?**

3. **How do these priorities relate to the district's lowest-performing schools and, in particular, the SIG schools?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Are SIG schools required to implement particular district policy/strategies if not consistent with school improvement plan? (e.g., curriculum working well at school so decides not to implement a new curriculum that the district is requiring for other schools)

4. [N*, or if not addressed in the fall*] **Within the district, how do decisions about individual SIG schools get made? Who makes the final decisions about key aspects of the school, such as improvement strategies, staffing, curriculum, professional development, and budget? Please explain.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Who sets priorities?
   - Is this different for SIG and non-SIG schools?

5. *[If addressed in the fall]* **In the fall you mentioned that the district makes decisions on** *[list key topics]*. **Has this decision-making process <u>changed over the course of the year</u>? If so, how?**

6. **Have there been any significant changes in the SIG schools since we spoke in the fall? Please describe.**

DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF SIG

Now that you are at the end of the second year of the SIG program, we are interested in knowing about the role of the district and if there have been any changes over time, and what progress has been made *[at the SIG schools in the study]*.

7. **What do you see as the primary role of the district in the implementation of SIG in the schools? Has your perspective changed at all based on your experience implementing SIG thus far? How? Why?**

8. *[If not addressed:]* **How did the district support the SIG schools <u>this year</u>? How was this <u>different from the last school year</u>? Why? Are any changes planned for <u>next year</u>? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do SIG schools benefit from additional support for district coaches and other staff?
    - What is the district's role in identifying an external provider for the school(s) and then working with the external provider on school issues?
    - How do you support the variation in needs among the SIG schools? Do different SIG schools receive different supports? *[focus on supports received by study schools]*

9. **With the school year almost completed, to what extent do you believe the SIG schools are making progress? On what do you base this assessment?**

I would like to ask you a couple of questions about support for SIG implementation that the district has received from the state and any external providers the district may work with.

10. **Has the state provided any direct support to SIG schools <u>this year</u>? If so, please describe.**

11. **Has the state support provided to the district and/or SIG schools changed this year (2011-12) as compared to last year (2010-11)? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What has been most helpful this year? What has been least helpful?
    - Has the state issued specific rules about the implementation of the SIG program in year 2?
    - About distribution or uses of funds?

12. **Are there particular ways in which the district has built its own capacity to support SIG implementation <u>this year</u>? Please describe. Is this <u>different from last year</u>. How? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Has the district worked with an external partner? If so, describe partner's role and if different from prior year.
    - Has the district reorganized? If so, please explain.
    - What has been most helpful this year? What has been least helpful?

13. [*Only ask of districts that we know are working with Education Management Organizations or Charter Management Organizations, and only ask if not addressed in response to the previous question*] **How would you characterize the district's relationship with this [EMO/CMO] this year? How does the district coordinate with the [EMO/CMO]? Have there been any changes since last year?**

ROLE OF THE DISTRICT IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT- MONITORING

14. How does the district measure and monitor SIG schools' success? How is this reported to the state? To the SIG schools?

> *Probe if not mentioned:*
> - How do you know the quality of particular actions implemented?
> - What student indicators will you use?
> - What data are used, and how? (e.g., student outcomes, implementation, observation of classrooms?)
> - Who uses the data?
> - Does the district provide any data or data interpretation training to schools?

15. What are district policies and/or guidance regarding schools' and teachers' use of student-level data? How, if at all, are district policies or support provided differently for SIG and non-SIG schools? Why?

> *Probe if not mentioned:*
> - Does the district require that schools use certain types of data more than others?
> - What types of student data are most frequently used?
> - Which types of student data are supported at the district level?

16. Based on this year's experiences, are you working with the SIG school(s) to refine, re-focus, or change any improvement strategies next year? If so, why? How?

> *Probe if not mentioned:*
> - Did the Cohort I SIG school grant renewal process or the Cohort 2 process conducted by the state contribute to these changes? How?
> - Did information from student performance data or some other data source influence these decisions? How?
> - What, if any, challenges to implementing particular improvement strategies have affected plans for next year? Please describe?

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT- PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Today I would like to ask a few questions about the SIG schools' teacher and leader capacity.

17. Are there district-level strategies to increase the capacity for leaders in SIG schools? Please describe.

18. **Thinking about last year and contrasting it with this year, what <u>changes</u>, if any, can be noted with regard to professional learning opportunities for school leaders in SIG schools? Why? Are any changes planned for next school year? Why?**

19. **Are there district-level strategies to increase the capacity for teachers in SIG schools? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What role does the district play in providing professional development/learning opportunities to SIG schools?
    - Are the professional development and professional learning opportunities offered in SIG schools different from non-SIG schools? If different, how? [e.g., specific external provider, particular topics, more embedded PD, etc.) Why?
    - What is SIG supported?

20. **Thinking about last year and contrasting it with this year, what <u>changes</u>, if any, can be noted with regard to professional learning opportunities for teachers in SIG schools? Why? Are any changes planned for next school year? Why?**

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

*[**Interviewer note**: These questions on human capital management may be asked of a separate district representative or one of the administrators you are already interviewing. Please tailor the protocol accordingly.]*

Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about district policies and practices related to staff and school leaders at the SIG schools.

21. **What have been the district's experiences in attracting/recruiting qualified <u>principals</u> to work in SIG schools? How, if at all, have these experiences differed between SIG and non-SIG schools and across SIG schools?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What do you look for when recruiting/hiring principals for SIG schools?
    - Is the district able to attract qualified principals to work in the SIG schools? Why or why not?
    - What factors contribute to these experiences -- school reputation, school location, other?
    - Are any incentives provided to attract principals to the SIG schools? If so, are these incentives also offered for other schools in the district?

22. **How about the process for filling any open <u>principal</u> positions? From where do you typically hire the principals? How does this differ for open positions in SIG and non-SIG schools?**

23. **What characteristics have you looked for in principals to lead the SIG schools? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Characteristics related to **transformational leadership**, e.g., being accessible, welcoming input, being supportive of staff, being visible to the school community, being visionary, enthusiastic, communicative, developing leaders, having high expectations

- Characteristics related to **instructional leadership**, e.g., being knowledgeable about instructional issues, focusing on improving teaching and learning (technical core of school), monitoring and guiding instruction.
- Do these characteristics differ across the SIG schools? How?

24. Do you feel the current school administration (including principal and assistant principals) at *[list SIG schools in the core/rural study]* **have the capacity to "turn around" the school and improve outcomes for the students? Why or why not?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- Does the school's administration have the right combination of skills? Who takes on what roles?
- Does the school have sufficient instructional leadership? Who provides this leadership?

And now, let's turn to discuss the teaching staff.

25. What have been the district's experiences in attracting/recruiting qualified <u>teachers</u> to work in SIG schools? How, if at all, have these experiences differed between SIG and non-SIG schools and across SIG schools?

Probe if not mentioned:
- What do you look for when recruiting/hiring teachers?
- Is the district able to attract qualified teachers to work in the SIG schools? Why or why not?
- What factors contribute to these experiences -- school reputation, school location, other?
- Are any incentives provided to attract teachers to the SIG schools? If so, are these incentives also offered for other schools in the district?

26. What is the process for filling open teacher positions in the SIG schools? Is this any different for non-SIG schools? Have there been any changes in the process between the last school year (2010-11) and this school year (2011-12)? Please explain.

Probe if not mentioned:
- What is the role of the district? The schools?
- Do you believe the current process is adequate? If not, how would you change it?
- How does teachers' status [probationary, veteran] factor into who gets placed where?
- How much discretion does the school leadership have?
- Do teachers have discretion about whether or not they come to the SIG study schools?
- Are there any plans for changing this process next year?

27. Do the SIG schools have discretion in identifying and "letting go" ineffective teachers? Please describe the process.

Probe if not mentioned:
- What is the union's role? The district's role?
- What happens to these teachers? Are they "let go" from the district?

Lastly, a couple of questions about both school leaders and teachers, and then we'll talk about evaluation systems.

28. **What strategies, if any, exist to encourage qualified staff—principals and teachers—to remain at the SIG schools? If any, when were these strategies first implemented? How do they differ from non-SIG school strategies?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Incentives?
   - Leadership roles?
   - Support for teachers' commutes?

29. **Have** [list SIG schools in the core/rural study] **experienced changes related to staffing—principals and teachers—since last year? Please describe. What were the reasons for any changes?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Was this the result of district policy or decisions related to staff capacity or budget cuts?
   - Was this a school-level decision?
   - Was this just natural turnover of staff positions (i.e., personal choice, relocation)?

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT- TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION SYSTEM

Note to interviewer: Before the site visit, obtain documentation on the Web about teacher and principal evaluation systems used by the SIG school sand become familiar with who developed the evaluation systems, whether they are state, district or school-level, who conducts the evaluations, what is the frequency, and evaluation criteria/rubric. As necessary, ask any follow-up or clarifying questions about the teacher evaluation system.

If the schools are not using the same teacher evaluation system and it is not part of the change process (an interesting finding in itself), there is no need to probe extensively, e.g., the role of SIG.

30. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are principals evaluated in this district?**

31. **Does the district evaluate principals of its SIG schools differently from principals in the other schools? How? Why?**

32. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are teachers evaluated in this district?**

33. **Do the SIG schools have a formal teacher evaluation system that is different from the district's? Why or why not? If so, how was it developed?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - What stakeholders--you, district, union, teachers, parents--had a role in developing the teacher evaluation system?
   - What was the role of SIG?

34. **If the teacher evaluation system used by SIG schools is different compared to other schools in the district, please explain how and why they are different.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How long has the teacher evaluation system for non-SIG schools been in place in the district?
   - What, if any, have been previous efforts to revise system? Why or why not successful?
   - Are SIG schools piloting a system that will be implemented throughout the district at some point?

35. **If a new teacher evaluation system at SIG or all schools, have there been any challenges? If so, please describe.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Challenges to the development of the evaluation system?
   - Challenges to the implementation of the evaluation system?
   - What has been the teacher union's involvement? What have been the reactions of teachers? The community?

USE OF FUNDS

I'd like to turn to a few questions on SIG funds.

36. *{If do not have information]* **What was the timing of the Year 2 budget and funds at** *[list SIG schools in core/rural study]***? When was the budget finalized? When were the funds received?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - If delay in finalizing budget, what caused the delay?

37. *[Depending on answer to question above:]* **How have any delays affected implementation of your school improvement plans?**

38. **How has the district applied other sources of funds to support improvement strategies (turnaround efforts), including those you've already mentioned?** *[Interviewer note: Following are some examples, but do not explicitly state them: ELL resource teachers paid for by Title III, other initiatives that include resources for PD, etc.]*

39. **After the SIG grant ends, does the district have plans to continue SIG improvement strategies using other funds? Which strategies, and with which funds?**

CLOSE

40. **Is there anything I haven't asked you about the SIG grant program and/or** *[SIG schools in district]* **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 (SST)

_____

Principal Interview Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School:	Date/Time:
Interviewee:	

Interview: Principal

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.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

As you probably know, I work for an independent non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy Research], and we are under contract with the U.S. Department of Education to study how School Improvement Grant (SIG) implementation unfolds, and more specifically, the decisions and strategies schools, districts and states undertake, and the constraints they face as they work to implement intervention models intended to improve student outcomes. The study is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collect information on SIG implementation experiences from a diverse array of SIG grantees

Privacy

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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.

