

DISCUSSION GUIDE: PARENTS
GENERATION Z IN-PERSON FOCUS GROUP
03/03, 03/05 [EXACT DATE TBD]
FINAL VERSION 01 12 15

I. INTRODUCTION AND GROUND RULES

- My name is Dave Glantz and I work for Market Connections, a market research firm in the Washington, DC area.
- I will be your moderator for tonight’s focus group discussion. We’ll be here for 90 minutes, on behalf of the Department of Education’s office of Federal Student Aid (also known as FSA), to talk about your impressions of different types of student aid-related information and the way it is communicated to you.
- As I mentioned, what we are doing today is called a “focus group.”

As a **participant**, I’d like you to...

- Participate — I need to hear from everyone
- Speak up (but only one talks at a time)
- Please avoid side conversations
- Address your comments to the group
- Remember that you’re here for who you are, so say what you believe and not what you think others might say
- If you don’t agree with what somebody says, tell us what you think – there are no wrong answers.
- What you don’t know is just as important as what you do know.

As the **moderator**, I can be impartial because I have no vested interest in whether you agree or disagree with the things we’ll be talking about. I try to ensure...

- We get through this discussion guide: there are lots of questions and ideas I’d like to talk to you about, so I have to keep things on track.
- We are audio and videotaping, which is standard practice to help with the accuracy of my report. I also have some colleagues behind the glass, who are involved in this project, and who are interested in hearing your views firsthand.
- Most importantly, everything we discuss is considered private and for internal research purposes only. Our report will not identify individuals by name.
- Do you have any questions?

0:05

II. WARM-UP, DEFINITION OF GENERATION Z

Start by: 0:05

elapsed time: 0:20

Finish by: 0:25

I would first like to go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves. Please tell me...

- Your first name (or what you like to be called)
 - PARENTS OF STUDENTS AGED 16-18: Your child's intended course of study in college
 - PARENTS OF STUDENTS AGED 13-15: School subjects that interest your child

When it comes to naming different generations, there are terms like “Baby Boomers” and other, more recent, labels to describe younger generations.

- What name or label best describes your child's generation? (**PROBE IF NECESSARY:** Generation X, Generation Y, Millennials, Generation Z, other name (specify), unsure).
- What, if anything, makes your child's generation different from someone five or ten years older than them?
- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Do you feel like your children will have more opportunities/advantages in life compared to earlier generations, less opportunities/advantages, or will their prospects be about the same?
 - What makes you say that? (**PROBE:** educational, employment, financial opportunities or obstacles)

0:25

III. GEN Z DIGITAL HABITS

Start by: 0:25

elapsed time: 0:30

Finish by: 0:55

- Based on what you've observed, how do your children interact with or use technology?
- Can you describe the relationship they have with their electronic devices?
- What electronic devices do you frequently use? (**PROBE:** smartphone, tablet, laptop, PC/desk top)
- What electronic devices do your children frequently use? (**PROBE:** smartphone, tablet, laptop, PC/desk top)

- How many hours per day do you think they are connected to their devices/online?
- What, if anything, do you like best about the devices your children use?
- What do you like least about their devices?
- How dependent are your children on their devices?
- Do you have concerns about the devices they use, or the time they spend using their devices, or do you have no concerns in these areas?
 - What makes you say that?
- Are there one (or two) devices your children rely on more than others?
 - Which one(s) and what makes you say that?
 - **IF DEPENDS:** What does it depend on?
 - **IF DEPENDS ON THE TASK AT HAND:**
 - As far as you can tell, what device(s) do they prefer when communicating with friends?
 - What device(s) do they prefer when looking for information or researching something, such as for a school assignment?
- In general, what social networks do they prefer? (**PROBE:** Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Google+, other (specify))

0:55

IV. GEN Z PARENTS' COLLEGE FUNDING KNOWLEDGE, CONCERNS

Start by: 0:55
Finish by: 1:30

elapsed time: 0:35

I want to turn to the subject of looking for information. In particular, I'd like to talk about the subject of college funding or financial aid.

- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** How many of you plan for your children to attend college or university? (IF NOT PLANNING, ASK: What has led to that decision?)

- How knowledgeable do you feel about the subject of college funding and financial aid?
- What challenges do you face, as a parent, with regard to college funding and financial aid? (**PROBE:** affordability/paying back loans, your inability/limited ability to help financially, how to fill out application forms (FAFSA), other (specify))
- What plan, if any, do you have at this time to save up for your child's post-secondary education?
- Let me turn the question around a bit and ask, to what extent do you feel your children are responsible spenders – for example, they consider their family's financial situation before making purchases?
- To what extent do you consider yourself well versed in federal student aid and federal student loan issues?
- **[FLIPCHART]** How would you prefer to receive information about college funding or financial aid? This can include offline as well as online sources. (**PROBE:** print publications; online/electronic publications; website content; videos; infographics; talks by counselors; texts; social media; messages or alerts on your smartphone or tablet; e-mail; other (specify))
- The Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid provides information to students and borrowers on funding for college or career school, as well as information on federal student loan repayment. If you had the full attention of someone from this office right now, what would you want to ask them? (**PROBE:** What would you want to know or have clarified?)
- Given the age of your child, how involved would you like them to be right now with regard to the financial side of their college education?
- How much emphasis is their school placing on this issue?
- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Have or will your children consider your family's financial situation before deciding to attend college?
- **[FLIPCHART]** Where, if at all, have you ever looked for information about funding for college? (**PROBE:** online (search engines; websites; social media sites – specify); colleges; financial institutions (specify banks, lenders); government sources (specify); family or friends; guidance or financial aid counselor; other (specify))
- Let's look at the flipchart. Which of these formats are you most likely to pay attention to?

- In general, are you more likely to prefer online or more traditional sources? **1:30**

Wrap-up

Those are all the questions I have for you. Thanks for coming!

LEAVE ALL FORMS ON THE TABLE. INCENTIVES AT FRONT.