

Interview Protocol

The protocols that follow include open-ended interview questions and a number of subject areas to keep in mind. If these areas are not addressed by the open-ended responses, even after general probes are used, some of the suggested questions might be helpful.

The purpose of probes in interviews is to enable the person being interviewed to be as informative as possible in their responses. They are neutral prompts that encourage additional information, but do not suggest specific answers. Some examples of probes are “How is that?” or “In what ways?” and so on.

The protocols below include some follow-up questions that might be helpful for obtaining further information when probes do not result in covering the areas. Since follow-up questions should touch on whatever the interviewee has already said, there is no best way of phrasing them. These are only suggestions.

These protocols were used by teams of researchers to guide the Effective Practices study and are provided as a sample of documents that could help guide a school visitation.

SAMPLE

Washington Just for the Kids Effective Practices Study

GENERAL TIPS FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

- Start each interview with a statement ensuring confidentiality
- Interview roughly a third of the total certificated staff
- Do random selection from list of certificated staff (exclude itinerant staff)
- Each principal should be interviewed automatically and *not* be part of sampling procedure (1 - 2 hours, including a school tour)
- School sites will need to secure a roving substitute(s)
- Plan for 20 – 30 minutes for each person to be interviewed
- Focus Group size – 6 –10 people (best is 8)
- When writing up observations, be sure to include number and percentages of people responding (*i.e 4 out of 6 teachers interviewed felt there were few on site opportunities to collaborate*)
- This is basically an inductive approach
- Don't be too focused in questions—ask general, open-ended questions
- Use 2 or 3 open-ended questions to get the interviews and focus groups started.
- Develop three or four questions that 'get at' each of the attributes
- Use same questions at each site; major questions, followed by minor ones
- PROBE (*i.e. what things have you been doing in the past that allow you to...*; use follow up questions (*i.e. 'You haven't mentioned...'*))

SAMPLE

Washington Just for the Kids Effective Practices Study

Interview Team Method and Outcomes

Method: Observations, Interviews, and Focus Groups

1. Two team members interview the principal (approximately 90 minutes)
2. One team member interviews central office personnel (60 minutes)
3. Team members interview 6 to 8 teachers (@ 30 minutes per interview)
4. Team members conduct teacher focus group (30 – 45 minutes)
5. Team Leader accompanies Principal on tour of school

Post-Interviews

1. Team debriefing immediately after interviews (on site, 1-2 hours)
2. Identification (team) of main themes/observations from interviews

Outcomes

1. Each member submits summary of interviews/observations to team leader within 7 days of visitation (2-3 pages per school)
2. Team leader summarizes all reports (integrating her/his own observations) and submits 3 page report (per school) to project leader
3. Project leader integrates all summaries and produces final report

Logistics

1. WSRC will notify all schools of their selection in the process
2. Team leader will communicate all relevant information to team members
 - A. Contact central office to identify interviewee and arrange time and place
 - B. Contact principal:
 - i. -Arrange interview time
 - ii. -Inform principal about nature and number of teacher interviews
 - iii. -Request arrangements for teacher focus group
 - iv. -Request artifacts
 - C. Convening additional face-to-face meetings or conference call
 - D. Arrange for travel and lodging for the team

I. Principal Interview

Introductory, open-ended questions

1. To what do you attribute your strong WASL success over the last three years? (This question will be sent prior to the interview)
2. As Principal, what role did you play in this process?

Specific areas for follow-up questions

The use of WASL or other assessment data
(How have you used WASL results at your school?)

Changes over the last 5 years
(How has your work as Principal changed from 3 years ago?)
(How is the school different now than 3 years ago?)

Nature of the curricula
(Which features of your curricula have been important?)

Teacher collaboration
(To what extent do teachers from different grades discuss learning goals and progress?)

Professional development
(Do you have a plan for how professional development is used at your school?)

Teacher accountability
(Do teachers have a system for keeping track of student achievement?)

School governance

(How has the governance system been helpful, or not helpful, in the success here?)

District office

(Has the central office been helpful in your efforts?)

Parental involvement

(How would you describe parental involvement at your school?)

Morale

(How would you describe the morale at your school?)

Final Question

Is there anything else you would like to add?

II. Teacher Interview

Introductory, open-ended questions

1. To what do you attribute your strong WASL success over the last three years?
2. How did you, individually or as a group, contribute to this success?

Specific areas for follow-up questions

Teacher views of students

(Do you think all the students here are capable of achieving the state standards?)

In-school assessments

(Do you think the assessments that you use have been helpful in the success here?)

(How do you use assessment data?)

Changes over the last 5 years

(How is your teaching different now than it was 3 years ago?)

(How is the school different now than 3 years ago?)

Nature of the curricula

(Which features of your curricula have been important?)

(How much of the school day - in minutes - is devoted to math, reading & writing?)

Teacher collaboration

(To what extent do teachers from different grades discuss learning goals and progress?)

Professional development

(Do you have a plan for how professional development is used at your school?)

Teacher accountability

(Do teachers have a system for keeping track of student achievement?)

School governance

(How has the governance system at your school been helpful, or not helpful, here?)

District office

(Has the central office been helpful in your efforts?)

Parental involvement

(How would you describe parental involvement at your school?)

Morale

(How would you describe the morale at your school?)

Final Question

Is there anything else you would like to add?

II. Central Office Instructional Personnel Interview

1. To what do you attribute the strong WASL success over the last three years at _____ school?
2. What role did the principal play in this process?
3. How did the central office contribute to this success?
4. How are resources allocated to the schools for achievement improvement?
5. Is there a formal or informal accountability system for teachers and principals in the district?

Final Question

Is there anything else you would like to add?

SAMPLE

Washington Just for the Kids
Effective Practices Study
Sample Time Schedule for School Visitations

Sample School November 29	Interview Schedule for Team Leader	Interview Schedule for Member #1	Interview Schedule for Member #2	Interview Schedule for Member #3
<u>Time</u>				
8:00 – 8:30	Principal Interview & Tour		Central Office Interview	Teacher Interview
8:30 – 9:00				
9:00 – 9:30			Prep Period Group	Teacher Interview
9:30 – 10:00				
10:00 – 10:30	Prep Period Group	Teacher Interview		
10:30 – 11:00				
11:00 – 11:30	Prep Period Group	Teacher Interview		
11:30 – 12:00				
12:00 – 12:30	Prep Period Group	Teacher Interview		
12:30 – 1:00				
1:00 – 1:30	Prep Period Group	Teacher Interview		
1:30 – 2:00				
2:00 – 4:00*	Team Debrief			