Recording

If you don't mind, I would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the tape, it would just be for my own reference. 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?

Today I'd like to talk to you about a few topics, primarily about the change that has been going on in your school, how the improvement strategies are fitting together with the vision of your school, what kind of progress is occurring, and how the school and district are monitoring progress. We would also like to focus on leadership and how your school is increasing staff capacity. Lastly, I would like to ask you a few questions about the use of funds.

PRINCIPAL BACKGROUND

1. [N] **Can you to tell me a bit about your background in schools?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - How many years of experience do you have working as a principal?
    - Do you have experience working in schools that are similar to this one?

2. [N] **Did you work in a different school or district before coming to [the SIG school]? How did the previous school's setting compare to the current one?**

3. [N] **When and how did you come to be principal at this school? Why were you interested in becoming principal of this school?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Did district staff approach you about the available position?
    - Did you apply for the position?

SCHOOL CONTEXT

4. [N, *or if do not have information*] **I'd like to get a sense of where the students live in relation to this school. Are students from within the neighborhood or from throughout the district?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Where do the majority of the students live?
    - How do students get to school? Bus? Walk? Public transportation?
    - To what extent are the school's afterschool programs and extra-curricular activities affected by where the students live

5. [N] **Please briefly describe the school, including its strengths and challenges?** [

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - How is your school addressing these challenges?
   - *[If not known:]* How are the school's strengths and challenges affected by the school's context and setting—e.g., urban or rural, neighborhood or district-wide school, etc.?

6. [N] **What is your understanding of why this school has remained low-performing year after year? What has hindered improvement efforts in the past (prior to receiving SIG funds)?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - To what extent would you attribute the school's history of low performance to its setting [urban/inner city, rural/isolated, etc.].

7. *If interviewed previously*] **Have the school's strengths and challenges changed during this school year? How?**

STATUS OF IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND GOALS

8. [N] **What have been your primary goals for the school?**

9. [N**] What have been the key activities or strategies that you implemented this school year to accomplish those goals? Why?**

Now that you are at the end of the second year of the SIG program, we are interested in knowing how your school is changing through the process, what progress has been made and what levers were key in making progress, if any, and any lessons you have learned along the way.

10. **Have there been any significant changes in the school since the fall that we should know about? Please describe.**

11. *[If interviewed previously]* **I'd like to follow up on our previous conversation in the fall when you mentioned that your primary goals for this school were** *[insert goals here]***. Are these still your primary goals? Have they changed at all during this school year? How? Why or why not?**

12. *[If interviewed previously]* **In our previous conversation you also mentioned the key improvement strategies you are implementing:** *[insert strategies here].* **To what extent have these strategies changed during this school year? If so, how? Why or why not?**

- Were there any particular issues with implementation that you were trying to change this year?
- Have you discontinued any strategies this school year? Why?
- [*If changes*] Have these changes been welcomed or not? Why?

13. During this school year, did the district provide you with guidance or input into the appropriate school improvement strategies? If so, what was the guidance and how was this communicated?

Probe if not mentioned:
- How closely does the school work with the district on the school's improvement strategies. Please describe.

14. *[If not mentioned earlier]* **What is the rationale behind implementing these strategies and making any changes, if any? Please explain.**

15. With the school year almost completed, to what extent do you believe this school is making progress? In what areas? On what do you base this assessment?

16. How do the improvement strategies you mentioned fit into your overall vision for the school? Please explain how you see them fitting together to achieve this vision.

Probe if not mentioned:
- [N, *or if not known*] Where would you like this school to be in 5 years?

17. What lessons have you learned in implementing these key strategies, if any?

Probe if not mentioned:

- Are there any specific <u>challenges</u> that you think <u>cannot be addressed</u> by your school's current plans or improvement strategies?

18. *[If not already mentioned]* **Based on your experiences are you planning to <u>refine or re-focus</u> any of the improvement strategies <u>next year</u>? If so, why? How?**

HUMAN CAPITAL – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/LEARNING

[If interviewed previously] **We talked previously about the capacity of the teachers at your school.**

Today I would like to ask a few questions about the variety of ways you and your school are increasing teacher capacity and if there have been any changes since last year.

19. *[Note to interviewer- in order to avoid generating a laundry list of trainings, please list what PD you do know about and ask the principal to comment on anything more.]* **What are the primary professional development or learning opportunities available to teachers? How do these activities fit into the overall strategy for improvement?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What are your goals for professional development/earning for teachers?
    - Are these activities unique to this district? To SIG schools? Please explain.
    - Are teachers applying what they learning in their classrooms? How do you know?

20. **Have the PD or professional learning opportunities <u>changed since the last school year</u>? How? Why or Why not?**

21. [N*, or if do not have information*] **In your role as principal, have you had any professional development/learning opportunities this school year? Has this <u>changed since the last school year</u>? How? Why or why not?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Are there different professional learning opportunities for school leaders in SIG schools than in non-SIG schools? *[If yes]* Please explain?

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

22. **I'd like to turn to ask a few questions about your teaching staff. What have been the school's recent experiences attracting/recruiting qualified staff? Has this <u>changed since last year</u>? If so, how? Why or why not?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Is the school able to attract qualified—i.e., skilled and motivated--teachers to the school? Why or why not?
    - What factors contribute to these experiences -- school reputation, school location, pay scale, other?
    - Do where teachers tend to live relative to school affect your success in recruiting/attracting teachers? Please explain.
    - Are any incentives provided to attract teachers to the school? If so, please describe.

23. **How, if at all, is the process for filling open teacher positions in the school different from non-SIG schools? Please explain.**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Does the school have more/less discretion in hiring?

24. What strategies, if any, exist to encourage qualified staff to remain at the school? Are these unique to the school?

Probe if not mentioned:

- Incentives? How are they paid for?
- Leadership roles?
- Support for teachers' commutes?

25. What is the process for removing ineffective teachers from this school? Is that different from the process in other district schools? How?

Probe if not mentioned:

- In order to stay, did teachers have to reapply or achieve certain outcomes for their students?
- Where did teachers who were removed go?
- What is the district role? The Union role?

26. *[If not already known:]* **What was the school's experience with teacher turnover at the start of this school year? Do you anticipate there will be any teacher turnover and/or instability of staff next year?**

Probe if not mentioned:

- What were the reasons?
- Did the turnover affect the school's progress? How?

HUMAN CAPITAL – TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION

Note to interviewer: Before the site visit, obtain documentation on the Web about teacher and principal evaluation systems used by the school and become familiar with who developed the evaluation systems, whether they are state, district or school-level, who conducts the evaluations, what is the frequency, and evaluation criteria/rubric. As necessary, ask any follow-up or clarifying questions about the teacher evaluation system.

If the school is using the same teacher evaluation system and it is not part of the change process (an interesting finding in itself), there is no need to probe extensively, e.g., the role of SIG.

27. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are teachers evaluated at this school?**

28. Does the school have a formal teacher evaluation system that is different from the district's? Why or why not? If so, how was it developed?

Probe if not mentioned:

- What stakeholders--you, district, union, teachers, parents--had a role in developing the teacher evaluation system?
- Have there been any challenges in using the teacher evaluation system?
- How effective is the teacher evaluation system?
- What was the role of SIG?

29. **What is your role in the evaluations? What is the role of the leadership team? Other teachers?**

30. **How are the evaluation results used?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What kinds of feedback do teachers receive? How often?
    - Are there rewards or consequences that are implemented as a result of a teacher's evaluation? Please explain

31. **Have you as a principal been evaluated at this school?** *[If yes]* **Was this part of a district-wide principal evaluation system, or different for SIG schools? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How are the evaluation results used?
    - What kinds of feedback do principals receive? How often?
    - *[If different from district-wide system]*: How is it different? Why?

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT MONITORING

I would like to ask you a few questions about how the teachers, your school and district are using data.

32. **How are teachers using student-level data to modify instructional practices? What are the data sources (e.g., student work embedded in the classroom, standardized tests, benchmark assessments, grades, attendances, other?) Why? Please explain.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    33. What are the purposes for using these data?
    - Do teachers rely more or less on these data this year than in years past to identify appropriate improvement strategies?
    - What do you attribute the increase/decrease to? *[Listen to see if SIG is mentioned.]*

34. *[If not answered earlier]* **How is the school monitoring its progress? How do/will you know if your school is successful in reaching its goals (short-term or long-term)?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What is your role in monitoring?
    - What data will you use? How do/will you use the data?
    - What indicators of student success will be used? What will be the data sources?
    - How do/will you assess students' instructional needs?
    - How do/will you assess and improve staff capacity, i.e., evaluate teachers?

35. **How does the district measure and monitor your school's success?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How will you know if your school has been successful?

- What data is used, and how? (e.g., student outcomes, implementation, observation of classrooms?)
- Who uses the data?
- Does the district provide any data or data interpretation training to schools?

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

I'd like to turn to some questions about leadership.

36. [N] **How do you view your role as principal?**

Listen for:

- Fostering a coherent instructional vision and strategies [instructional leadership]
- Supporting the faculty and staff members in the change process [transformational leadership]
- Creating opportunities for professional learning, e.g. PD, coaching, fostering collaboration [transformational leadership]
- Monitoring instruction and monitoring student learning, e.g., observing classrooms, meeting with teachers to discuss students' progress, tracking progress of individual students, etc. [instructional leadership]
- Managing the internal environment, e.g., building a leadership team, motivating students and teachers, managing facilities, etc. [transformational leadership]
- Managing the district
- Managing the larger school community, e.g., meeting with parents, building support from external organizations, etc. [transformational leadership]

37. In reflecting on your leadership role, what do you believe are your strengths? In what areas do you think you could improve?

Probe if not mentioned:

- *{if do not have information]* What is your role as a school leader in moving the school forward?
- Has the way you've thought about your leadership of the school changed over the past year? If so, why and in what ways?

In the fall we talked about leadership at your school and I wanted to follow up on that discussion.

38. Please tell me about the school's leadership team (e.g., APs, coaches, teacher leaders, etc.) and how you work with them. What is your role in selecting and developing the leadership team? *[**Note**: we are trying to understand if there is a distributed leadership model at this school.]*

Probe if not mentioned:

- Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, PD, staffing extracurricular activities, etc.?
- To what extent do teachers get involved in school decision making?

USE OF FUNDS

I'd like to turn to a few questions on SIG funds.

39. *[If do not have this information]* **What was the timing of the Year 2 budget and funds? When was the budget finalized? When were the funds received?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    o   If delay in finalizing budget, what caused the delay?

40. *[Depending on answer to question above:]* **How have any delays affected implementation of your school improvement plans?**

41. **As principal, how much discretion have you had in allocating the SIG funds? Has this changed over time? How?**

42. **How has the school applied other sources of funds to support improvement strategies (turnaround efforts), including those you've already mentioned?** *[**Interviewer note:** Following are some examples, but do not explicitly state them: ELL resource teachers paid for by Title III, other initiatives that include resources for PD, etc.]*

43. **After the SIG grant ends, does the school/district have plans to continue SIG improvement strategies using other funds? Which strategies, and with which funds?**

CLOSE

44. **Is there anything I haven't asked you about the school or the SIG initiative 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 (SST)

_____

Union Representative Interview Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

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

Interview: 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 6 states, 24 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 research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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?

RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

1. **Can you to tell me a bit about your background in schools? How did you come to work with the teacher's union?**

2. **What is your position and responsibilities?**

DISTRICT CONTEXT

Note to interviewer: 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.

