

School code: _____

Interviewer: _____

EXPERIENCED PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your background.

[Probes: When did you come to the school? What is your educational background? How many years have you been a principal? At this school? Did you have prior experience or training working with low-performing schools or students?]

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? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

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

3. What actions were taken to *initiate* school improvement efforts at the school? Who was involved in those actions? Describe any major barriers to the actions. *Important to get detailed chronology of actions.*

[Probes: Who were the leaders and what was their role (e.g., principal, teachers, formal leadership team, parents, community, district office, external organizations)? Who made final decisions for the actions? Who set improvement goals for the school? Was there a specific timeline for achievement goals?]

4. What was the school like when you arrived?

[Probes: What were the school's strengths? Weaknesses? What was the general climate of the school? What was the student achievement profile? What were the teachers like? What was the relationship between the school and the district? Were reform efforts underway when you assumed the principalship? If so, what were they? How were they working? Have they changed? If so, what influenced the change(s)?]

5. Were the actions to improve student achievement monitored? If so, how?

[Probes: What data were used? Would you describe the actions as an intervention and/or instructional change?]

6. **What programs, practices, policies were introduced to improve student achievement? When? Why were these selected? If multiple strategies are in use, what were early actions? What came later?**

[Probes: On what basis were these selected? To what extent did the research base influence the selection of strategies? To what extent did school-based data influence the selection?]

7. **What resources were used to support the actions taken to improve student achievement? Were additional resources needed? Where did they come from?**

[Probes: Federal, state, district, philanthropic, or other sources? Use of both fiscal and human resources? Resources reallocated? School autonomy in budgeting?]

8. **How did staff react to the plans for improvement?**

[Probes: Did staff support or resist the plans for improvement? How? How was staff resistance overcome? Were there any staff changes or turnover? If yes, what were the reasons for these staff changes? What is the process for replacing (hiring new) teachers? How did the staff turnover affect the process?]

9. **How did you support staff as they sought to implement the change?**

[Probes: Use of external assisters, staff development opportunities, schedule changes to facilitate grade-level and content sharing?]

10. **When new teachers come to the school, are there practices (e.g., formal or informal mentorships, special orientation) to introduce them to the key curriculum, instructional, and organizational activities? If so, when were these practices introduced?**
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11. **Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement at your school. How do you use data from these assessments?**

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years?]

12. **How did the district office react to the changes in the school?**

[Probes: How did it support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from the district office or school board in implementing the actions? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

13. How did parents react to the changes?

[Probes: How did they learn about the changes? From whom? How did they support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from them? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

14. What programs or policies currently exist designed to ensure sustained achievement?

[Probes: When were these introduced?]

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