

**Attachment 3 – Protocols and Supplemental Sheets**

**National Household Education Surveys Program 2019 (NHES:2019) Focus Groups with Parents of Students using Virtual Education**

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# Focus Group 1: Enrolled families who supplement with online learning

## 1) Introduction

*[As parents enter the room, greet them and ask them whether their children are full-time virtual or just supplement their in-school learning with virtual courses. For ease of conversation flow, please request that the parents of full-time virtual students sit together and that the parents of supplemental virtual student sit together. Provide parents sample question items so they can review them and even fill them out as they wait.]*

Hello everyone and welcome. My name is <name> and I am with a research firm called <Sanametrix/Activate Research> who is supporting the U.S. Department of Education with a study about online schooling. I will be moderating our discussion today about your experience with your children's schooling. You were invited here today to share more about your experience with your child's education, and particularly with respect to online classes your child takes.

This is a focus group, which is a research method useful for gaining information about a topic in a comfortable environment. As participants, I ask you to maintain the confidentiality of today's discussion and not share the content with anyone outside the focus group. With your permission, we will audio and video record the session. Your identity will not be included in the summary report. The information you share today will be used to improve our understanding of the schooling experiences of children and families like yourselves.

Now I would like you to write the name you would like to be called by today on both sides of the card in front of you. These are the names we will use to talk with each other during today's session, but they need not be your real name.

In order for our discussion to be productive, I ask that you speak clearly and one at a time, and that you think about the questions and answer candidly. Keep in mind that you don't have to answer every question. While at times you may disagree with the comments made by others, please respect their right to say what they think. At this point, if you would like to leave and not participate in the focus group, feel free to do so now. *[IF ANYONE GETS UP, THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME.]*

Now I will distribute a consent form for this project. *[DISTRIBUTE CONSENT FORM AND GIVE TIME TO READ AND SIGN]*. As the consent form states, the purpose of this focus group is to talk about your child's schooling experiences. We will both audio and video record this session. We will keep these recordings on password-protected computers to help us write up what we learned. At the end of the study, we will destroy the recordings. We will use information from this focus group in our study; sometimes we may even use direct quotes from the conversation. In any case, we will never use your name or other information that would allow readers to determine your identity. Please remember that your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to answer questions or you may choose to stop participating entirely. If you have questions about the study right now, I will be happy to answer them for you. If you have any questions about the study later and need to get into contact with the study team, please feel free to reach out to Stephen Wenck. His contact information is on the second page of the consent form. *[POINT TO STEPHEN WENCK'S CONTACT INFORMATION ON THE SECOND PAGE.]*

Please take a few minutes to read this form and if you feel comfortable doing so, sign the form indicating that you agree to participate in this focus group. *[HAVE PARTICIPANTS RETURN SIGNED INFORMED CONSENT FORMS. IF ANYONE DOES NOT WANT TO SIGN, AND CHOOSES TO LEAVE, THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME.]*

## 2) Type of School and Instruction Delivery

You were each invited here today because at least one of your children is currently enrolled in an online or virtual school, or because they take online classes for credit. When answering questions throughout this discussion, please refer to this child or children.

- a) Let's start by talking about your child's schooling. Can you walk me through a typical week in your child's schooling? [*Probe for: Public/Private/Public Charter, Catholic/religious but not Catholic/not religious, brick-and-mortar, face-to-face/virtual; listen especially for how parents describe the full-time virtual schools – what words do they use to talk about this experience.*] Please start with Monday morning— where does the child go to start the week?
  - i) How does your child receive instruction at this school? [*e.g., in-class or online teacher, online program with no instructor, parent; listen especially for how parents talk about the online part – do they talk about a teacher at all?*]
- b) You mentioned that your children take some or all courses online. Could you please describe that component of your child's education? [*Choose from the following probes as appropriate, based on what we have not yet learned through responses to the previous question.*]
  - i) What type of school is it? [*Probe for: Public/Private/Public Charter, Catholic/religious but not Catholic/not religious, brick-and-mortar, face-to-face/virtual, college or university*]
  - ii) About how many hours per week does your child spend engaged in educational activities with this school?
  - iii) With regard to the virtual or online component of your child's education, how does he or she access online instruction and curricula? Who provides the content? [*Probe for specific terms they might use to describe how instruction is delivered, e.g., platform, school, etc. and listen for whether or not the distinction between who designs the curriculum and who makes the curriculum available to their kids comes up*]

### 3) Fees

Next, I'm going to ask a couple of questions about fees that may be associated with your child's schooling. I will ask these questions first of parents with children who attend online school full-time and then of parents whose children attend online school part-time.

