

Sample Interview Questions For A Study of school restructuring in California

1274 Study

Teacher and Administrator Interviews: Guiding Questions

Interview Topic Outline

1. Recent school change initiatives at your school
2. Changes in how success is defined, measured and assessed
3. Changes in school culture and organization
4. The overall impact of recent school change initiatives
5. What these recent changes have meant for you
6. Impact of restructuring

1. Recent School Change Initiatives at Your School

Inventory of recent change initiatives: What different restructuring or school change initiatives are you aware of that have been undertaken at your school in the last three years or so?

The global change story: If you were to write a story about how these restructuring and school change efforts at your school took place, what would be the different parts of the story? What title could you propose for this story? What key scenes, events, decisions, or turning points would you include in the story? Who are the main characters?

2. Defining, Measuring and Assessing Success

Definitions. How is success defined at your school? Have definitions of success changed, developed or evolved at your school over the past three or so years? What was the impetus for that change? How do you know whether students are successful or not? Whether teachers are successful or not?

Indications of success How is success evaluated, measured, assessed at your school? What part do formal and/or informal modes of assessment play in how success is measured at your school? Has any of this changed over the past three or so years? If change has happened, what was the impetus for that change? What influences brought it about?

Please give me a picture of how success is measured at your school. Please give me a hypothetical situation so I might better understand how this works.

Changing assumptions: Have any taken-for-granted assumptions about the ways success is measured/evaluated/assessed at your school been questioned during the past three or so years?

Changes in what is done: Have changes in the kinds of things that are done to measure success at your school occurred in the last three or so years? How is student progress monitored in your classroom? How is the data used? How does your monitoring of student progress, assessment, and data usage compare to other teachers? What roles do formal and informal kinds of assessment play in the ways success is measured at your school? Have these roles changed in the last three or so years? Have changes in the alignment between approaches to teaching and

learning at your school and the ways success is evaluated occurred in the past three or so years? If change has happened, what was the impetus?

Changes in how work is done: How is the work of measuring success done at your school? Has anything about the way the work is done changed in the past three or so years? If changes have happened, how did those changes come about? Are different individuals doing the work now? Have different individuals done the work at other times? How much freedom of choice do individuals in different groups have about how the work is done? Teachers? Administrators? Students? What kinds of decisions do you make as a teacher? Is there anything done or expected that extends or limits this decision-making? Who chooses the materials that are used in the classroom? How and to what degree do those materials influence decision-making in the classroom? What is the relationship between tests, material selection, instructional strategies and instructional decisions?

Changing groups: Who makes decisions about the success of students and teachers at your school? How are such decisions made? If change has happened, what was the impetus? Have lines of authority for such decision-making been redrawn during the past three or so years? Have teachers' roles changed? Have students' roles changed? What about administrators? What kinds of responsibilities do these groups have for making decisions? Have those responsibilities changed during the past three or so years? How much autonomy do individuals in each of these groups have? Has the degree of autonomy changed?

Perceived impact: If changes in the way success is defined and/or measured at your school (or assessment is conducted/ evaluation is conducted) have taken place, which do you see as substantial and which as largely superficial? For what groups in the school have these changes been most significant? Which groups of students are best served by these changes? Which groups of teachers?

New problems: What new problems, tensions, contradictions, conflicts, etc. have emerged in connection with any changes in the ways success is defined and measured at your school?

3. School Organization and Culture

In addition to what you've told us about how success is defined, measured and assessed, what can you tell us about the impact of recent restructuring and school change efforts on other aspects of the organization and culture of your school?

Redefining School Groups

Patterns of participation: What kinds of groups been created or dissolved in response to recent school restructuring and school change initiatives at your school? How did this occur? In what areas have these changes had the greatest impact? In what areas have they had the least?

Communication: Have any changes occurred in who talks to whom about what? Are patterns of communication among teachers in the school pretty much the same as they were? What about for teachers and administrators? What about parents?

Decision-making: Have any changes occurred in how different kinds of decisions are made at your school? How do the people or groups involved now differ from what they were three years ago?

Relations within groups: Have recent restructuring or school change efforts at your school led to better or worse relationships among individuals within particular groups (e.g., teachers in general, teachers in particular departments or programs, students in general, particular groups of students, parents, etc.)? If so, how did this occur and for which groups?

Relations among groups: Have recent restructuring or school change efforts at your school led to better or worse relationships between different groups (e.g., teachers in general, teachers in particular departments or programs, students in general, particular groups of students, parents, etc.)? If so, how did this occur and for which groups?