Probe to see if the union rep knows about the specific SIG schools in the core/rural study and ask about those specifically during the interview.

3. **How would you describe the union's relationship with the district? How has this changed in recent years?**

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

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - On what issues or in what areas does the union work with the district?
   - What are the key strengths and challenges in this relationship?
   - How much do district and union officials collaborate?

4. **What is your understanding of why the district's low performing schools have remained low-performing year after year? What has hindered improvement efforts in the past?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Do you have specific knowledge of the issues of the SIG schools in the study? *[If yes]* Are the factors hindering improvement different in these schools?
   - To what extent has teacher turnover been a problem? Leadership turnover?

SIG IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND UNION INVOLVEMENT

[Fill in number] **schools in this district have been implementing major reforms through the School Improvement Grant program.**

5. **To what extent was the union involved in discussions and decisions about which schools to include in the SIG application and which intervention models they should implement (for example, converting to charter, or replacing teachers and the principal)? How? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How was the union—both at the district and school level—involved?

- Why was the union involved?
- *[If the union was not involved]*: Did the union ask to be involved in these decisions?
- What was the nature of the discussions?

6. **To what extent do you believe that the intervention models chosen for the SIG schools are aligned with the challenges these schools face? Why? Please explain.**

7. **What has been the union's ongoing involvement with the SIG schools in this district once the SIG was awarded? Has the union's involvement <u>changed since last year</u>?** *[If yes]*, **How? Why? Please explain.**

8. **Are there other ways in which the union is involved with what is going on in the SIG schools in this district?**

9. **From the union's perspective, what aspects or activities of the SIG grant are you concerned about? Which show greatest promise? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - In particular, have there been concerns regarding the recruitment and replacement of teachers?
   - An extended school day at the school and implications for teachers' contracts?
   - How about the development of a new teacher evaluation system?

10. **From the union's perspective, what aspects or activities of the SIG schools' improvement plans have been most challenging to implement? Most successful? Why?**

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Today I would like to ask a few questions about the ways the district is increasing teacher capacity, and how the union has been involved in these issues, especially in the SIG schools. In particular, I'm interested in understanding the issues regarding teacher recruitment and replacement, compensation, and evaluation.

*[**Note to interviewer:** The issues in the following questions—namely, teacher recruitment and replacement, compensation, and evaluation—might come up in the response to question #9. If so, please be prepared to follow-up as necessary using the questions and probes below. If not, please ask about each topic below.]*

11. **First, what have been the district's experiences in attracting/recruiting qualified teachers to work in SIG schools? Has the district implemented any new strategies to encourage teachers to work at these schools?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What is the union's role in this process?
    - What has been the nature of any negotiations between the union and district?
    - Is the district able to attract qualified teachers to work in the SIG schools? Why or why not?
    - Are any incentives provided to attract teachers to the SIG schools? If so, are these incentives also offered for other schools in the district?

12. **What is the process for filling open teacher positions in the SIG schools? Is this any different for non-SIG schools? If so, what agreements had to be reach between the district/school and union?**

Probe if not mentioned:
   - What has been the union's role in this process?
   - What has been the nature of any negotiations between the union and district?
   - Do teachers have discretion about whether or not they come to the study schools?
   - Are there any plans for changing this process next year?

13. **Do the SIG schools have greater discretion in identifying and "letting go" ineffective teachers than other schools? If so, please describe.**

Probe if not mentioned:
   - What happens to these teachers? Are they "let go" from the district?
   - What agreements had to be reached between the district/school and union?

14. **What strategies, if any, exist to encourage qualified staff to remain at the SIG schools? If any, when were these strategies first implemented? How do they differ from non-SIG school strategies?**

Probe if not mentioned:
   - What agreements had to be reached between the district/school and union?
   - What, if any, Incentives are offered to teachers?

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 or discussions?**

Probe if not mentioned:
   - What has been the union's involvement in these discussions or decisions?

Note to interviewer: Before the site visit, obtain documentation on the Web about teacher and principal evaluation systems used by the SIG school sand become familiar with who developed the evaluation systems, whether they are state, district or school-level, who conducts the evaluations, what is the frequency, and evaluation criteria/rubric. As necessary, ask any follow-up or clarifying questions about the teacher evaluation system.

If the schools are not using the same teacher evaluation system and it is not part of the change process (an interesting finding in itself), there is no need to probe extensively, e.g., the role of SIG.

16. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are principals evaluated in this district?**

17. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are teachers evaluated in this district?**

18. **Do the SIG schools have a formal teacher evaluation system that is different from the district's? Why or why not? If so, how was it developed?**

Probe if not mentioned:
   - What stakeholders--, district, union, teachers, parents--had a role in developing the teacher evaluation system?

- What was the role of SIG?
- What agreements had to be reached between the district/school and union?

19. *[For districts in which there are restart schools only]* **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?**

CLOSE

20. Is there anything else regarding the union, district, and/or SIG 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 (SST)

_____

External Support Provider Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

Support Provider(s):	Interviewer:
District:	Interviewer:
School(s):	Date/Time:

Interview: External Support Provider

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 [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy Research], and we are conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Education on the implementation of the School Improvement Grants (called SIG) under ARRA. The study is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collection information on implementation of the SIG from a diverse array of SIG grantees. 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 program.

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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 the interviewer: Not all schools will have an external support provider. You will need to work with the school to identify the best respondent for this interview, if any. There are many different types of external support providers who may be working with SIG schools. Some may be affiliated with a private organization that specializes in management of low-performing schools. Others may be under contract with the district to focus on a specific aspect of the school, such as mathematics, special education, or leadership. Still others may be affiliated with the state, and have worked through the state system of support in the past. Before conducting this interview, you should obtain background information on the key support providers, their affiliation, and role in the school, so you can appropriately tailor these questions.

Some questions are intended for external providers who were <u>not</u> previously interviewed and are designated by "N". Questions for external providers that we have interviewed before are indicated by an "If previously interviewed". Please note that questions 1-5 are for an external provider not previously interviewed and questions 6-7 are for those previously interviewed. The interviewer will build on previous external provider responses to tailor the questions for this interview.

SUPPORT PROVIDER(S) BACKGROUND AND ROLE

[N] **Thanks for taking the time to talk with me today. I'd like to start by asking a bit about your background and your role in supporting the work at [*this school*].**

1. [N] **First, I'd like to know a bit about your background. What is your expertise? What kind of training have you had?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What is your background in education? Were you ever a teacher or administrator?
    - Do you have a particular area of expertise? Please describe.
    - What <u>types of schools</u> do you work with most often? (Elementary, middle, high? Traditional vs. charter?)
    - <u>How many years</u> have you been involved with support for low-performing schools?

2. [N*, and if the external provider is part of an organization*] **How long have you been affiliated with** [*name of organization*]**? What is the background or expertise of the organization? What kind of training does your organization provide?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How many low-performing schools does your organization work with?
    - Does the organization only work in the district, or state? In how many other districts/states does the organization work?

3. [N] **How many schools are you personally currently working with? How many are low performing?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How many SIG schools, specifically?
    - Do you focus on a particular aspect of support? *[e.g., leadership, instruction, etc.]*

4. [N] **How and when did you come to be the support provider for this school?**

5. [N] **What are your main responsibilities/roles within this school? To whom are you responsible? Has your role changed <u>during the last year</u>?**

    *[**Note**: Try to get specific information for how a provider is matched or connected with a school and listen for the history of the school.]*

    Listen for:
    ▪ *[If working for a larger organization/or state]* Are you assigned a particular region or state?
    ▪ Did you respond to a request from the state or district for proposals to become a provider for this particular district/state?

6. *[If interviewed previously]* **Thanks for talking with us again this fall. I'd like to follow up on our conversation from last fall [or spring] to talk about any changes that may have occurred. Has your job and/or responsibilities at** *[organization]* **changed at all since we last spoke? How?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    ▪ How many schools do you work with?
    ▪ Are you focusing on different aspects of support?

7. *[If interviewed previously]* **Has your work with this school changed at all since we last spoke** *[or, since you were last interviewed]*? **If so, in what ways? Why?**

8. **What are your main priorities for your work with this school <u>this year</u>? Have these priorities <u>changed since last year</u>** *[or since the fall]*? **If so, how? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    ▪ Who sets these priorities?
    ▪ How were these priorities chosen?
    ▪ *[If changes:]* Did your work last year contribute to the changes you made this year?

9. **Please describe a typical week of work [or visit] to the school this year. Who do you work with, and what are your specific activities? Why? What do you hope to accomplish?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    ▪ Who is being targeted? Why?
    ▪ Who decided that these should be the people targeted?
    ▪ Do you work with different staff each time? Why?

10. **Do you use school-level and/or student-level data in your work with this school? Why or why not? If so, please explain.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    ▪ What are the purposes for using these data?
    ▪ What are the data sources (e.g., student work embedded in the classroom, standardized tests, benchmark assessments, grades, attendances, other?) Why those sources?
    ▪ *[If at the school last year]* Do teachers rely more or less on these data this year than in years past to identify appropriate improvement strategies? Why? *[Listen to see if SIG is mentioned.]*

Next, I'd like to ask about the role of any other support providers to the school and your relationship with them.

11. **Are there any other support providers working with the school?**

12. *[Ask if there is more than one external support provider]* **How, if at all, do you interact and share information with one another? Please describe. Have there been any <u>changes since last year</u>? Please describe.**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

*[**Note**: Tailor these questions to the type of external support provider being interviewed. Some may not know about the changes to the school.]*

13. **Let's talk about this school as a whole. What would you say are its key strengths <u>this year</u>? How, if at all are these different from last year?**

14. **What challenges does the school face <u>this year</u>?   How, if at all, are these <u>different from last year</u>?**

GOALS AND KEY STRATEGIES

*[**Note**: The external provider support provider may be working with several case study schools in a district or across the state. In these instances, the following questions should be asked for each core and ELL school.]*

Now that the school is at the end of the second year of the SIG program, we are interested in knowing how this school is changing through the process and what progress has been made.

15. **<u>This school year</u>, is there a clear set of goals for the school as a whole? If so, what are the school's goals, and in particular, its improvement goals?**

16. [N] **What are the main ways in which the school is working to accomplish its goals? What specific improvement strategies are being implemented? Why? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    ▪ Is use of student-level data a priority? How?
    ▪ Is the school focusing on improving teacher instructional practices? How?

17. [*If previously interviewed:*] **In our previous conversation you also mentioned the key improvement strategies the school is implementing:** *[insert strategies here].* **To what extent <u>have these strategies changed during this school year</u>? If so, how? Why or why not?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    ▪ What is similar and what is different?
    ▪ Has the school discontinued any strategies this school year? Why?
    ▪ *[If changes]* Have these changes been welcomed or not? Why?

18. **Do you believe these strategies are appropriate given the school's challenges? Why or why not?**

19. *[If not mentioned earlier]* **What is your role in the implementation of these strategies this school year?**

20. **With the school year almost completed, to what extent do you believe this school is making progress? In what areas does the school still need to improve? On what do you base this assessment?**

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

I'd like to turn to leadership at this school.

21. **How would you describe the principal? What do you think are his/her strengths? In what areas could he/she improve?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - *What are the* principal's abilities as an instructional leader?
    - What is the principal's ability and commitment to developing leaders within the staff and school community?

