

# The Impact of CSI Designation in Multiple Measure ESSA Accountability Systems

## District Interview Protocol



American Institutes for Research – March 15, 2022

## District Administrator Interview Protocol

<b>District:</b> <b>State:</b>	<b>Interviewer:</b>
<b>Interviewee(s):</b>	<b>Date/Time:</b>
<b>Interviewee(s') Role(s):</b>	

### Key points to convey to the respondent:

- This study is being conducted by the American Institutes for Research as part of an Education Research Grant from the Institutes of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. Through this study, we are seeking to examine:
  - whether the inclusion of new accountability indicators influence which schools are identified as low performing (schools designated for Comprehensive Support and Improvement, CSI)
  - whether administrators of CSI schools have higher levels of awareness about the measures included in the accountability system, have different priorities for improvement, or enact different interventions to address student outcomes compared to non-CSI schools; and
  - whether CSI schools ultimately improve student outcomes relative to non-CSI schools.
- There are multiple parts to this study, which include reviewing student outcome data, conducting interviews, and surveying principals. To date, we have conducted interviews with state officials and administrators and are conducting surveys of principals. Three states are serving as the focus of the study—California, Florida, and Ohio. For our district interviews, our goal is to understand the role of district administrators in supporting CSI schools, understand whether inclusion of multiple measures has influenced which schools are identified as low performing and if this has changed supports, and understand your experiences of supports from your state education agency. We also want to learn about the school improvement planning processes in your district.
- **This is not a compliance study; our purpose is solely to provide policymakers, educators, and the general public with insight regarding local experiences with CSI provisions.** We also recognize that COVID-19 has created significant upheaval to the typical cycles of federal and state accountability monitoring. As we discuss your experiences, we would like to focus on your most recent experience supporting CSI schools. Please feel free to share how your current experience may be different than your past experiences where you think it is relevant.

- The results of our study will be shared with each participating state; the state officials will be provided with their state-specific reports and attend a presentation at the conclusion of the study. A summative report will also be shared and presented publicly, and articles may be written for academic journals. We will not include any information in our public reporting that identifies your district or schools. However, officials at your state education agency may know which districts and schools in your state participated in this study. Therefore, if during the interview there is anything you would like us to exclude from our reporting due to sensitivity please let us know.
- We know that you are very busy, and we appreciate your time. We anticipate that this interview will take approximately 60 minutes.
- We would like to record this conversation so that we can be sure we have an accurate record of our conversation. We will not share this recording with anyone outside the research team, and we will delete the recording after the final report is complete. Is that okay with you?
- You may stop your participation in this interview at any time. During the interview, if we touch on topics that you believe to be sensitive for any reason, please bring that to our attention, and we will not include these comments in our public reporting.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

***If asked how districts will be selected for the district-level interviews:*** In each state, we identified a purposive sample of 10 districts, 5 of which will include the districts with the greatest number of CSI schools. The remaining 5 districts in each state have been selected to provide balance in terms of district size, urbanicity, and student characteristics.

***If asked the number of years and types of data included in the analysis of longitudinal, school-level administrative data:*** We will obtain data for at least 5 years prior to initial CSI school designation (2013–14 through 2017–18) and 4 years following initial CSI school designation (2018–19 through 2021–22). In addition to data on outcomes, we also will collect data on (a) school demographics and staff characteristics for each school over the same time period, (b) administrative data from each state identifying the CSI schools from the initial identification year and all subsequent years, and (c) all data and documentation related to the method of identifying CSI schools in the selected states.

## Opening: Administrator Background and district context

1. I'd like to start by learning a bit about your background and position. Can you tell me about your position and the role you have related to school accountability and supporting CSI schools that are designated for improvement?

*Probe if necessary:*

- *How many years have you been involved with this school district?*
- *How many years have you been in this position/role?*
- *What credentials or specific training/experience are needed for someone in your role?*

*Listen for:*

- *Whether respondents have been working in the district since the 2018-19 CSI identification cycle*

2. Within your district, what other individuals or departments, if any, are involved in supporting the development and implementation of supports for CSI schools?

*Probe if necessary:*

- *[If shared responsibility] What are your major responsibilities?*
- *Has your district changed supports or structures related to accountability designations and school improvement planning as a result of changes to the measures within the state accountability? In what way(s) (e.g., number of personnel, roles, engagement of additional departments/individuals)?*
- *Are recent supports, since the onset of the pandemic, similar to the supports provided pre-pandemic? If not, what are the differences?*

## District Context

3. Could you tell me a little bit about your district, like its strengths, challenges, and priorities? How would you briefly describe your district to someone who has never been here before?

*Listen for [NOTE: do not probe on all of these, just check off any that arise in the administrator's response]:*

- Faculty/Staff (e.g., teacher knowledge and skills, turnover, shortages)*
- Students (e.g., diversity of student population ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learners, special education, mobility)*
- Community/neighborhoods served (e.g., parent/family engagement, safety, economy)*
- Local officials*
- Differences among the schools*
- The fiscal context*
- Relationship with the school board*
- Relationship with teachers unions*
- Relationship with the state board of education*
- Administrator turnover*
- Responding to Covid-19*
- Other school reform/improvement efforts and priorities*

4. How would you describe the district's overall philosophy or approach to supporting CSI schools? What is the approach in place?

