

Promoting Science among English Language Learners (P-SELL)

University of Miami – School of Education

Social Capital Interview (Focus Group)

The purpose of this interview is to understand the kinds of support that teachers receive from the principal and other teachers at their schools in the teaching of science. Additionally, the interview also addresses teachers' perceptions of FCAT influence on their science teaching and how they prepare their students for FCAT science. Each question is followed with probes.

I. Teacher Collaboration

1. Do the teachers at your grade level or your school have “a common goal” when it comes to the teaching of science?

If yes:

If a stranger walked into your school, what would he/she observe that showed that common goal in action? (Probe for specific examples of collective activity or a sense of collective responsibility in the school.)

How does that common goal develop?

How does the principal encourage or hinder this common goal?

How does turnover among teachers influence this common goal?

Are there any examples of instances in school that you can say discourage the development or achievement of that common goal?

2. How do teachers at your grade level or in the school collaborate or help each other to teach science better given the background and experiences of your students?

PROBE:

Low SES students

Ethnic minority students

ESOL students

ESE students

Retainees

3. Are there any school policies or practices that influence how science gets taught at your school?

PROBE:

Ability grouping

Block scheduling

Pullout programs

Inclusion

FCAT prep

If so, how do the teachers at your grade level or your school address these issues?

4. How much influence do the teachers at your grade level or at your school have over the direction of the science program or science teaching?

PROBE:

If a stranger walked into your school, what would he/she observe that showed the influence that teachers have?

Who has the most influence?

Does working together increase the influence of teachers?

How is influence distributed between school administrators and teachers (and others)?

5. Have you been involved in collaboration among teachers within your grade level, across grade levels, or between schools with regard to the teaching of science?

If so, what does it look like? How would a stranger walking through your school know that you collaborate?

How would you plan to collaborate with new teachers at your grade level this year?

How would you plan to collaborate with other grade levels this year?

PROBE:

To share materials or supplies

To share ideas about student learning (reasoning, inquiry, understanding)

To discuss ideas about science curriculum

To discuss ideas about teaching science

To discuss ideas about how to assess science learning

To discuss ideas about preparing for FCAT (specifically science)

6. How does access to resources (time, supplies, money, other teachers) constrain or enhance your ability to teach science?

PROBE:

Time to teach

Time to plan

Time to discuss science teaching with other teachers

Supplies for experiments, hands-on

Professional development in science teaching

7. How much do the school administrators' instructional priorities influence your science teaching?

PROBE:

How are they distributing resources into these priorities?

What kinds of support do they provide to help you improve your science teaching?

How do they communicate with you about science teaching?

8. How well does the school district support the improvement of your science teaching?

PROBE:

What kinds of support does the school district provide to help you improve your science teaching?

How do they communicate with you about science teaching?

II. FCAT Influence on Science Teaching

9. How do the Sunshine State Standards and M-DCPS CBC influence your science teaching?

PROBE:

Do these guidelines help or hinder your teaching?

What are the benefits and limitations of these guidelines?

10. How does the FCAT in reading and mathematics (for 4th grade also ask about writing and 5th grade ask about science) influence your science teaching?

PROBE: Can you describe how FCAT influences:

What you teach in science?

How you teach science?

How much time you have for science instruction?

When is science taught (during the year, during the week, during the day)?

Do you deal any differently with your ESOL students (if any)?

How does the state policy around school grades influence your science teaching?

Note: Further probes may include eliciting teacher comments on:

The efficacy (usefulness) of such a test-driven focus,

The degree to which the FCAT reflects what students need to know in reading, writing, and math,

11. How do you prepare your students for FCAT science?

PROBE:

What do you teach in science?

How do you teach science with

- ESOL students?

- ESE students?

- Students with limited literacy development?

Thank you very much!