22. **Who are the key school leaders? What role does each member of the leadership team play?** *[Interviewer provide examples: the principal, leadership team, department heads (high school), cluster leaders (high school), other teachers, coaches, etc.]* **Have there been any changes since last year?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - *[If not addressed]* Who at the school takes on the role of instructional leader?
    - Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, professional development, staffing, extracurricular activities, etc.?

23. **Do you believe that the principal and his/her leadership team is the right set of people to move the school forward? Why or why not? Please explain.**

    Listen for:
    - Who is involved in decision-making
    - Who sets priorities
    - What are the leader(s)' strengths/weaknesses

STATE AND DISTRICT ROLES

24. **What support or guidance has the state provided you in working with this school, if any? Please describe.**

25. **In your role as a support provider for the SIG school(s), do you work with district staff? If yes, how are the district staff engaged in your work?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How much time is spent with district staff?

- What is the primary purpose for working with the district staff (e.g., procuring resources, building relationships, providing capacity building to district, etc.)?
- *[If the respondent works with more than one SIG school]* Does this level of involvement vary by school?

REFLECTIONS

26. Is there anything I haven't asked you about the improvement strategies or the school 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 (SST)

School Improvement Team Focus Group Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

State:	Interviewer:
Date/Time:	Interviewee:

Focus Group: School Improvement Team

Introduction

Good afternoon/morning. My name is _____and I am from AIR/Mathematica Policy Research. I am part of an independent research team that is studying schools' use of the school improvement grants awarded in 2010. The student is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collection information on the implementation of the SIG from a diverse array of SIG grantees.

To help us better understand how [SCHOOL NAME] is using its school improvement resources, we would like to ask you some questions about the school's improvement efforts and the role of the school improvement team in these efforts.

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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'm recording the discussion so I don't have to take detailed notes and can listen carefully to what you are saying. No one outside of the research team will have access to the tape. We will not share this recording or notes from this session with the school or district administration. In addition, our reports will never identify you by name. Instead, we will combine information from this discussion with information from discussions our team is holding in other schools. Participants' comments will be reported as, "One person felt that. . ." or "About half of the participants did not agree with…" The recording is just to help me remember what you say.

I hope you will feel free to be open and frank in our discussion. I ask that none of you share what you hear with others outside the group. It will also help me if you speak clearly and if you will speak one at a time. The discussion should last about one hour.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's get started. [HIT THE RECORD BUTTON].

I have hit the record button. Everyone in the room has consented to being recorded.

INTRODUCTIONS

[Even though I talked with some of you last time I was here] **Let's start by introducing ourselves. Please tell me your name, your position at the school, how long you have been at the school, and how long you have been on the school improvement team.**

Today I'd like to talk to you about a few topics, primarily about the work of the School Improvement Team and how it has changed from last year, the school's vision, the leadership at the school, improvement strategies and if they have changed over time and the rationale, how the school is monitoring its progress and what kind of progress is occurring.

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM AND LEADERSHIP

1. **What is the mission of the SIT? Has the mission <u>changed since the 2011-12 school year</u>? If so, how? Why?**

2. **What have been the SIT's specific responsibilities <u>this school year</u>?**

   Probe if not mentioned: How is the SIT involved in:
   - Analyzing and using school-, teacher-, and student-level data?
   - Improving instructional practices?
   - Identifying professional development needs and opportunities and other teacher supports?
   - Evaluating teachers?
   - Improving the school climate (e.g., safety, school discipline?

3. *[Note to interviewer: If some have continued to serve on the SIT]:* **Have these responsibilities <u>changed since last year</u>? How? Why?**

   Probe as necessary:
   - Were other responsibilities reassigned to other groups or individuals? Please explain.

4. *[If not mentioned earlier]* **To what extent has the work of the SIT influenced the school's policies and improvement strategies? Please provide examples. Has this <u>changed from last year</u>? How? Why?**

5. **Who are the key school leaders? What role do the key leaders play?** [*Focus group facilitator: provide examples: the principal, leadership team, department heads (high school), cluster leaders (high school), other teachers, coaches, etc.]* **Have there been any <u>changes since last year</u>? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - *[If not addressed]* Who at the school takes on the role of instructional leader?
   - Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, professional development, staffing, extracurricular activities, etc.?
   - Is this the right team to move the school forward?

SCHOOL CONTEXT

6. **Please briefly describe the school, including its strengths and challenges? Have the school's strengths and challenges <u>changed during this school year</u>? How? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How is your school addressing these challenges?
   - *[If not known:]* How are the school's strengths and challenges affected by the school's context and setting—e.g., urban or rural, neighborhood or district-wide school, etc.?

7. **Does the school have an overall vision for change? Please describe.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Who formulated this vision?
   - Is this vision shared by all staff and administrators?

8. **Has this vision <u>changed from last year</u>? How? Why?**

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Now, I'd like to hear from you about the school's improvement efforts.

9. **Last spring you** *[or school improvement team, if not same members]* **mentioned the key improvement strategies the school is implementing:** *[insert strategies here].* **To what extent <u>have these strategies changed since last year</u>? If so, how? Why or why not?**

10. **Please describe how you think these specific improvement strategies are working, to improve the school.**

11. *[If not mentioned earlier]* **What is the rationale behind implementing these strategies and making any changes, if any? Please explain.**

12. **With the school year almost completed, to what extent do you believe this school is making progress? On what do you base this assessment?**

13. **How is the school monitoring its progress?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What is your role in monitoring?
    - What indicators of student success will be used? What will be the <u>data sources</u>?
    - <u>What data will the school use</u>? How will it use the data?

14. **How do the improvement strategies you mentioned fit into the school's overall vision? Please explain how you see them fitting together to achieve this vision.**

15. **What challenges, if any, has this school faced in implementing these improvement strategies? Please describe.**

16. **What type of <u>assistance</u> has the school has received in its efforts to improve the school? Has this <u>changed since last year</u>? How? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Please provide specific examples of the source-- district, state, and/or external support provider-- and type of assistance.
    - *[If an external provider]* Have you felt that the provider understood your school and its needs?
    - Was the assistance provided in a timely way?

17. **After the SIG grant ends, does the school/district have plans to continue SIG improvement strategies using other funds? Which strategies, and with which funds?**

CLOSE

18. **Are there any other comments you'd like to share with us about the school in general or the improvement efforts the school is implementing?**

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

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

_____

Instructional Coach Interview Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School:	Date/Time:
Interviewee:	

Interview: Instructional Coach

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 [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy Research], and we are conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Education on the implementation of the School Improvement Grants (called SIG) under ARRA.

The study is taking place in 6 states, 24, 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. 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 instructional coaches play an important role in this process, we want to gain your perspective on the SIG program.

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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 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?

Some questions are intended for instructional coaches who were <u>not</u> previously interviewed (are new to the school and/or role as coach) and are designated by "N". For those coaches new to their role but not to the school, and those interviewed previously as coaches, the interviewer should tailor questions for the interview to scale back some questions and probe more deeply on others.

If there is more than one instructional coach and they focus on different topics/subjects, (e.g., literacy or math), interview both of them. If the instructional coach is a peer coach, tailor the questions appropriately.

COACH BACKGROUND

1. [N] **I'd like to start by talking about your background and your role as an instructional coach. How long have you been a coach, at this school and others? What were your teaching experiences before working as an instructional coach?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How <u>many years</u> have you worked at this school as a coach?
   - How <u>many years total</u> have you worked as a coach (including other schools within district and other districts)?
   - Have you worked at this school and district in other roles? If so, what were these roles and for how <u>many years</u> did you work in those roles?
   - Do you have experience working in schools that are similar to this one?
   - Is your position <u>paid for by SIG</u>?

2. [N] **Did you receive any specific training or acquire a particular certification to be an instructional coach?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How long ago did you receive this training?
   - Who conducted the training? How long did it last?

SCHOOL CONTEXT

3. [*N*] **Please briefly describe the school, including its strengths and challenges.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How is your school addressing these challenges?
   - *[If not known:]* How are the school's strengths and challenges affected by the school's context and setting—e.g., urban or rural, neighborhood or district-wide school, etc.?
   - Is it a safe place to work and a safe place to learn?

4. *[If interviewed previously]* **Last spring, you shared some of the school's key strengths and challenges such as** *[insert what he/she indicated here].* **Have they <u>changed during this school year</u>? How? Why?**

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I'd like to talk about your role and responsibilities as a coach at *[SIG school]* **for this school year. I'd also like to focus on any changes that may have occurred in your role/responsibilities since last school year** *[or since the fall if interviewed then].*

5. [N] **What have been your roles and responsibilities as a coach?**

6. [N] **What are your priorities for working with teachers? How were these priorities determined? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Who determined the priorities? What was your role?
   - What are your goals for working with teachers?
   - What do you want them to learn or to accomplish?

7. *[If interviewed previously]* **Last spring/fall you mentioned that your main roles and responsibilities were** *[insert responsibilities from prior discussion].* **Did your role and responsibilities <u>change</u> over the course of the year? If yes, how and why?**

8. *[If interviewed previously]* **Last spring/fall you mentioned that some of your priorities were** *[insert priorities here].* **Have these priorities changed over the course of the year? How? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - *[If priorities changed]* Who determined the new priorities? What was your role?
   - What role, if any, did the principal, other school leadership, and the district play in identifying what to focus on?
   - Were data from any sources used to reassess priorities? If so, please describe?

9. **During this school year, how have you determined which teachers to work with?** *[If at the school last year]* **How is this <u>different from last year</u>?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Do you work with teachers individually or in groups?
   - Do you work with teachers with particular characteristics – novice teachers, teachers with large number of ELL and special education students or any other particular subgroups, teachers of a certain grade?
   - Do you determine which teachers to work with based on observations? From data (which data sources)? Do teachers ask for support?

10. **Do you use student-level data in your work with teachers? Why or why not? If so, please explain.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What are the purposes for using these data?
    - What are the data sources (e.g., student work embedded in the classroom, standardized tests, benchmark assessments, grades, attendances, other?) Why those sources?

- ▪ *[If at the school last year]* Do teachers rely more or less on these data this year than in years past to identify appropriate improvement strategies? Why? *[Listen to see if SIG is mentioned.]*

11. How do you know if you have been successful with the teachers you work with? How do you monitor progress in reaching your goals? Please explain.

12. This year, what types of challenges, if any, did you face when working with teachers? *[If at the school last year]* **Is that <u>different from last year</u>? How?**

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND GOALS

13. <u>This school year</u>, is there a clear set of goals for the school as a whole? If so, what are your school's goals, and in particular, its improvement goals?

14. *[If at the school previously]* **Have <u>the school's goals changed since last year</u>? How? Why or why not?**

15. Would you say the school's goals are shared across the staff and administrators? Why or why not?

16. [N] **What have been the key activities or strategies that have been implemented this school year to accomplish those goals?**

17. *[If interviewed previously:]* **In our previous conversation, you had mentioned the school is implementing the following key improvement strategies**: *[insert strategies here]*. **To what extent have these strategies <u>changed during this school year</u>? If so, how? Why or why not?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- ▪ Were there any particular issues with implementation that the school was trying to change this year?
- ▪ Has the school discontinued any strategies this school year? Why?

