

Sample Interview Structure

Interview/Focus Group:

Date:

Facilitator:

Documenter Initials:

Participant Background

Ask each member of the group for role in school, length of time in school and in the district. [Documenters also note race/ethnicity.]

Accomplishments

Ask generally about accomplishments in the current superintendent's administration. Then probe for accomplishments in key content areas, as well as in developing the organizational infrastructure for improvement, if not mentioned earlier.

Evidence

Focus on the kinds of evidence informants used to make the judgments about the accomplishments.

Challenges

Focus on what have been the challenges in making key improvements. Probe for demographics of city, students, and teaching force.

Moving Forward

Focus on sustainability. What should be preserved? What should be reworked or abandoned?

Clarifications/Additions

Final question: Anything to add or clarify?

Sample Debrief Questions

Debrief of External Review Team (ERT)

Names of participants (including ERT, Researchers and Documenters:

Date:

Documenter's Initials:

Highlights

Thinking back over the day, what comments from participants particularly struck you?

Why?

Emerging Themes

What themes do you see emerging?

Questions

What key questions were raised for you by your discussions today?

Analytical Guide

1. The Nature of the Problem

How did informants describe the major challenges that the district has faced in improving how well students [in pre-K--5; in grades 6--12] perform? What was the *district* context for the improvement efforts (what changes in the city, who attends public schools, who teaches, who stays in teaching, etc. make up the context for the improvement efforts)?

2. Major Choices and Efforts

What are the two or three major choices and efforts (these should be thought of broadly and include curricula, standards, professional development, etc.) that the district has made in order to create the kind of organization that was needed:

- at central office (deputies, HR, etc.)?
- at the school sites?
- with core partners?
- with the wider community (e.g. community-based organizations)?

3. Degree of Success: Which of those efforts have had the biggest effects? What is the evidence? What failed (or is proving hard to change) and why?

4. Moving Forward

What efforts did informants say should be discontinued? Continued? Modified? Started? Which are the most urgent to pursue?

5. Obstacles to Continued Improvement

What are the two or three things most likely to get in the way of continued improvement if they aren't paid attention to?