*Probe if needed:*

- *What is the rationale behind this approach? Is there an underlying theory as to how this approach will improve student outcomes?*
- *Are there specific principles or beliefs that have guided your district's approach to supporting improvement in CSI schools? If so, could you briefly describe those principles?*

## Accountability System and Initial Identification of Schools

5. What has been your experience with communications you receive from the state regarding your district's and schools' performance? How well do your district's administrators understand how schools become identified as CSI schools in your state and what is required to exit that status?
  - To what extent do you feel that communications from the state around accountability designations have been clear, useful and/or timely?
  - In your experience, are the formula and the data used to calculate whether a school is identified as a CSI school clear? Are leaders able to interpret and act on the underlying data to plan for school improvement? Has the complexity of the state's identification criteria presented any challenges?
  - How do you use accountability data you receive from the state?
  - What additional information would have been helpful?
6. Let's discuss accountability processes in your district. When a school is identified by the state for improvement, how is the district informed? What are the initial steps that take place?

## School Improvement Planning

7. What is the process by which school improvement strategies are identified and selected for CSI schools?
  - What is the role of school leaders in this process? How are district administrators involved? Are there other individuals involved? If so, who?
  - How are the strategies selected? Do the strategies identified have specific characteristics (such as being evidence based or being aligned to district goals)?
  - How are data used in the selection of strategies?

*Listen for:*

*District and principal roles in decision making, level of autonomy school leaders have in selecting strategies*

8. Are there supports or strategies that the district requires CSI schools to use?
  - Can you describe what level of autonomy schools have when selecting strategies to use?

*Probe if needed:*

- *Can you give some examples of the different decisions made by school leaders and district administration?*
- *Is the level of autonomy different for schools that are CSI designated and those that are non-CSI designated? Is it different for CSI schools versus other schools that have been designated for improvement (e.g., schools identified for targeted support and improvement)?*
- *Has the CSI planning process been coordinated with any other required planning activities in the district? In what ways?*

9. What is the process by which CSI schools conduct needs assessments? Who is involved in the needs assessment and planning processes? How often are needs assessments conducted?

10. Can you describe how you, or the district overall, helps school teams prioritize which school improvement goals they are focusing on?
- To what extent do the performance measures or methodology that the state uses to identify CSI schools influence improvement goals or priorities? In what ways do they guide improvement?

*Listen for:*

- specific rules or guidelines about number of goals or goals in specific focus areas (such as ELA, Math, attendance/engagement, reducing discipline instances, etc.)*
- elimination of other district requirements or plans (to reduce paperwork burdens)*
- involvement of additional support staff such as coaches*
- any requirements to use district created goals/strategies beyond those shared previously*

11. What, if any, supports does the district provide to help CSI schools with the implementation of their strategies and plans for improvement?

*Probe if needed:*

- *How often is the support provided? What does it focus on?*
- *Does the district provide CSI schools with any flexibility from district policies or mandates? If so, in what areas is the flexibility provided?*
- *Are CSI schools given more flexibility in decision making in key areas, for example hiring staff?*
- *[if district has more than one CSI school] Do all CSI schools receive the same type and amount of flexibility or support, or does it depend on the school? If it depends on the school, how does the district determine what flexibility or support to provide for each CSI school?*

*Listen for:*

- identifying evidence-based interventions
- providing training or professional development for school leaders
- providing training or professional development for teachers
- providing plan development supports such as templates or rubrics
- staffing/personnel supports

12. What, if any, support has the district received from your county office of education to facilitate the improvement process in CSI schools?

- What types of topics has the support covered? What, if any, guidance or resources have you received for identifying evidence-based interventions?
- In what format is the support provided (e.g., large group meetings/webinars, one-on-one coaching)? How often does your district receive these supports?
- To what extent is the support customized to address the needs of your district/schools?

13. What, if any, support has the district received from the state to facilitate the improvement process in CSI schools?

- What types of topics has the state support covered? What, if any, guidance or resources from the state have you received for identifying evidence-based interventions?
- In what format is the state support provided (e.g., large group meetings/webinars, one-on-one coaching)? How often does your district receive these supports from the state?
- To what extent is the support customized to address the needs of your district/schools?

- *[If not mentioned]* I understand that some districts in your state have requested or receive trainings or support from the School Improvement and Support Office (SISO) of the California Department of Education. Has your district received any type of direct support from them?

14. What supports from the state have been most helpful? What has been least helpful? What additional types of supports or assistance from the state would be helpful to better support CSI schools' efforts and success?

## School Improvement Implementation and Monitoring

Now, I'd like to ask about how your district monitors CSI schools' progress.

15. What types of data does your district use to plan and monitor CSI schools' progress and improvement? Did the data you are using change when new accountability measures were added?