18. Do you believe these strategies are appropriate given the school's challenges? Why or why not?

19. What is your role in the implementation of these strategies <u>this school year</u>?

Probe if not mentioned:
- ▪ What is /was your role in preparing and guiding teachers as they implement these strategies?
- • Do you feel prepared to implement these new strategies?
- ▪ Do you think teachers feel prepared to implement these strategies?

SCHOOL MONITORING

20. How is the school monitoring its improvement progress? How do you know if your school is improving?

Probe if not mentioned:
- Do you have a role in monitoring the school's progress?
- What indicators of student success are being used? What are the data sources?

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT –PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We're interested in learning from your perspective about the professional development activities and professional learning opportunities that teachers at your school receive.

21. *[If not addressed:]* **Do you have a role in determining the need for professional development and/or providing PD to teachers? If so, please describe your role.**

Probe if not mentioned:
- How do you identify areas for professional development?
- Do you provide PD to teachers? How often? In what format?
- What is your role, if any, regarding follow-up with teachers after the PD to guide/monitor implementation of new practices, curricula, etc.?

22. Thinking of this school year, is the professional development available at this school different from what's offered at other schools? How? Why?

Probe if not mentioned:
- Compared to non-SIG schools, do teachers at this school have more time for PD during the school year or before/after the school year?
- To what do you attribute the difference in PD? – SIG, new principal, district policy

23. This school year, what has been particularly strong about the PD offered? What has been weak?

Probe if not mentioned:
- *[If at school last year]* Is the PD offered this year different from that offered last year? How? Why?

24. To what extent do teachers have the opportunity to collaborate and work together? Is this different from last year? How?

Probe if not mentioned:
- [*If not addressed previously:*] What is your role, if any, in facilitating these opportunities?
- Do teachers meet in professional learning communities? How often, and for how long?
- What happens in these communities?
- Are there other opportunities, such as shared planning time, for teachers to collaborate? Please describe.

HUMAN CAPITAL – TEACHER EVALUATION

[Note to interviewer: Before the site visit, obtain documentation on the Web about teacher evaluation system used by the school and, as necessary, ask any follow-up or clarifying questions about the teacher evaluation system.]

Let's spend a few minutes talking about staff evaluations and feedback you and teachers may receive.

25. *[If not previously addressed:]* **Do you have a role in the school's evaluation of teachers? If so, what is your role? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do you lead or participate in teacher observations? If so, how often?
    - Do you review student-level data?

26. *[If coach has a role:]* **How are the teacher evaluation results used?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What kinds of feedback do teachers receive? *(e.g., teaching, behavior management)* How often?
    - Are there rewards or consequences that are implemented as a result of a teacher's evaluation? Please explain

27. **Now let's turn to your work. How is your work evaluated? From whom do you receive feedback?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Who conducts your evaluation?
    - What type of feedback do you receive?

28. **What are your thoughts on the current evaluation process/system for both teachers and coaches? Do you think other staff feel the same way? Why or why not?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do you receive useful feedback? Please explain.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

I'd like to turn to leadership at this school.

29. **How would you describe the principal? What do you think are his/her strengths? His/her weaknesses?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What are the principal's abilities as an **instructional leader**? [listen for characteristics such as: being knowledgeable about instructional issues, focusing on improving teaching and learning (technical core of school), monitoring and guiding instruction]

- Characteristics related to **transformational leadership**, e.g., being accessible, welcoming input, being supportive of staff, being visible to the school community, being visionary, enthusiastic, communicative, developing leaders, having high expectations

30. [N] **Who are the school's other key leaders? What role does each member of the leadership team play? How would you characterize the school's leadership?**
[Interviewer provide examples: the principal, leadership team, department heads (high school), cluster leaders (high school), other teachers, coaches, etc.]

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - *[If not addressed]* Who at the school takes on the role of instructional leader? Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, professional development, staffing, extracurricular activities, etc.?

31. *[If interviewed previously:*] **Have there been any changes in the leadership team and the roles of its members since the fall? Please describe.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - *[If not addressed]* Who at the school takes on the role of instructional leader?
   - Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, professional development, staffing, extracurricular activities, etc.?

REFLECTIONS

32. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about SIG implementation, your school's priorities, the improvement activities or strategies, or your role in this school that I haven't asked you?

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

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

_____

Teacher Interview Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School(s):	Date/Time:

Interview: Teacher

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.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)
As you probably know, I work for an independent non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy Research], and we are under contract with the U.S. Department of Education to study how School Improvement Grant (SIG) implementation unfolds, and more specifically, the decisions and strategies schools, districts and states undertake, and the constraints they face as they work to implement intervention models intended to improve student outcomes. The study is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collect information on SIG implementation experiences from a diverse array of SIG grantees

Privacy
I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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.

Recording
If you don't mind, I would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the tape, it would just be for my own reference. 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?

Thank you again for your time. Today I'd like to talk to you primarily about the changes taking place at your school, how the improvement strategies that the school has implemented are fitting together with the vision of the school and the goals of your classroom, as well as what sort of progress may be occurring at the school. I will also ask you to focus on leadership and any professional development you have received as a teacher.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

1. [N] **I'd like to start by talking a bit about your background, including how long you've been a teacher.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How many years have you worked at this school?
    - What do you currently teach at this school (grade/subject area)?
    - How many years have you worked in this district?
    - Do you have any additional roles or responsibilities?

2. **What do you currently teach at this school? What subject and grade(s)? Is that different from last year?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do you have any additional roles or responsibilities? How has that changed?

3. *[Teachers new to school in the past two years:]* **What brought you to teach at *this school*?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - How were you recruited?
    - What key factors did you consider when deciding to work at [the SIG school]?
    - [*If coming from a new district or school*]: Why did you move?

YOUR CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

I'd like to talk about your classroom and the ways you may use data to inform your instruction.

4. *[N, or if teacher is teaching a different class, course and/or grade]* **How would you describe the students in your class(es)?** *[If a teacher asks which class, ask them to choose a particular class.]*

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - What is the range of student backgrounds and abilities?
    - Describe students' strengths and challenges.

5. **What were your goals for your students in your class(es) this year? What did you want them to accomplish? How have your goals for your students <u>changed from last year</u>?** *[If a teacher asks which class, ask them to choose a particular class.]*

6. **How do you know that you are meeting these goals with your students? Please give examples.**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - What information do you use to assess students' progress?
   - Do you conduct assessments? What kinds?
   - What other kinds of data do you use?

7. **Do you use student-level data in your classroom(s)? If so, please describe. How has your use of data <u>changed during the past year</u>, and why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Do you use data to change and/or differentiate instruction? Please describe.
   - Are they used to identify struggling students? Students who are close to passing standardized test?

8. **Do you have sufficient support to integrate the use of data in your classroom? Why or why not? If yes, please describe how you are supported.**

9. **This year, what types of challenges, if any, did you face with regard to improving your students' outcomes, such as achievement? Is that different from last year? How?**

YOUR SCHOOL

Now, I want to talk about the school as a whole.

10. **What has it been like teaching at this school this year? Have there been any significant <u>changes in the school since the fall</u> that we should know about? Please describe.**

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS AND GOALS

Note to the interviewer: *Teachers <u>may not know about SIG</u>, and/or be familiar with all aspects of the actions the school is adopting, in which case the phrasing of these questions may need to be modified to refer, more generally, to the school's improvement efforts this school year.*

11. **<u>This school year</u>, has there been a clear set of goals for the school as a whole? If so, what are your school's goals, in particular, its improvement goals?**

12. **Have the school's goals <u>changed since last year</u>? If so, how? Why?**

13. **What are the main ways in which the school is working to accomplish its goals? What specific activities are being implemented? Please describe.** *[If interviewed previously, note if these activities are much different from what the teacher mentioned in last spring's interview. Probe for why they're different.]*

14. **Do you believe these ways/activities are appropriate given the school's challenges? Why or why not?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do you feel that teachers and students support them? Why or why not?
    - Do you think the school/teachers have the support to implement them well? Why or why not?
    - Do you see any indication that they have helped or will help? Why or why not?

15. **Does the school have an overall vision for change? Please describe.** *[This is referring to the long term vision, different from goals.]*

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Who formulated this vision?
    - Is this vision shared by all staff and administrators?

16. **With the school year almost completed, to what extent do you believe this school is making progress? In what areas? On what do you base this assessment?**

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/LEARNING

We're interested in learning about the professional development activities and professional learning opportunities that teachers at your school receive over the course of the school year.

17. *[Note to interviewer- in order to avoid generating a laundry list of trainings, please list what PD you do know about and ask the teacher to comment on anything more.]* **What are the primary professional development or learning opportunities in which you and other teachers take part?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do you have a sense that the professional development and professional learning opportunities available to you at this school this year are different from what's offered at non-SIG schools? What is different? Why?
    - What PD is formal? What is informal?

18. *[If taught at the school last year]* **Has the PD available to you this school year <u>changed from what was available last year</u>? Is so, how?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - To what do you attribute the changes? (SIG, new principal, district policy)

19. **To what extent have you been able to use what you learned in the professional development and learning in your classroom? What has been the most valuable to you? Why? What has not worked well for you and why?**

20. *[If not already mentioned]* **At the school, to what extent do teachers have the opportunity to collaborate and work together? Is this different from last year? How?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- Do teachers meet in professional learning communities? How often, and for how long?
- What happens in these communities?
- Are there other opportunities, such as shared planning time, for teachers to collaborate? Please describe.

TEACHER EVALUATION

Note to interviewer: Before the site visit, obtain documentation on the Web about the teacher evaluation system used by the school and become familiar with who developed the evaluation system, whether it is state, district or school-level, who conducts the evaluations, what is the frequency, and evaluation criteria/rubric used. As necessary, ask any follow-up or clarifying questions about the teacher evaluation system.

If the school is using the same teacher evaluation system and it is not part of the change process (an interesting finding in itself), there is no need to probe extensively, e.g., the role of SIG.

Let's spend a few minutes talking about teacher evaluation and feedback you may receive. I understand that teachers in this school are evaluated *[mention what you know about the rubric used, who it is conducted by, frequency, etc.].*

21. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are teachers evaluated at this school?**

22. **Following the evaluation, how do you receive feedback?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- What type of feedback do you receive? (e.g., teaching, behavior management)
- How is feedback given to you? Written? Oral review? Both?
- Is feedback given to you each time you are evaluated?
- Is the feedback from observations and/or other sources? Please explain.

23. **How is the evaluation and feedback used? How do you use it in your teaching? How does your supervisor/administrator use the results of the evaluation?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- Are you monitored throughout the year based on the feedback that you receive?
- To what extent do you implement any feedback in your classroom? Is the feedback useful?
- To what extent is your salary tied to the evaluation?

24. **Has the evaluation process changed since last year? If so, how? Why?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- What do you attribute changes to--(i.e. SIG, new principal, district policy)?
- What role did the faculty have in any changes?

25. **What are your thoughts on the current evaluation process/system? Do you think other staff feel the same way? Why or why not?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- Do you receive useful feedback? Explain.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

26. **How would you describe the principal? What do you think are his/her strengths? In what areas could he/she improve?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- What are the principal's abilities as an **instructional leader**? [listen for characteristics such as: being knowledgeable about instructional issues, focusing on improving teaching and learning (technical core of school), monitoring and guiding instruction]
- Characteristics related to **transformational leadership**, e.g., being accessible, welcoming input, being supportive of staff, being visible to the school community, being visionary, enthusiastic, communicative, developing leaders, having high expectations.
- What is the principal's ability and commitment to developing leaders within the staff and school community?

