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Moderator's Guide: Student Focus Groups

Section I. Getting to know each other (5 minutes)

- Hello, my name is _____ and I am a researcher. Our job is to talk to people to find out what they think about a lot of different things, like what they watch on TV or what their favorite food is. Today, we're going to talk about food, nutrition, and some possible classroom activities for students like you.
- Before we begin, there's something important to remember. There are no right or wrong answers here -- we just want to know what you think. So if you like ice cream the best and I like pickles the best, we're both right. That's because your idea is right for you, and my idea is right for me. And what I really want to know about today are your ideas. OK?
- Let's start with some basic questions: (ASK GROUP)
 - o What are your favorite foods?
 - o What are your least favorite foods?
 - o What are your favorite fruits?
 - o What are your favorite vegetables?
 - o What is a "tween"? (Probe: do they consider themselves to be tweens, pre-teens, kids or teens)

Section II. Teen Influences (10 Minutes)

- Now I'd like to talk a little bit about what it's like for you and your classmates to be in middle school. Let's start with a few easy ones:
 - o What are your favorite TV Shows?
 - (Probe: What do you watch most often?)
 - o What kind of music do you and your friends listen to?
 - o What do you like to do after school or on weekends?
 - o Do you read comic books? (Probe: input from boys v. girls)
 - o Who is somebody that everybody in your school knows about?
- These are a little harder, so take a minute to think:
 - o What is the most important thing for kids your age?
 - o What really matters to you? (Probe: Independence, being unique; fitting/blending in, acceptance, making a difference?)
 - o Who do you look up to or admire?
 - Probe: someone they know; someone famous; an authority figure; etc. (Follow up question: **Why** do you admire them?)

- o Who do kid's like you listen to?
Whose opinion (Remind them of what an opinion is) do you think you listen to the most? (Probe: friends?, parents?, teachers?, celebrities? Other?)
 - o Would you rather experience someone for yourself, or take someone's word for it if you trusted them?
 - o What would you like to be better at? (Probe: What does it mean to be successful to them?)
 - o If I told you all about this new thing that you have definitely never heard of before, how and where would you go to find out more about it?
 - o If you were going to try and tell all of your classmates about something, how would you do it?
- This question is sort of silly, but I want you to really think about it before you answer:
 - o If you were to create a magazine for kids like you, what would be on your front cover, what would it be called and why? (Probe: What type of articles/stories would be in your magazine?)

Section III. Baseline Understanding of Nutrition (15 minutes)

- Now we're going to talk about nutrition and health, but first let's talk about what that means:
 - o What does it mean to you to be *healthy*?
 - o How do you find out what food is "*healthy*" or "*nutritious*"?
 - (Probe: do your teachers ever talk about this?)
 - (Probe: do your parents ever talk about this?)
 - (Probe: do you ever hear commercials about this?)
 - Where do you hear them?
 - (Probe: do you listen to these messages?)
 - o Do you ever help your parents/guardians chose what foods to buy?
 - (Probe: tell me more about that)
 - o What makes you want to try a new food?
 - o What are some things that keep you from trying new foods?
 - (Probe: tell me more about that)

Section IV. Test Messages and Themes (25 minutes)

- I'm going to read some messages to you, and I would like to know what you think about them. (Will probe after each)
 - o What does this statement mean?
 - o How do you feel about this idea?

1. Eat more fruits and vegetables.

- o Fruits and veggies help keep your body and mind strong to do the things you love to do.
- o Eat a colorful variety of vegetables. Especially dark-green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, and beans and peas. These are the most "awesome smart"!
- o Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- o Enjoy fruits and vegetables with less solid fats and added sugars. Go for low-fat dressings and dips, and choose fruit packed in water or 100% fruit juice.

Dark Green vegetables: *“Broccoli and Collard Greens, Dark Green nutrient machines!”*

Red and Orange vegetables: *“Squash that is Orange -- and Peppers in Red -- are nutritious choices that keep you well-fed!”*

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

2. Try new fruits and vegetables.

- o In different colors, shapes, and textures, fruits and vegetables are delicious!
- o Different fruits and vegetables have different nutrients – grab these benefits by making your plate colorful! Be sure to taste and try the vegetables you may not eat as often, including ones that are dark-green, red and orange, and beans and peas.
- o Eat your fruits and vegetables: fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.
- o It can be fun to explore and see what is “in season”. Look for fresh produce from a garden, farmer’s market, or local grocer.
- o Fruits and vegetables are delicious ... so don’t cover up their yummy taste! Eat them on their own, or with a small amount of low-fat dressings, cheese or dip.

3. Grow your own fruits and vegetables.

- o Gardening is fun and rewarding ... and you can “eat what you sow and grow”!
- o Grow and harvest the vegetables and fruits that are on the “target list” [see list above]
- o Garden fresh is “delish”!

Summary Message: “Fruits and Vegetables: Eat more ... try new ... grow your own!”

- Now, I’m going to read three ideas designed for students like you. Listen closely to the description and then I’m going to ask some questions:

READ OUT LOUD

“In **Choose to Grow**, you will get to choose your own adventure by making choices through a normal day in the life of **you**. Based on each decision, you will end up with a different consequence impacting and changing your day. There are many combinations possible, but only one path to a healthy and productive day. Your future is up to you! What choices will *you* make?”

- o So, what is this saying?
 - o How do you feel about this idea?
 - o Do you ever think about these kinds of things?
 - o What do you think your friends and classmates would think of this?
- Alright, here is another idea:

READ OUT LOUD

“What do you love to do? What do you want to be great at? Think about people you admire — in your life and from history who have done great and interesting things. What do you suppose they did to be the best **they** could be? Did you know that fueling up with fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods can help you do what you love to do *and* be the best **you** can be? When your energy is failing or you don't feel your best, it can be challenging to play hard ... or be creative ... or study well. But if you fuel up with fruits and vegetables, it can help you do what YOU love to do and be awesome smart!”

- o So, what is this saying?
 - o How do you feel about this idea?
 - o Do you ever think about these kinds of things?
 - o What do you think your friends and classmates would think of this?
- Alright, here is another idea:

READ OUT LOUD

“Ever wish you could unleash your superpowers? Did you know that vegetables like carrots, zucchini, broccoli and tomatoes have the power to activate your “hidden talents” by giving you the nutrients that are important for your growing body and mind? What hidden power do you want to unleash?”

- o So, what is this saying?
- o How do you feel about this idea?
- o Do you ever think about these kinds of things?
- o What do you think your friends and classmates would think of this?

Section V. Fruit and Vegetable Preferences and Consumption (5 Minutes)

- Before we wrap up, I want you to take a couple of minutes to fill out this short survey about fruits and vegetables.
- (Hand out Fruit & Vegetable Preference Survey)

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