Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How is the SIR visit connected to the school improvement plan?

A: Participants in the SIR visits are members of school improvement teams, instructional coaches, and school improvement facilitators. The development of a high level of knowledge, supported by

the SIR data, informs effective, high-quality instruction. This knowledge is essential to the

development of an effective school improvement plan because classroom instruction is the single largest factor in student achievement.

Q: Why are we doing this?

A: A shared understanding of high effective, rigorous instruction is essential if students are to make

dramatic gains in achievement. We need a deep, shared understanding of what constitutes

high-quality instruction that is consistent across the district. Information from the SIR visit and

conversation with the SIR team will help focus attention on the most effective strategies for

inclusion in the building’s school improvement plan.

Q: How many people are involved in the SIR visit?

A: This varies somewhat. Generally a team of about six (6) to eight (8) will visit. As well, building

principals are invited to participate as is the building school improvement chair. This usually means that a team of about three (3) or four (4) will be working together to visit rooms. The team visits a classroom at a time and stays for about 15 minutes.

Q: Will every classroom be visited?

A: A typical SIR visit involves visits to every regular classroom in the building. Each classroom will be

visited at least once, if at all possible. As time allows, some classrooms may be visited twice.

Q: What do I need to do in preparation?

A: No special preparation is necessary. It would be thoughtful to provide chairs for the visitors.

Q: Won’t this visit be disruptive to my classroom?

A: From experience, classrooms continue to function normally. The group will be unobtrusive if you are

doing whole-class instruction. If students are working in groups, members of the team may visit

with groups to ask about what they are doing.

Q: Can I opt out?

A: No. All rooms will be open for a visit. Transparency of teaching and collaboration are crucial to

dramatic improvements in student achievement.

Q: What are the norms the group uses?

A: The generally accepted norms of no cell phones, no sidebar conversations which might interrupt the

class, etc. are observed. The group also has a strict confidentiality norm that no one discusses

any specific observations with anyone outside the group meeting. In addition, no classroom is

ever referenced by teacher name or room number during the internal discussions. General, summarized results, feedback, and recommendations for the building are shared with the building’s leadership, but no individual classrooms are ever discussed in these consultations or with the building principal.

Q: How is the problem of practice, i.e. the focus of the SIR visit, determined?

A: The problem of practice was selected from one of two priority focus areas connected to our MTSS

(Multi-tiered System of Support) initiatives. The SIR visit will focus either on ‘first good

instruction’ or on ‘student engagement’. These two implementation guides were collaboratively

created in January as both topics were major components of school improvement plans across districts.

Q: How is data collected during the SIR visit?

A: Observation data is collected. You will see visitors taking notes as a means of collecting evidence

around the problem of practice. This is important to ensure that conclusions are based on specific observed evidence and not on feelings or opinions. Before any evidence is shared with the entire SIR team, individual data is re-recorded to connect to a specific general observation. There is no reference to grade level, room number, or teacher on the notes. It is impossible to assign a specific observation to an individual teacher.