27. **Who are the key school leaders? What role does each member of the leadership team play?** *[Interviewer provide examples: the principal, leadership team, department heads (high school), cluster leaders (high school), other teachers, coaches, etc.]* **Have there been any <u>changes since last year</u>? Why?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- *[If not addressed]* Who at the school takes on the role of instructional leader?
- Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, professional development, staffing, extracurricular activities, etc.?
- Is this the right team to move the school forward?

28. **How do you learn about different activities taking place or decisions being made at the school? How are teachers kept informed?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- Who lets you know?
- Do you feel like you received adequate information?
- Do you feel like your opinions and experiences were taken into account?
- Are all teachers on board?
- What are your expectations?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

29. *[Lower priority]* **Let's turn now to your students' parents. How involved are they in their children's education? In what ways are they involved?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- Do they attend parent-teacher conferences?
- Do they contact you or respond to teacher-initiated communications?

- In what ways do you involve parents?

30. *[Lower priority]* **In your view, what are the challenges to engaging parents in their children's education? In the school?**

Probe if not mentioned:
- To what extent is the difficulty traveling from families' homes to school—e.g., because of distance, lack of transportation-- a factor? Explain.
- To what extent are families' backgrounds and circumstances—including cultural perception of school, language barriers, life challenges, etc.—a factor? Explain.

REFLECTIONS

31. I'd like to turn to your thoughts about teaching at this school. What do you like about this school? How likely is it that you will stay at this school? Why? Why not?

Probe if not mentioned:
- Are there monetary or other incentives for you to stay at this school?
- Does the school's location impact your decision to stay? Or to go? Explain.

32. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your classroom, your school, and/or the improvement actions that I haven't asked you?

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

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

_____

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School(s):	Date/Time:

Focus Group: School Teacher

Teacher Name	Grade	Subject Area

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.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

As you probably know, I work for an independent non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy Research], and we are under contract with the U.S. Department of Education to study how School Improvement Grant (SIG) implementation unfolds, and more specifically, the decisions and strategies schools, districts and states undertake, and the constraints they face as they work to implement intervention models intended to improve student outcomes. The study is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collect information on SIG implementation experiences from a diverse array of SIG grantees

Privacy

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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 considerations. Please take a minute to read it and let me know if you have any questions.

Recording

If you don't mind, I would like to record our discussion simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the audio file, it would just be for my own reference. 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?

TEACHER BACKGROUND

33. I'd like to start by talking a bit about your background, including how long you've been a teacher.

Probe if not mentioned:
- How many years have you worked at this school?
- What do you currently teach at this school (grade/subject area)?
- How many years have you worked in this district?
- Do you have any additional roles or responsibilities?

YOUR SCHOOL

34. Now let's talk about the whole school. What would you say have been the school's top challenges this school year? What about its strengths?

Probe if not mentioned:
- To what extent is the school's location a challenge?

35. How, if at all, is this different from last year?

36. What is it like teaching at this school? Have there been any big changes in the school since the fall that we should know about? Please describe.

Probe if not mentioned:
- Do students come willing to learn? Please explain.
- Does the teaching staff have high expectations/positive attitudes? Please explain.
- Is leadership supportive of staff? Please explain?
- Is it a safe place to work and a safe place to learn? Has that changed?

37. This school year, has there been a clear set of goals for the school as a whole? If so, what are your school's goals, in particular, its improvement goals?

38. *[For teachers who were at the school last year]* **Have the school's goals changed since last year? If so, why? How?**

39. Does the school have an overall vision for change? Please describe. *[This is referring to the long term vision, different from goals.]*

Probe if not mentioned:

- Who formulated this vision?
- Is this vision shared by all staff and administrators?

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS

Note to the focus group leader: *Teachers may not be familiar with all aspects of the actions the school is adopting, in which case the phrasing of these questions may need to be modified to refer to the school's improvement efforts this school year more generally.*

I want to turn now to the ways in which the school is working to "turn around". Now that you are at the end of the second year of the SIG program, we are interested in knowing how your school is changing through the process.

40. **What are the main ways in which the school is working to accomplish its goals? What specific activities are being implemented? Please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Were any of these activities new this year? If so, when were they implemented?

41. **Do you believe these ways/activities are appropriate given the school's challenges? Why or why not?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - In your opinion, are the activities addressing the needs of the school? Why or why not?
    - In your opinion, are the activities addressing the needs of your students? Why or why not?

42. *[If not mentioned]* **What was the reasoning behind implementing these activities and making any changes? Please explain.**

43. **How do you learn about different activities taking place or decisions being made at the school? How are teachers kept informed?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Who let you know?
    - Do you feel like you received adequate information?
    - Do you feel like your opinions and experiences were taken into account?
    - Are all teachers on board?
    - What are your expectations?

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We're interested in learning about the professional development activities and professional learning opportunities that teachers at your school receive over the course of the school year.

44. *[**Note to interviewer:** In order to avoid generating a laundry list of trainings, please list what PD you do know about and ask the teacher to comment on anything more.]* **What are the primary professional development or learning opportunities in which you took part this school year?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do you have a sense that the professional development and professional learning opportunities available to you at this school this year are different from what's offered at non-SIG schools? What is different? Why?
    - Is this different from last year? If different, how? Why?

45. **At the school, to what extent do teachers have the opportunity to collaborate and work together? Is this different from last year? How? Please describe.**

- Do teachers meet in professional learning communities? How often, and for how long?
- What happens in these communities?
- Are there other opportunities, such as shared planning time, for teachers to collaborate?

46. To what extent have you been able to use what you learned in the professional development and learning in your classroom? What has been the most valuable to you? Why? What has not worked well for you and why?

47. Over the course of this school year, did you receive support from others? Did you work with the coach? With the external provider? Please describe.

Probe if not mentioned:
- How often did you work with the coach? The external provider?
- What kind of assistance did you receive?
- Was it helpful? Not helpful?

TEACHER EVALUATION

Note to interviewer: Before the site visit, obtain documentation on the Web about the teacher evaluation system used by the school and become familiar with who developed the evaluation system, whether it is state, district or school-level, who conducts the evaluations, what is the frequency, and evaluation criteria/rubric used. As necessary, ask any follow-up or clarifying questions about the teacher evaluation system.

If the school is using the same teacher evaluation system and it is not part of the change process (an interesting finding in itself), there is no need to probe extensively, e.g., the role of SIG.

Let's spend a few minutes talking about teacher evaluation and feedback you may receive. I understand that teachers in this school are evaluated *[Mention what you know about the rubric used, who it is conducted by, frequency, etc.].*

48. *[If no information prior to interview]* **How are teachers evaluated at this school?**

49. Following the evaluation, how do you receive feedback?

50. How is the evaluation and feedback used? How do you use it in your teaching? How does your supervisor/administrator use the results of the evaluation?

51. Has the evaluation process changed since last year? If so, how? Why?

52. What are your thoughts on the current evaluation process/system? Do you think other staff feel the same way? Why or why not?

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

53. **Who are the key school leaders? What role do the key leaders play?** *[Provide examples: the principal, leadership team, department heads (high school), cluster leaders (high school), other teachers, coaches, etc.]* **Have there been any <u>changes since last year</u>? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - *[If not addressed]* Who at the school takes on the role of instructional leader?
    - Who is responsible for decisions related to curriculum, professional development, staffing, extracurricular activities, etc.?
    - Is this the right team to move the school forward?

54. **To what extent can staff/teachers at this school get involved in school decision making? What avenues are available to teachers to provide their input? Please describe.**

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

55. *[Lower priority]* **Let's turn now to your students' parents. How involved are they in their children's education? In what ways are they involved?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Do they attend parent-teacher conferences?
    - Do they contact you or respond to teacher-initiated communications?
    - In what ways do you involve parents?
    - Do others at the school or district involve parents? How?

56. *[Lower priority]* **In your view, what are the challenges to engaging parents in their children's education? In the school?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - To what extent is the difficulty traveling from families' homes to school—e.g., because of distance, lack of transportation-- a factor? Explain.
    - To what extent are families' backgrounds and circumstances—including cultural perception of school, language barriers, life challenges, etc.—a factor? Explain.

REFLECTIONS

57. **Do you think the school is moving in the right direction? In what areas do you think there has been positive change? Where do you think there has been a lack of change? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - To what do you attribute the change or lack of change?

58. **Is there anything I haven't asked you about SIG, your school, and your school's improvement actions 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 (SST)

_____

Parent/Community Focus
Group Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

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

Focus Group: Parent/Community

> ***Note to interviewer:*** *It is important that the group be comfortable and that they be fully aware of the purpose of the discussion and how the focus group will proceed. Time is limited, so be sure to allocate time accordingly. Strive for an informal atmosphere, and encourage broad participation to the extent possible. Pass out paper and markers to make name tag tents. Then go around the room so everyone can say their first name.*

Introduction

Thank you for speaking with us today. My name is [your name] and I am here with [other site visitor]. We are part of an independent research team contracted by the U.S. Department of Education to study school improvement. The study is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country. The purpose of the study is to collect information related to the implementation, impact, costs, and benefits of the School Improvement Grant (SIG), which is part of the federal stimulus act. We are trying to understand whether and how these grants are helping schools improve education for their students.

We are not evaluating your school or your children but are trying to learn lessons that help make the program better. To do this, it is important that we hear not only from teachers and administrators but also from parents and community members. We see this as an opportunity for you to voice your opinions to the federal department of education.

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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.

Would it be all right if we record our discussion for note-taking purposes? No one outside the research team will hear the recording. If at any point anyone would like me to turn the recorder off, just let me know.

We would really like to hear from each of you. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in all of your opinions and feelings. We ask only that one person speak at a time during the discussion. If at any time you would like clarification about any of the questions, please feel free to interrupt. Do any of you have any questions before we begin?

BACKGROUND

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

1. *[If parent]* **Please tell me your name, and the grade(s) of your child(ren) and how many years your child(ren) has/have been at this school.**

2. *[If community member]* **Please tell me your name, your role at this school, and how long you've been in this role. Have you been involved at this school in other ways/roles? If so, what and for how long?**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

3. **Can you tell me a little bit about this school? How would you describe this school to someone who has never been here before? What are the major strengths (what makes this a good school) and challenges?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - How about safety? Is this a safe school?
   - Do you think the school environment is conducive to learning? Why or why not?
   - What do you think about the school leadership? Teachers?

4. **Have some of these things we've been talking about <u>changed in the school since last year</u>? If so, how? Why?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - Have these been positive or negative changes? Please describe.
   - What do you think have been the causes of these changes?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

5. **Is the school doing anything to address the challenges that you mentioned earlier?**

6. **Are there other activities in place to improve things for students at this school that you have observed or heard about?**

7. **What are your impressions of these activities / changes? How do you think they'll help improve some of the school's challenges that we've talked about?**

8. **Are there other things you would like to see happen that would make this school better? Please describe.**

PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

9. *[For parents]* **How does the school communicate with you about your child(ren) and what you can do to help** *[him/her/them]* **to do well in school?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Are you pleased with the school staff's availability and willingness to talk with you about your child(ren) and the school?
    - Is the communication adequate? Would you like more?
    - *[If there are parents of ELL students]* Do you receive communications in your own language? Is there someone at the school you can talk to who speaks your language?
    - In what ways could the school be more "open"?

