

Interviewing Techniques Part Two Program Transcript

We have now observed one interview. Let's see how the next interview compares with the first.

LINDA: Oh, hi, Laura, glad to meet you. I'm Linda. (Pleased to meet you, too, hi.) Please have a seat. Thank you for taking the time for this interview. Your participation in this educational project on workplace morale for teachers is really important as a study. It'll help us understand more about how to support teachers and ultimately help the student achievement and student outcomes. We'll be interviewing yourself and about 10 other teachers, so we'll have all this information that will contribute to the project. Now, I know you've read about the project and how we're conducting it, but I'd just like to review a few items with you. (Okay) First of all, as you know, your participation is totally voluntary. So, if I ask you a question that you don't want to answer or if you need to stop the interview at any time, just let me know. Also, as you know, I'll be audio taping the interview and also be taking some notes. When I finish, when we finish the interview, I'll be giving you a transcript of the audio tape and sharing my notes with you so you can look at them, review them, make any corrections that you see need to be made to make sure that we really capture what it is you wanted to say. This study may be published and in publication, we won't use any of your names – yourself or any of the other teachers, even if we use direct quotes, we'll use pseudonyms. And it also might be presented in conferences and professional meetings. Okay – do you have any questions? (No) As you know, we've set aside about 30 minutes for the interview and that seems to be okay for you?

LAURA: That will be okay.

LINDA: Okay. We won't go beyond that time unless you wish to do so. (Okay) Audio taping is still fine? (Yes) Okay. Ready to go? (Yes) Let's start then. Laura, what does workplace morale mean to you?

LAURA: Workplace morale I would say basically means that it's a fun place to work, that it's a place where you are looking forward to getting up and going to every day and that there's nice people there that you enjoy working with.

LINDA: What makes it fun?

LAURA: I would say the idea that you can try out new ideas, that your colleagues support you, that there's a sense of friendship, camaraderie, flexibility on the part of the supervisor, and support – just feeling supported, I'd say.

LINDA: So, support actually makes you enjoy the work? (Yes) I'd like to hear some stories about workplace morale. (Okay) And if you could tell me a story

that might have enhanced workplace morale and one that de-enhanced it – without naming any real names, that would be really helpful to me. Do you have some stories like that?

LAURA: Yeah. I think I'll start with the one that you call de-enhanced. (Okay) At a school I worked at before, there was a principal who he just didn't – didn't give us the flexibility to try out new ideas. I had a program I had my heart set on starting. I had spent so much time on it and I really felt like it would help solve some of the problems and difficulties that kids were having. It was an after school program and I just thought it would just be so – the creativity and the critical thinking involved would just really help the kids. And, he just said no way, he squashed the whole idea and I felt bad because I felt like I had nowhere to go. I couldn't even - you know, every time I'd try to bring it up to the point that he said, "Just please don't bring this up to me again. Stick to the basics. That's - you know that's what you were hired for." And, I was completely deflated after that and so that, yeah, that didn't make me feel very good about my job.

LINDA: After that, did you propose any other new programs?

LAURA: No. No, I knew it wouldn't work out. But I'd had other times and it was because I had other times where little things he would just squash and that was just sort of like the icing on the cake and I knew you know that there was nothing else I could do at that point.

LINDA: Had you shared this idea with any of your colleagues?

LAURA: Yes. They liked the idea and then they told me about times that the same thing happened to them. We were all very frustrated and you know it got to the point that we were just complaining to each other and that didn't help you know because it sort of you know after you know complaining and just that negative talk at least for me sort of makes me feel even worse. You know, we were trying to support each other but that wasn't helpful.

LINDA: When you say that you're open to constructive critique, I'm interpreting that to mean that you don't need to be told everything you do is right and good.

LAURA: Right, yeah. (Okay) Right, like for instance, you know there's guidelines. (Okay) You know we need to be told that you know we're going to keep in those guidelines. And you know that's – but it's all in the way you do it, the way it's presented.

LINDA: So, my understanding is pretty much on target of what you're saying? (um-hm) As we think about the responsibility for workplace morale - we've talked about the employees and the teachers and the supervisor or the principal - particularly in education, does the community-at-large have any role in it and

what might be the relative roles of those three groups – the supervisor, the teachers and the community-at-large?

LAURA: I would say the community-at-large, the only thing I can think about is parents as another group that affects our workplace morale in terms of if they're too negative, if they're not open, if they're not supportive and helpful, that makes our job harder. You know, if they're – and especially if they're not supportive if we have new ideas or new programs. That, that makes – so, they're an important piece. And then the colleagues are also important, very important in terms of that support. But if I were to put it in rank order, I would say your principal, you know for teachers, the principal is the most important. The colleagues second, and then parents, third – even though they're all important, that's how I would rank them.

LINDA: Could we go back to an earlier question a little bit? Do you believe that you've given me enough information or all the information you want about a positive and a negative experience?