Student and parent participation

Changing patterns of participation: In what ways (if at all) have restructuring efforts changed how students or parents participate in your school? Was student or parent targeted specifically within these change efforts? If so, how and why?

Ideas and expectations: In what ways (if at all) have ideas about what kinds of involvement by students and parents are most desirable changed in response to the restructuring efforts at your school?

New problems, controversies and tensions: What new problems, tensions, contradictions, conflicts, etc. have emerged at your school about the participation of students and parents in response to school change and restructuring initiatives underway in the past three or so years? Have the restructuring effort at your school stimulated or generated any controversies or tensions about participation by students or parents in the school? If so, what are they? How have they come up? Who has been involved with these?

School discourse: Have you noticed any ways in which teachers or administrators talk differently about involving students or parents in your school? What examples can you point to that illustrate these changes?

Responding to Student Diversity

Reform focus: In what ways (if at all) have recent school change and restructuring efforts at your school focused on issues of student diversity? How has “diversity” been defined within these efforts? Has any attention been given in these efforts to increasing school success for students from particular racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups? What about to increasing success for female students, male students or students from families in poverty?

Changing patterns. In what ways (if at all) have restructuring efforts changed how students from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds participate in your school? Are these changes (if any) more closely associated with classroom instruction or curricula or with the co-curricular activities?

Stimulating or revealing controversy and tension: Even if it was not a specific focus, have the restructuring effort at your school generated any discussions, controversies or tensions involving racial, ethnic or gender issues or issues of poverty? If so, what are they? How have they come up? Who has been involved with these? What has happened regarding these so far?

School discourse: What about how these issues are discussed? Do teachers, students or administrators talk any differently about issues of race, ethnicity, student’s home languages, gender, poverty, etc. as a result of the restructuring efforts at your school? If so, what examples can you point to?

Equity issues: Has restructuring altered how issues of equity are defined at your school? If so, in what ways? What implications (if any) do these alterations have for classroom instruction? What implications do they have for co-curricular activities? What about for school community relations?

4. Overall Impact

Overall impact: If you were to make a list of things about your school that have been altered as a result of recent “school restructuring” or “school change” initiatives at your school, what would you include? Which of these changes do you see as substantial and which appear to be largely superficial? For what groups in the school have these changes been most significant?

5. What these Recent Changes Have Meant for You Personally

Personal involvement: In which of these activities we've been discussing have you been the most involved?

Impact on you of these changes efforts: How has your involvement in these activities above affected the following:

How you assess student work

The groups at the school that influence your work

The groups at the school in which you are involved

Who you talk with at the school (e.g., Communication with students, parents, administrators, and other teachers)

How you approach or define issues of equity and diversity

Your definition of what it means for students to succeed at this school

Your definition of what it means for you to succeed in this school

6. Perceived Impact of Restructuring

Surface change and deep change: In which of the following areas have recent restructuring and school change efforts led to changes in how work is done, taken-for-granted assumptions, or decision-making at your school? Indicate whether change is relatively superficial (*surface*) or relatively substantial (*deep*).

	Changes in vocabulary	Changes in taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations	Changes in how policy decisions are made	Changes in participation and in how work is done
Assessing student performance				
Assessing teacher performance				
Curriculum design				
Co-Curriculum				
Classroom Instruction				
School management				
Student involvement in school				
Parent involvement in school				
School-Community relations				

New ideas words, concepts, vocabulary, etc. What new ideas, words, concepts, etc. have been introduced into the school as a result of these school change and school restructuring initiatives? Where did these come from? Which of these seem to have taken hold in the school and which just passed on through?

New problems, controversies and tensions: What new problems, tensions, contradictions, conflicts, etc. have emerged at your school in response to school change and restructuring initiatives underway in the past three or so years? Even if it was not a specific focus, have the restructuring effort at your school stimulated or generated any controversies or tensions in the school? If so, what are they? How have they come up? Who has been involved with these? What has happened regarding these so far?

Students: What's been the overall impact so far of all these changes on students? Which students do you think might benefit the most from the restructuring effort? Are there students that you are worried about overlooking in the process? How do you think different groups of students feel about the reforms proposed within the school change and restructuring efforts?

Teachers: What's been the impact so far of all these changes on teachers? Which teachers do you think might benefit the most from the restructuring effort? Are there teachers that you are worried about overlooking in the process? How do you think different groups of teachers feel about the reforms proposed within the school change and restructuring efforts?