10. **Let's talk about your involvement at the school. What types of meetings or events do you attend? How frequently?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Do you attend parent-teacher organization meetings?
    - Do you attend parent-teacher conferences about your child?
    - Do you attend the school's cultural or sporting events?

11. **What are some of the things that have affected your participation in school activities?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Do any transportation issues/distance between home and school affect participation? Explain.
    - Do your other obligations (e.g., shift at work, other children, etc.) affect participation? Explain.

12. **Let's talk about the involvement of other parents and community members. What sorts of meetings or events do other parents and community members most often attend? Why these events? Please provide some examples.**

13. **In what ways are parents/community members involved in <u>making decisions</u> about what happens at the school? Have you been involved in any of these decisions?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - If yes, can you give me some <u>examples of decisions</u> that have been made with the help of parents/community members?
    - Would you like to be <u>more involved</u> in decision making? How?
    - What <u>role</u> would you like to play in making improvements at this school?

14. **Are you aware of any activities or programs that the school has in place to get parents and the community more involved at the school? If so, please describe.**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Which activities or programs have been the most successful? Who do you think that is?
    - Which haven't worked as well? Why do you think that is?

REFLECTIONS

15. *[If parent]* **Are you satisfied with the education your child(ren) is/are getting at this school? Why or why not?**

16. **What do others in the community think about the school and the education it offers? Has that changed in the past year? If so, how? Why?**

17. **Is there anything you'd like to tell me about this school, the community, and/or your child(ren)'s learning that I haven't asked you?**

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

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

_____

Community/Parent Liaison Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

Support Provider(s):	Interviewer:
District:	Interviewer:
School(s):	Date/Time:

Interview: Parent/Community Liaison

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 [nonpartisan research organization called Mathematica Policy Research], and we are conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Education on the implementation of the School Improvement Grants (called SIG) under ARRA. The study is taking place in 6 states, 24 districts, and 60 schools throughout the country; they were selected so that the study could collection information on implementation of the SIG from a diverse array of SIG grantees. 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. We wanted to gain your perspective on the SIG program and the role that the community /families play in the school.

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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?

I have four main areas that I would like to discuss with you today. First, I would like you to tell me about your own background and responsibilities. Next, I'd like to talk about the school and the involvement of the parents and community in the school. Finally, I'd like to learn about the school's parent and community activities and programs.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

BACKGROUND/RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **First, I'd like to know a bit about your background. How long have you been at the school? Have you been in any other positions at the school? How long have you had the role of community/parent liaison? What is your expertise/training for this position?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - Is your position funded by SIG?

2. **What are your main responsibilities/roles within this school?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - What are your typical day-to-day activities?
   - Can you briefly describe your work with parents? With teachers? With students? With others in the community?
   - How often do you communicate with parents about their children? About what issues?
   - To whom are you responsible?

3. *[If in position prior to SIG]* **How, if at all, have your responsibilities changed as a result of SIG?**

4. **Who supports you in your role as community/parent liaison? School leadership (specify who)? Teachers? Parents? Other support staff? Any district staff? How do they support you?**

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

5. **Now let's talk about the whole school. What would you identify are the top three challenges the school faces? What about the strengths? In your opinion, has anything changed this school year? What? How?**

6. **I'd like to get a sense of the community in which the school is located. Are students from within the neighborhood or from throughout the district? Do teachers tend to live far away from or near to the school?**

   Probe if not mentioned:
   - How far, on average, would you say the school's staff live from the school?
   - How about students? How far do most of them live from school? '
   - How do students get to the school? Walking? By bus? By public transportation?
   - If students are not from the neighborhood, where do neighborhood children go to school?

7. **What is your understanding of why this school has remained low-performing year after year? What has hindered improvement efforts in the past (prior to receiving SIG funds)?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - To what extent has the school's community/setting [urban/inner city, rural/isolated, etc.] been a factor?

- School leadership?
- Teacher stability/capacity?
- Parent involvement?
- Students' family background?

8. **What are the school's goals for improving the school? Do you believe that these goals are appropriate given the school's problems you identified earlier? Why or Why not?**

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Now, I'd like to talk with you about parent involvement and activities to engage parents. Then, let's turn to talking about the larger community and its involvement at the school.

9. **How involved are parents in the school? What types of meetings or events do parents attend the most frequently? What sorts of meetings or events draw a large response from parents and the community?**

10. **How does participation differ by the school's subgroups of families?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - ELL/non-ELL
    - Ethnicity
    - Families of younger/older students
    - If students from across district – neighborhood vs district families

11. **What are the main challenges to involving parents in the school?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - To what extent is the difficulty traveling from families' homes to school—e.g., because of distance, lack of transportation—a factor? Explain.
    - To what extent are families' backgrounds—including cultural perception of school, language barriers, life challenges, etc.—a factor? Explain.

12. *[If not mentioned previously]* **To what extent would you say that increasing parent involvement is a focus of the school's efforts <u>this school year</u>?**

13. *[If not mentioned previously]* **What particular activities has the school undertaken to improve <u>involvement of parents</u>? Does the school:**

    - Provide a parent center?
    - Offer classes for parents?
    - Employ parent liaisons?
    - Develop parent leaders?
    - Other?

14. **For each activity, please specify:**

    - Why was this particular activity undertaken? What need does it address?
    - What are the goals for the activity?

- What types of families/subgroups are targeted, if any?
- How are participants recruited? Describe any recruitment challenges and/or successes.
- What roles do you play?
- What other school staff are involved? What are their roles?
- How many parents are involved?
- How often does each type of activity take place? How long does it last?
- How do you assess progress toward the goals?
- Was the activity driven, funded, or affected in any way by SIG?

15. Has parent involvement increased/decreased in the last year? Why? How do you know?

Probe if not mentioned:
- What strategies/actions have been most successful in engaging parents? Why?
- Which have been least successful? Why?
- How do you know/gauge whether involvement has changed?

16. From your perspective, what is the school's reputation among parents today? How has this changed over the last two years? Why?

Probe if not mentioned:
- Is it a considered a safe place?
- Is it considered an effective school?
- Is there pride in the school?

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Now, let's talk about the larger community.

17. To what extent is the school seen as a central part of the community in which it is located? What are the challenges in involving the community?

Probe if not mentioned:
- Is it a place where community members come for other events/activities? If so, please describe the type of community activities. What kind? How often? What is attendance?
- Are community organizations seen as partners in the school? If so, which organizations and what role do they play in the school?

18. Has the school implemented any particular activities/actions to change the perception and/or involvement of the larger community?

Probe if not mentioned:
- Are school leaders visible/known to the community? In what ways?
- Have the school leaders enlisted the aid of the community to address any of the school challenges? If so, which leaders and in what ways?
- Have the school leaders partnered with the community to address some of the challenges that the community faces? If so, which leaders and in what ways?

19. **Are these activities to involve the larger community new or ongoing? To what extent have they been implemented as a result of SIG? Are any community-based activities funded by SIG?**

20. **Has community involvement increased/decreased in the last year? Why? How do you know?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Which community-based activities have been most successful?
    - Which have been least successful?
    - How do you gauge community involvement? Why

21. **From your perspective, what is the school's reputation among the community today? How has this changed over the last two years? Why?**

    Probe if not mentioned:
    - Is it a considered a safe place?
    - Is it considered an effective school?
    - Is there pride in the school?

REFLECTIONS

22. **To what extent do you feel that the school is on a path toward improvement? Why?**

23. **Is there anything I haven't asked you about the SIG initiative, your school, or the involvement of parents and community members 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 (SST)

_____

Student Focus Group Protocol

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

District:	Interviewer:
School:	Date/Time:

Focus Group: Students

Student Name	Grade	Gender

Note to interviewer: *It is important that the group be comfortable and that they be fully aware of the purpose of the discussion and how the focus group will proceed. Time is limited, so be sure to allocate time accordingly. Strive for an informal atmosphere, and encourage broad participation to the extent possible. Pass out paper and markers to make name tag tents. Then go around the room so everyone can say their first name and their grade level.*

Introduction

Thank you for speaking with us today. My name is [*your name*] and I am here with [*other site* visitor]. We are part of an independent research team contracted by the U.S. Department of Education to study how schools are improving education for their students. We are visiting 25 schools across the country, including yours, to learn more about how the initiative is working. We are not evaluating your school or you, but are trying to learn lessons that can help make the program better. To do this, it is important that we hear not only from teachers and administrators but also from students. We see this as an opportunity for you to voice your opinions to your school system and to the federal department of education.

I want to assure you that all research staff on this study adhere to the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. **The data we collect will be used for research purposes only**. **We will not provide information that identifies you, your school, or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.** We will NOT report results in any way that would permit them to be identified with you or any other specific individual. 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.

During our session today, we will record the discussion in case we miss something in our notes, but no one outside of the research team will have access to the tape. This session will give you a chance to express your opinions about your school. We want you to feel comfortable in saying what you really think and what you really feel. We hope all of you will give us your ideas since each of your opinions is important to us. There are no right or wrong answers. You might disagree with each other and that's okay since different people often have different experiences and different opinions. It's really okay to disagree with someone but please do it respectfully.

Also, it will also help me if you speak clearly and if you will speak one at a time. The discussion should last about one hour.

Finally, I ask that none of you share what you hear with others outside the group, so everyone can feel safe being honest.

Are there any questions before we get started?

 [*Press record button*]. I have hit the record button. Let's begin by going around the room and having each person introduce him or herself by first name.

BACKGROUND

1. **Please tell me what grade you're in and how long you have been at this school.**

SCHOOL CLIMATE

2. **We'd like to know about how you feel about your school. How would you describe your school to a friend who goes to a different school?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - How would you describe:
     - Your teachers?
     - Your principal?
     - Students?
     - Extracurricular activities?

3. **How do others in and outside of the school think about it? Do you think those feelings have changed over the last couple of years? If so, how?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - Is there a sense of school pride at [school]?
   - Do other people outside of the school think it's a good place to go? Why or why not?

4. **Do you feel your school is a safe and comfortable place to learn? Why or why not?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - Are there many disruptions in your classes?
   - Are there any problems associated with substance abuse or violence in your school?

5. **Have you noticed any changes at your school in the past year to make it a more safe and comfortable place to learn?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - Possible strategies:
     - Security measures
     - Disciplinary procedures (i.e., zero tolerance)
     - Service-learning (i.e., linking classroom learning to community service)
     - Health and counseling services

6. **How do you get to and from school (i.e., by school bus, walking, parent's car, public transportation, etc.)? How long does it take each way?**

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

7. **What are your classes like?**

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - Do you feel that you are learning subjects that are important? Interesting? Useful in your everyday life and your goals for the future?
   - Are you and your classmates challenged by your teachers to do well? Do you feel that your teachers set high expectations for you and other students?
   - Do they expect you to graduate?
   - Do you think teachers have different expectations for different kinds of students?

8. **I would like you to think about one or two teachers who you think of as good teachers. What do you think makes them good teachers?**

9. *Can you tell me a little about how your classes are taught? Do you get a chance to do interesting projects or have good discussions, or is the teacher typically leading the class?*

   Probe if not mentioned:

   - Do you work in groups with other students?
   - Do you have one-on-one time with teachers?
   - What kinds of classes do you like best? Why?
   - What kinds of classes do you like least? Why?

