**Principal Interview**

**(Prior to site visit – may be conducted by telephone)**

**Sample Protocol**

1. How long have you been a principal at this school? What did you do before?
2. Data on school attendance suggests your school does a better job than many others in ensuring students attend regularly.

We’d like to understand what you are doing to support good attendance at your school. Can you give me a quick overview of what your staff and community partners are doing that is making such a difference?

Probes (if time allows):

* 1. Close monitoring of student attendance data
  2. Attendance incentive
  3. Parent engagement & education about the importance of attendance
  4. Early identification and outreach to students with poor attendance
  5. Providing an engaging curriculum that makes students want to come to school
  6. Offering school based health services or social supports that help keep students from missing school to health or economic issues
  7. Ensuring a safe school climate
  8. Providing effective alternatives to suspension
  9. Professional development for school staff on the importance of attendance and what they can do to improve it
  10. Encouraging a team approach to supporting good attendance that includes teaching and support staff and potentially community and parent partners

Are you doing anything else that you think is making a difference but isn’t listed?

1. What do you think are the biggest barriers to students attending school? What is most important for helping overcome those barriers?

***Probes***: (if time allows)

* *What are parents’ attitudes about the importance of attendance? What about in the early grades, especially kindergarten? (Particularly relevant if site is an elementary school)*
  + *Are students avoiding school because they are struggling academically?*
  + *Are there issues with bullying?*
  + *Do students often miss school because of illness or doctor’s appointments?*
  + *Is getting to school (lack of transportation or lack of safe paths) a problem for some?*

1. What have you found to be the most helpful supports for enabling you and your staff to tackle improving attendance in your school?
2. What do you think is most helpful for ensuring that other schools in your district are also taking steps to improve student attendance and taking steps to reduce or prevent chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school)?
3. Who are the key people, besides you, we should be sure to interview when we visit?

* Assistant principal
* Members of the attendance team
* Attendance clerks
* School nurse
* Counselor
* Family outreach workers
* Staff from community-based organizations that provide services on site
* Teachers
* Parents/parent leaders
* Students
* Others who may have a role in promoting good attendance?

1. Is there a quiet place where we can talk to people and not disrupt the daily routine?