*Probe if needed:*

- *What were the changes?*

16. What other ways are school improvement activities monitored?

- Who is involved in progress monitoring?
- Is the progress of all CSI schools monitored in the same way? If there are differences, what are the differences? How are decisions made about the level of monitoring that a school receives?
- What challenges have you or your office experienced related to schools successfully implementing their improvement plans?

*Listen for:*

- COVID/pandemic*
- Principal turnover*
- Teacher turnover*
- Burnout*
- Prioritization of other activities/bandwidth*
- Lack of available data for monitoring*
- Lack of motivation/urgency due to ratings being maintained from prior years resulting from pandemic conditions*
- Difficulty identifying "evidence-based" interventions*

*Probe if needed:*

- *What is the frequency of the monitoring?*

**Alternative Schools** *[ask only if district has at least one alternative school and/or special education school identified for CSI]*

I understand that [#] of the CSI schools in your district are alternative [continuation/other state-specific term] schools that serve specialized populations of students. Does that sound right to you?

17. We noticed in our preliminary analyses that when [state] revised its school accountability procedures under ESSA, higher numbers of alternative [continuation/other state-specific term] schools became designated for improvement and support. Have you noticed this trend in your district? I understand that your state uses modified criteria for identifying alternative schools for CSI. Do you feel that the

performance measures used to identify alternative schools for CSI are appropriate? If not, what would you change?

18. Do the supports that CSI alternative schools receive differ from the supports provided to other schools for CSI? Are there any differences in how you monitor those schools? Are there different interventions or improvement strategies that your district uses in alternative schools that have been identified for CSI?

### CSI School Resources/Costs

19. Earlier we talked about strategies schools implement to address improvement needs. Can you tell me about the resources that the district provides, either programs, staff, or funding, to implement those strategies?

- Do schools also use their own funds for improvement plan activities?
- Are the <staff identified> fully dedicated to CSI school improvement efforts?

20. Are there additional resources or funds available to schools that are CSI designated? How are those funds used?

*Listen for:*

- State resources/funds*
- Additional district resources (not ESSER funding)*
- Additional district resources (ESSER funding)*
- Local funds not provided by the district (grants, foundation support, PTA support, etc.)*
- Other*

### Conclusion

21. Do you feel that the schools that are identified as needing improvement using the state's criteria are the schools in your district that most need additional support to improve? Why or why not?

- Are there measures in the current system that you think are not useful for rating school performance?
- Are there any additional measures that you think would be worth including?

22. Do you have any additional reflections you want to share about the strengths and/or areas for improvement of the state's accountability system and CSI schools in particular from the district's perspective?

*Probe if necessary:*

- *Have you found that certain components or requirements of the CSI planning and monitoring process are more difficult to implement than others?*
- *What are some of the challenges?*
- *What are some of the successes?*

23. Is there anything I haven't asked you about CSI schools or processes that you'd like to comment on?

**Thanks again for your time. We deeply appreciate your participation in this important study.**

# Informed Consent

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## **Purpose**

The American Institutes for Research, as part of an Education Research Grant from the Institutes of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, is conducting a study to examine the implementation of new accountability measures for identifying schools as CSI schools and whether CSI schools ultimately improve student outcomes relative to non-CSI schools. To this end, the study will employ multiple data collection strategies.

To assist with the study, we are asking state and district staff from three states to participate in interviews. You will be asked about the following topics: your experiences supporting CSI schools, CSI plan development and implementation, district-level and state-level supports for CSI schools, monitoring and evaluation of plan implementation and outcomes, and district and state policy context. The interview is designed to last no more than 60 minutes.

## **Risks and Discomfort**

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

## **Benefits of Participation**

Your participation in the study will contribute to an understanding of the processes used to develop CSI plans and the supports for school improvement provided to CSI schools from districts and states.

## **Freedom to Withdraw**

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

## **Confidentiality**

*Responses to this data collection will be used only for research purposes.* No part of the study involves evaluation of any individual. The reports prepared for the study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district, school, or individual. We will not include any information in our public reporting that identifies your district or school. However, officials at your state education agency and at the U.S. Department of Education will know which districts and schools participated in this study. If there is information that you do not want shared in any reporting, please let the interviewer know. Information we collect in the interview will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

## **Permission to Record the Interview**

To ensure the accuracy of the information we report, we would like to record the interview. The recording allows us to check the accuracy of our findings. Please know that no one outside our research team and a transcribing service has access to the recording. Recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a secure server that can be accessed only by study team members. The audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. You can participate in the interview but decline to have it recorded. Additionally, if you elect to have the interview recorded, you may stop the recording at any time.

## **More Information**

If you would like more information about this study, you may contact the project director, [name], at the American Institutes for Research at [contact info]. For questions regarding your rights as a subject participating



in this research, please contact AIR's Institutional Review Board at [IRBChair@air.org](mailto:IRBChair@air.org) or toll free at 1-800-634-0797.

Signature for consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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