10. **How do you know if you're doing well in school, or what you still need to work on?**

    Probe if not mentioned:

    - Does your teacher or other school staff talk to you about how you are doing?
    - How are you tested? How often?
      - Do you think your tests are fair? Why or why not?

STUDENT SUPPORTS

11. If you are having difficulty in your classes, who can you turn to for help (e.g., teacher, another student, parent or family member, etc.)? If you have, has this person been helpful? Why or why not?

Probe if not mentioned:

- Do you have someone you can turn to for help?
- How about tutoring?

12. What other kinds of activities, such as sports and clubs, does the school offer?

13. How much do you participate in these activities? Why?

Probe if not mentioned:

- Is it easy/hard for you to stay after school to participate in these activities because of transportation issues?
- Does the time it takes you to travel between home and school affect the kinds and number of activities that you can participate in? How?
- Do other after-school obligations (e.g., work, family, and other activities) affect how much you can participate? Please describe.

14. Are there other activities that you wish were offered at your school but aren't? Please describe.

15. What do you know about any changes at your school that are happening or planned for the school? What do you think about them?

POST-GRADUATION GOALS

16. What would you like to do after you graduate from high school? How do you think your experiences in high school will help you achieve your goals?

CLOSE

17. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about being a student here?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and your time today. You have each been extremely valuable in helping us understand more about your classes, your teachers, and your school.

Study of School Turnaround (SST)

_____

Teacher Survey

Spring 2012

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Study of School Turnaround

Dear Teacher,

We are asking you to complete this survey as part of the Study of School Turnaround. You are receiving this survey because your school has received funds through the School Improvement Grants (SIG) under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

We greatly value the opinion of teachers and hope you will answer this questionnaire. By responding to this survey, you can help policy makers, educators, and researchers better understand how SIG schools are working to improve outcomes for all students.

This survey is voluntary. You can decide not to participate, or you can discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, but we encourage you to answer as many as you can. There are no known risks to participating in this survey. This survey is confidential. Your answers will be combined with those of other teachers, and your individual responses will never be linked to you. We will not provide any information that identifies you or your school to anyone outside of the study team, except as required by law.

This study is being conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), a nonprofit research organization, in cooperation with Mathematica Policy Research. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. For more information about the study, please contact the evaluation team at sfrancois@air.org. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact IRBChair@air.org or call toll-free 1.800.634.0797.

Thank you for your participation in this very important effort!

Professional Background and Current Teaching Assignment

Please be sure to answer questions only for the school where you received the survey. We will refer to the school where you received this survey as "__this__ school."

1. **How do you classify your main teaching assignment at this school during the current school year (2011–12)?**

   (Select only one response.)

   ☐ Full-time teacher working at this school in a full time teaching capacity

   ☐ Full-time teacher working at this school with release time for other duties (e.g., administrative, coaching, etc.)

   ☐ Part-time teacher working at this school

   ☐ Itinerant teacher (e.g., your assignment requires that you provide instruction at more than one school)

   ☐ Long-term substitute (e.g., your assignment requires that you fill the role of a regular teacher on a long-term basis, but you are still considered a substitute)

   ☐ Other (please specify):_____

2. **How many years of teaching experience do you have:**

   Note: For each row, write the number of years. Use whole numbers only. Count the current school year (2011-2012) as one full year.

		Number of years	
a.	Teaching in total		years
b.	Teaching at this school		years

3. **Before teaching in your current school, where was your previous teaching location?**

   (Select only one response.)

   ☐ I taught at another school within this district

   ☐ I taught at another school in a different district

   ☐ This is my first teaching assignment

4. **In the current school year (2011–12), in what grades are the students that you teach in this school?**

   (Check all that apply.)

Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Ungraded
1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐	7 ☐	8 ☐	9 ☐	10 ☐	11 ☐	12 ☐	13 ☐	14 ☐	15 ☐

5. **In the current school year (2011–12), what is your main teaching assignment at this school, that is, the field in which you teach the most classes?**

   (Select <u>only</u> one response. If your teaching time is equally divided among 2 or more subjects, choose one.)

   ☐ Self-Contained/All Subjects

   ☐ English/Language Arts/Reading

   ☐ Mathematics

   ☐ Science

   ☐ Social Sciences (History/Government/Civics/Geography)

   ☐ Foreign Language

   ☐ Arts/Music

   ☐ Special Education

   ☐ English as a Second Language (ESL/Bilingual Education)

   ☐ Other specify: _____

6. **In this school, approximately what percentage of the students you teach are classified as English language learners (ELL):**

   Note: Although terms vary across school districts, for the purpose of this survey, we are using the term English language learners (ELLs) to refer to those students who come from a language background other than English and are still acquiring English (i.e. students who have not yet achieved full proficiency in English). This may include students who are fluent in speaking English, but still require support for reading and writing in the content areas.

   Percentage of ELL students (If the answer is none, please enter "0")

Your School Climate and Culture

7. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school environment.

(Check one response in each row.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a.	At this school, we have a common understanding of the objectives we're trying to achieve with students. **(Shared Goals)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Goals and priorities for this school are clear. **(Shared Goals)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Most teachers at this school have values and philosophies of education that are similar to my own. **(Shared Values)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Most of my colleagues share a focused vision for student learning. **(Shared Values)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working. **(Coherence)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	I worry that we are adopting too many different programs and practices in this school. **(Coherence)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	This school generally chooses only those school improvement opportunities that fit with our improvement goals and strategies. **(Coherence)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	If teachers in this school work hard, we can meet our school's goals for student achievement. **(Shared Goals)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Teachers in this school are comfortable discussing beliefs about teaching and learning. **(Teacher Trust)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Teachers in this school are willing to question one another's views on issues of teaching and learning. **(Teacher Trust)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Teachers in this school trust each other. **(Teacher Trust)**	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your <u>principal</u>.

(Check one response in each row.)

The principal in my school...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Carefully tracks students' academic progress	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Understands how children learn **(Principal Scale)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Makes clear to the staff his or her expectations for meeting instructional goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Sets high expectations for student learning **(Principal Scale)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Actively monitors the quality of teaching in this school	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Presses teachers to implement what they have learned in professional development **(Principal Scale)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Knows what is going on in my classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your <u>principal</u>.

(Check one response in each row.)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. The principal has confidence in the expertise of the teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. I trust the principal at his or her word. **(Principal Trust)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. The principal takes a personal interest in the professional development of teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. The principal looks out for the personal welfare of the teachers. **(Principal Trust)**	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The principal places the needs of children ahead of personal and political interests.	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. The principal at this school is an effective manager who makes the school run smoothly. **(Principal Trust)**	☐	☐	☐	☐

School Improvement

10. How often do you engage in the following activities?

(Check one number in each row.)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
a. Review student achievement data to guide my instructional planning	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Read about educational research findings or best practices	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Consult with other teachers about challenges I am facing in the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Share the content of my lesson plans with other teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. How much of a challenge is each of the following to your efforts to improve student performance?

(Check one response in each row.)

Type of Challenge	Not a challenge	Minor challenge	Moderate challenge	Major challenge
a. Large class size and/or case load (School Resources)	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Lack of safety in or around the school	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Inadequate or substandard facilities (School Resources)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Inadequate supports for the lowest-achieving students	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Too few textbooks and other instructional materials (School Resources)	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Textbooks and instructional materials that are not aligned with state standards (School Resources)	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Poor student discipline (Student Behavior)	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Insufficient parent involvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Large number of student transfers into this school or your class at various points during the year (Student Behavior)	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Low student motivation (Student Behavior)	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Low staff morale	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Low teacher expectations for student achievement	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Low and/or erratic student attendance (Student Behavior)	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Insufficient access to technology	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Other (please specify):	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. From your perspective, to what extent has your school improved in any of the following ways during the 2011–12 school year?

(Check one response in each row.)

		Became worse	Stayed about the same	Moderate improvement	Substantial improvement
a.	Student attendance	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Student discipline	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	School safety	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	The morale among teachers at our school	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Collaboration among teachers at our school	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Teachers' focus on student learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Teachers' instructional practices	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Teachers' use of data to guide instructional decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Teachers' expectations for student achievement	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Assistance and supports for the lowest-achieving students	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Principal outreach for input from teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Clarity of school improvement goals	☐	☐	☐	☐

Professional Development

13. Did you participate in any professional development activities during the 2011-12 school year?

☐   **No**   →   **Skip to question 19**

☐   **Yes**   →   **Go to question 14**

14. During the 2011–12 school year, approximately how many hours total did you spend in each of the following professional development activities?

(If the answer is "none", please enter 0.)

Professional Development Activities	
a. Workshops, conferences, institutes or seminars.	
b. Professional learning community or meetings of colleagues designed to enhance professional learning.	
c. Formal coaching or mentoring.	
d. Course extended over several weeks, such as a college course.	
e. Other (please specify):	

15. During the 2011–12 school year, how useful were each of the following professional development topics to you?

(Check one number in each row.)

Professional Development Activity	Did not participate in activities of this type	Participated but did not learn very much	Participated and learned, but did not change my teaching	Participated, learned, and changed my teaching
a. Mathematics instructional strategies	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Literacy/English Language Arts instructional strategies	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Teaching English Language Learners (ELLs)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Teaching students with disabilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Data interpretation and use	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Classroom management	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Other activity (please specify):	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. During the 2011-12 school year, approximately how many of the professional development hours which you mentioned in question 14 were related to the teaching of ELL students?

Total number of hours: [ ]

17. During the 2011-12 school year, to what extent did the professional development activities in which you participated focus on any of the following topics related to ELLs?

(Check one number in each row.)

		Large extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all	N/A
a.	Ways to use assessment data to plan instruction for ELL students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Selecting appropriate instructional materials for ELL students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Specific instructional strategies to use with ELL students *to advance their English proficiency*.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Specific instructional strategies to use with ELL students *within content classes*.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Second language development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Other (please specify):	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. During the 2011-12 school year, to what extent have your professional development activities:

(Check one number in each row.)

		Large extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all	N/A
a.	Improved your effectiveness as a teacher of ELLs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Helped you implement curriculum standards with your ELL students?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Improved your ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of your ELL students?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Increased your expectations of what ELL students can achieve?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Increased your confidence in your own ability to address the needs of ELLs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Helped you to understand the diversity of backgrounds and needs within the ELL population in your class/school?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Your Background

19. Did you participate, or are you currently participating in an alternate route to certification/licensure (fast-track) program?

1 ☐ **No**

2 ☐ **Yes**

20. Please describe the certification(s)/ license(s)/ credential(s)/endorsement(s) you hold.

A. Certification/ licensure/ credential/ endorsement for teaching special populations	B. Type(s) of certification/ licensure/ credential/ endorsement
1 ☐ ESL or bilingual 2 ☐ Special education	1 ☐ Advanced (e.g., National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification) 2 ☐ Regular or standard 3 ☐ Temporary (e.g., Probationary, Preliminary, Provisional, Emergency, Waiver, etc.) 4 ☐ Other (please specify):

21. Do you have a graduate degree?

Note: Please answer "Yes" if you have a master's degree, doctorate or professional degree (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., etc.).

1 ☐ **No** → **GO TO Question 23.**

2 ☐ **Yes** → **If yes, write in year graduate degree was received.**

22. What was your graduate degree field of study?

(Write in graduate field of study)

Wrap-Up

23. Is there is anything else you would like to tell us about improvement strategies and the School Improvement Grant (SIG) in your school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for responding to this important survey!