LAURA: Oh, yeah, no, oh, yeah. The – oh, I'm glad you mentioned that (That's okay, it's all right) because the situation I'm in now is like night and day (Okay) comparing to the other one. We really have a collegial atmosphere. It all starts with a program this principal said to us and it was his idea – he said, “I want each of you teachers whatever your interests are to develop a program that's going to enhance student learning, student critical thinking and student creativity,” and he left it open to come up with what we wanted to do and he said, “I want you to meet every week, provide each other support and feedback. And, you know, I'll be at these meetings and we'll help each other and we'll brainstorm,” because he really believed that that's going to really help things. And for me, I just - you know I felt like I was so thrilled, you know based on my other experience, I thought this is wonderful. So, I developed a media literacy and a documentary producing program for the kids in my class. And other teachers did totally different things. And we meet every week and we talk about it and we give each other really helpful feedback and it's become just this great – it's really enhanced our interest and you know we're interested in each other, we care, we give each other good feedback. And, you know I'm friends with some of the teachers now that I didn't you know hardly know just because of the support. And the principal is there. He reigns us in when he needs to and we can handle it because we know we have his support, we know he's just sticking to the guidelines that are there and but otherwise – and if we're going too far, he'll help us brainstorm for a way to work around it or address it so that you know it's appropriate. And, I'm just really thrilled. And the interesting thing is it – it is more work but we're able to really make changes and see it. We can see everyday in that classroom we see it with the kids. We see it on their faces and then we see it – I see it in their assignments in grades going up, and struggling kids doing better because they're excited about school. And, you know and we're starting to bring in pieces of each

other's programs. Every - you know all these programs are quite different and it's just been wonderful. It's still in process, but so far everything is completely good and I think you know part of it is that it's a good principal, but all of us as teachers at this particular school just jumped in and we're ready, we're open and ready to try it out and it's been working really well and so I'm happy.

LINDA: Laura, I want to respect your time and I notice we're at 30 minutes.

LAURA: Oh, we are, okay.

LINDA: Yeah, already. (Oh, wow) I do have one more question, but it's time's up, so I'd like to know if you'd like to stay or go.

LAURA: Okay, well, you know I was going to go but I have to say I'm really enjoying this. I don't mind answering another question, (You're sure?) go right ahead. (Okay) I'd like to. (All right.) Thanks.

LINDA: I'd like to know some of your ideas on how a school might ensure a positive workplace morale.

LAURA: Well, I guess a typical school that aren't doing sort of these unusual motivating programs, one thing, simple thing they could do is just more social occasions for the teachers, more opportunities for teachers to get to know each other on a social level because I've been at schools where I only like have one or two teacher friends that are my close friends at the school. And, you know don't really know the others and I feel it can be a bit isolating. And just to be able to talk and to be able to share experiences and ideas and just I think it could start with just you know social parties. You know, little after school you know get-together hour, just informally, I think that would help. I think it would be a simple way to help to be able to support each other. And, then I guess the key thing is a supervisor who sort of makes it a point to be flexible and trusting and supportive. I think that's a key element and that's going to affect everything.

LINDA: If you had to like say three or five words – the most – really key in terms of this area, what would you say?

LAURA: Respect, support and openness.

LINDA: Okay. Laura, is there anything else you'd like to share with me on this topic that I've not asked you about or that you would like to have an opportunity to say?

LAURA: No, I can't think of anything else. I think we've covered everything on this topic, yeah.

LINDA: Well, thank you so much. And as I say, I'll be sending you a copy of the transcript and also my notes. If you see any corrections or anything that I've missed, please do let me know. Thank you so much, Laura.

LAURA: Okay, thank you. Thanks.

LINDA: Bye-bye. (Bye-bye) Have a good class. (Okay) Okay.

LINDA: You now have observed and collected data on two interviews. As a researcher doing qualitative studies, you need to carefully plan for the time it takes for you to collect, organize, analyze and interpret data. It can be quite a bit of time. Estimate for yourself, for example, how much time it would take to collect data for 10 audio taped 40 minute interviews. As you estimate the time, plan for contacting and scheduling the interviews, travel time, conducting the actual interview and transcribing the interview. That estimate feeds into your feasibility planning for the study and it's important for you in order to allocate adequate resources to fulfill your research goals. You have observed various qualities of interviewing. Now, imagine yourself as an interviewer. What would your body language be like? How would you establish rapport? What about the phrasing of your questions – how would you phrase questions to draw the participant into dialog? In order to practice that, you might consider a question and write it 3, 4, 5 different ways. Then evaluate the phrasings in order to see which would be most effective. You might even try them out with some folks. As an interviewer, you are a scientist and an artist. As a scientist, you must use strong and rigorous research designs and procedures. As an artist, you are painting a relationship to establish comfort with your participant so that the participant can contribute as much as possible to the study. Practice your science and art by designing and conducting interviews. Invite people to observe those interviews and give you feedback. Participate yourself as an interviewee and observe others conducting interviews. One way to do that is to observe and critique interviews conducted on news programs. This study, observation and practice will develop you as a skilled interviewer.