

Moderator's Guide: Teacher Focus Groups

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Section I. Getting to know each other (10 minutes)

- Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a researcher from the Michael Cohen Group. Our job is to talk to people and gather their opinions about different things. Today, we're going to talk about food, nutrition, and some possible classroom activities for 5th & 6th grade students.

- Before we begin I want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers here -- we just want to know what you think. Whatever your opinion may be, it will be extremely helpful for us to hear it. OK?

- Let's start with some general questions:(ASK GROUP)
 - o What are your favorite activities in the classroom?
 - (Probe: What is it about these activities that you enjoy?)
 - o What are the most challenging aspects of your classroom?
 - o What are some things that take up the most time during the school day?

Section II. Getting to know your students (10 minutes)

- I want to switch gears for a minute. We're interested in working with 5th and 6th grade students, and that means learning more about who these students are. You all spend a lot of time with these students so:
 - o What are your students into right now?
 - (Probe: What is something that every one of your student's knows about?)
 - (Probe: How do you think they all became interested in that?)
 - o Where do you think your students get their information from?
 - o Who do you believe students look up to?

- o Who do they listen to?

Section III. Nutrition in the Classroom (30 minutes)

- Now we're going to talk about nutrition and health programs, but first let's talk about what these words mean:
 - o What does it mean to you to be *healthy*?
 - o What does the word *nutrition* mean to you?
 - o Where do you get nutritional information?
 - o What role does the school have to provide children with nutritional knowledge?
 - (Probe: Do you think parents expect children to learn about nutrition in school?)
 - (Probe: Are there any challenges in teaching nutrition in school?)
 - o Do you have any input into your classroom curriculum?
 - (Probe: If not, who does?)
 - (Probe: What do you look for when selecting a curriculum?)
 - (Probe: What makes a good curriculum?)
 - (Probe: What makes a curriculum easy to use?)
 - o Have you used health/nutrition curriculum in the past?
 - (Probe: What types of things worked?)
 - (Probe: What types of things did not work?)
 - o Have you ever used school gardens in your classroom?
 - (Probe: What were the strengths and challenges of that experience?)
 - (Probe: If not, do you feel comfortable conducting garden-based activities?)
 - o What kinds of things can you teach using a school garden?
 - (Probe: Are there any subjects in particular that would be easier to teach using garden based activities?)
 - (Probe: In what ways could a school garden be integrated and supported by classroom activities?)
 - o What kinds of training and support would you need to feel comfortable leading garden-based educational activities?
 - (Probe: For staff, materials, literatures etc.)
 - o Do you think garden-based activities could be connected to educational standards?

- (Probe: Why, or why not?)
- o If you were going to create nutrition curriculum, what would you include to make it convenient for teachers to use?
- o Are there any ways that students can learn by working with the food service staff?
 - (Probe: Would your students be interested in working with the food service staff?)
 - (Probe: Why, or why not?)

Section IV. Messages for 5th & 6th Grade Students (15 minutes)

- Now we're going to talk about some ideas we have for nutrition advice for children. I'm going to read some statements that are designed for kids and then ask your opinion about them:

READ OUT LOUD

"Broccoli and Collard Greens, Dark Green nutrient machines"

- o What do you think your students will think about this advice?
 - (Probe: What might they think this means?)
- o Do you think it will be meaningful for children?
 - (Probe: Why, or why not?)
- o Where might kids read or hear about advice like this?

READ OUT LOUD

"Squash that is Orange -- and Peppers in Red -- are nutritious choices that keep you well-fed!"

- o What do you think your students will think about this advice?
 - (Probe: What might they think this means?)
- o Do you think it will be meaningful for children?
 - (Probe: Why, or why not?)
- o Where might kids read or hear about advice like this?

READ OUT LOUD

“Legumes are various Beans and Peas. Try them all, if you please!”

- o What do you think your students will think about this advice?
 - (Probe: What might they think this means?)
- o Do you think it will be meaningful for children?
 - (Probe: Why, or why not?)
- o Where might kids read or hear about advice like this?

Section IV. Home and Classroom Link (25 minutes)

- o How do you communicate with the parents of your students?
 - (Probe: What sort of things do you communicate with parents about?)
- o Do you think online tools are effective ways to communicate with parents?
 - (Probe: Why, or why not?)
 - (Probe: What sort of activities or information would be useful to communicate with blogs or wikis?)
- o How comfortable are you using blogs and wikis as teaching tools?
 - (Probe: What kinds of supports or materials would you need to feel comfortable using blogs and wikis to communicate with parents?)
- o How often do you use blogs, wikis, and other tools now?
 - (Probe: Are they helpful?)
- o (If needed) How do parents respond to online communication?
- o Do you think parents would readily integrate information their children learned in school into their home life?
 - (Probe: Are parents likely to complete homework assignments?)

You have been great and have helped me a lot. Thanks so much for talking with me today!