

School code: _____

Interviewer: _____

EXPERIENCED TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. **What grade (subject, for middle and high school) do you teach? How long have you taught? At this school? What brought you to this school?**
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2. **What major school improvement efforts has your school engaged in over the last five years?**

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround in student achievement? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison schools: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement? Who or what was responsible for this effort?]

3. **Now, please tell me a little about what I would have seen had I come to this school five years ago.**

[Probes: Was there a different principal? How effective was she/he? How would you characterize staff morale? The student body? What was the school "vision?" Were there earlier efforts at reform? Please tell me a little about them and their success or failure.]

4. **Are things different now?**

[Probes: Effectiveness of principal? Staff morale? The student body? The school vision?]

5. **During the first year of implementing the major school improvement efforts, how was progress assessed?**

[Probes: By whom? Did the assessment include looking at the extent to which the vision was enacted in practice? How did the principal assess progress? How did teachers? Were there differences in principal and teachers' measures for and viewpoints about progress? How were they dealt with? Do similar assessments take place now? How is the school's progress currently assessed?]

6. **What would have happened to the school, principal, and teachers if the school did not meet its achievement targets in the past? Is it the same now?**
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7. **How did teachers react or respond to the changes in school improvement efforts?**

[Probes: Were any teachers particularly supportive? If so, how did they show their support? Did any teachers resist the changes? If so, how was the resistance dealt with? Who dealt with it?]

8. **What support did teachers receive to help them successfully implement school improvement efforts? When? How were the teachers motivated to participate in the reform?**

[Probes: Help from people outside the school (e.g., model developers, consultants)? Professional development? Opportunities to meet as grade-level or content teams? Teacher incentives?]

9. **Describe the assessments used to measure student progress.**

[Probes: When were they instituted? How often are they administered? Has this changed? Was training provided in analyzing and using data? If so, who provided the training? What happens with the information from the assessments?]

[Probes: Schoolwide, grade-level, or subject area? Were data used for instructional change? To provide individualized support to students? Are they currently used in the same way?]

10. **Is there a pacing schedule? When was it initiated or revised? Does it help you with your instruction? Is it monitored? If so, by whom? What happens if you are not on schedule?**
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11. **In the past, was there common planning time? Has the schedule changed in the last 5 years? If so, when?**

[Probes: Grade-level planning? Subject area planning? Cross-disciplinary planning? Were data introduced? If yes, what data? Do the results lead to changes in classroom practice? Does the school schedule support collaboration?]

12. **What resources were used to support the actions for improvement? If so, how have the resources been used?**

[Probes: Purchase supplemental classroom materials? Extend professional development? Establish new positions to support the changes? Extend the school day?]

13. **When you came to the school, what orientation and support were given? Has this changed for new teachers?**
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14. **How do you think most staff perceived the principal who was in the position at the time of the school improvement efforts? Did he/she know what's going on in your classroom? If yes, how did he/she know? What actions did he/she take to help you succeed?**
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15. **Are there factors that help or hinder the ongoing improvement of the school? What are the main distracters you feel that keep you from achieving school goals?**

[Probe for specific distracters, which can range from interruptions to parent problems]

16. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?**
