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Moderator's Guide: Parents/Caregivers Focus Groups

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

- Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a researcher from the Michael Cohen Group. My 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 middle school 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 easy ones:(ASK GROUP)
 - o What are your middle school children's favorite foods?
 - o What are their least favorite foods?
 - o What are their favorite fruits?
 - o What are their favorite vegetables?
 - o How much input do you have into what your child eats?
 - o What do you take into consideration when buying food for your family?
 - o What are your biggest concerns about your children?

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

- We're interested in talking to 5th & 6th grade children about nutrition, but that means we need to get to know these kids. Who better to ask than their parents!
 - o What are your kids into right now?
 - (Probe: What does your child spend his or her free time doing?)
 - o What are some things you and your child do together?
 - o Who does your child look up to, admire?
 - o Who does your child listen to?
 - (Probe: for guidance, instructions, discipline)
 - o Where does your child go for information?
 - (Probe: online, peers, teachers?)

Section III. Baseline Understanding of Nutrition (20 minutes)

- Now we're going to talk about nutrition and health, but first let's talk about what you think that means:
 - o What does it mean to you to be *healthy*?
 - o What does the word *nutrition* mean?
 - o How do you find out what food is "*healthy*" or "*nutritious*"?

- (Probe: in other words, where do you hear health and nutrition discussed or promoted?)
- o How do your children find out what food is *healthy* or *nutritious*?
 - From you?
 - From school?
 - Where else?
- o Do your children ever help you chose what foods to buy?
 - (Probe: tell me more about that)
- o What are some things that keep you from trying new foods?
 - (Probe: tell me more about that)
- o What are some things that keep your children from trying new foods?
 - (Probe: tell me more about that)

Section IV. Home and Classroom Link (15 minutes)

- Now we're going to talk for about the school's role in shaping your child's nutrition
 - o To your knowledge, what role does nutrition education have in the classroom?
 - o Does your child share nutrition information from school?
 - o Do you receive nutrition information from your child or school?
 - If yes, do you incorporate this information into your cooking at home?
- Do you have the space to garden at your house/apartment?
- Do you have space for potted plants or window-boxes?
- Does your child's school communicate regularly about what's happening at school?
 - o If yes, how do you receive this communication?
- How comfortable are you using online tools to communicate with teachers?
 - o (Probe: what type of online tools are teachers using; what are some obstacles and challenges to receiving online information from school)
- What, if anything, would you change about the way the school communicates information about classroom lessons with you?

Section VI. Test Messages (30 minutes)

- We're going to talk about some ideas for nutritional advice that will be given to other parents of 5th – 6th grade students. We're still working on these ideas and fine tuning them for parents, so any opinion you have will be great:

READ OUT LOUD

"Make fruit and vegetable consumption a family goal! Create fruit and vegetable shopping lists, shop together, cook & eat fruits and vegetables together whenever possible"

- o How do you feel about this advice?
 - (Probe: when you heard this read aloud, what was the first thing that came to mind?)
- o Is it meaningful to you?
 - (Probe: how else could this be said to be more meaningful to you?)

- o Where would you imagine hearing or seeing this advice?

READ OUT LOUD

“Your kids learn from watching you. Try new fruits and vegetables yourself, and your kids will too!”

- o How do you feel about this advice?
 - (Probe: when you heard this read, what was the first thing that came to mind?)
- o Is it meaningful to you?
 - (Probe: how else could this be said to be more meaningful)
- o Where would you imagine hearing or seeing this advice?

READ OUT LOUD

“Together, brainstorm creative ways to prepare the featured fruits and vegetables in a variety of ways ... *without* affecting the nutritional value (avoiding the addition of fats and sugars)”

- o How do you feel about this advice?
 - (Probe: when you heard this read, what was the first thing that came to mind?)
- o Is it meaningful to you?
 - (Probe: how else could this be said to be more meaningful)
- o Where would you imagine hearing or seeing this advice?

READ OUT LOUD

“Nutrients in fruits and vegetables are important for your growing 5th or 6th grader. So, keep fruits and vegetables within easy reach and ready-to-eat.”

- o How do you feel about this advice?
 - (Probe: when you heard this read, what was the first thing that came to mind?)
- o Is it meaningful to you?
 - (Probe: how else could this be said to be more meaningful)
- o Where would you imagine hearing or seeing this advice?

READ OUT LOUD

“Position fruit and vegetables as the new-and-improved “fast food”! They make an excellent quick and nutrient-dense snack – great for backpacks, lunchboxes and after school”

- o How do you feel about this advice?
 - (Probe: when you heard this read, what was the first thing that came to mind?)
- o Is it meaningful to you?
 - (Probe: how else could this be said to be more meaningful)
- o Where would you imagine hearing or seeing this advice?

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READ OUT LOUD

“Your kids may be more likely to taste a vegetable they have helped grow. Try red peppers or Swiss chard in a kitchen pot or window box.”

- o How do you feel about this advice?
 - (Probe: when you heard this read, what was the first thing that came to mind?)
- o Is it meaningful to you?
 - (Probe: how else could this be said to be more meaningful)
- o Where would you imagine hearing or seeing this advice?

Section IV. Fruit & 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 Supplemental Survey)

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