- a) For those of you with one or more children who attend an online school full-time, are there tuition, fees, or other payments that are associated with your child's schooling? [*Listen/probe for "other payments" – books, extracurricular activities.*]
- b) For those of you with one or more children who attend an online school full-time, who pays for the content and the instruction? [*Probe to find out if parents are aware that the school system (district or state) is paying for their ability to access the content in some cases. How does their language distinguish from who the "provider" is.*]
  - i) Do you pay out-of-pocket for any of this instruction?
  - ii) Do you receive any support from any sources to pay for this instruction? [*Listen for family, voucher, tax credit, educational savings account, other.*]

- c) Now for those of you with one or more children who attend an online school part-time, are there tuition, fees, or other payments that are associated with your child's schooling? [*Listen/probe for "other payments" – books, extracurricular activities.*]
- d) For those of you with one or more children who attend an online school part-time, who pays for the content and the instruction? [*Probe to find out if parents are aware that the school system (district or state) is paying for their ability to access the content in some cases. How does their language distinguish from who the "provider" is.*]
  - i) Do you pay out-of-pocket for any of this instruction?
  - ii) Do you receive any support from any sources to pay for this instruction? [*Listen for family, voucher, tax credit, educational savings account, other.*]

#### **4) Identification with homeschooling**

- a) **Do any of you homeschool?** [*Probe to find out why/ why not*]

#### **5) Information Informing Schooling Decisions**

Next, we're going to discuss the information available to you when you made your decision about schooling options for your child.

- a) First, can you talk a bit about how you first learned that online courses were an option for your child?
- b) When you started to consider what schooling options would be right for your children, where did you look for information? [*Listen for: media, advertisement, someone from the district, friend, family member, church, some other way*]
- c) To what extent were you able to find the information you needed to make an informed decision about your child's schooling?

#### **6) Reasons for Virtual Schooling**

Let's shift gears for a few minutes and discuss why and how you chose the schooling options you did for your child.

- a) For those of you whose children attend a virtual school full-time, could you each please talk a little bit about the reasons you chose to incorporate virtual schooling into your child's education? What were the most important factors in this decision?
- b) For those of you whose children just take some classes online, could you each please talk a little bit about the reasons you chose to incorporate virtual schooling into your child's education? What were the most important factors in this decision?

*[Provide example prompts, if needed, such as ...*

- i) *My child needed an advanced course the school didn't offer (e.g., Advanced Placement)*
- ii) *My child needed a specialized course (e.g., foreign language) that the school didn't offer*
- iii) *My child needed to make up a course that s/he failed*
- iv) *My child had a schedule conflict with the in-person courses]*

- c) Some of you have children who are enrolled in schools that you specifically chose, like a charter school. When you decided which school to send your children to, what were the main reasons you chose the specific school you did?

## 7) If Time

- a) We would like to get your feedback on some survey questions we're thinking about. [*Refer to paper with item language.*] The first question tries to determine how to classify the educational experiences of children. Do you see your family's experiences represented in this question?
- b) The second question is about the type of school your child attends. What are your reactions to these instructions and response options? [*Probe for: do the instructions/options clarify or confuse? What are your understandings of charter schools - are they public or private? What are virtual schools? Listen for the words that parents use to describe each of these schooling types*]
- c) The third question is about many different ways that parents can educate their children. What do you think of this question?
- d) The fourth question has to do specifically with online learning. What is your reaction to this question?

## 8) Wrap up

- a) Is there anything else you would like to add about your family's educational choices and experiences?
- b) Thank you very much for taking the time to share your experiences with us today. Your contribution will help enhance our understanding of school choice in the United States, and the Department of Education appreciates your participation.

# Focus Group 1 (Virtual) Supplemental Sheet: Items for Feedback

1) Is this person primarily currently:

- Homeschooled instead of enrolled in a public or private school for some or all classes;
  - Enrolled in a public or private school, or preschool;
  - Enrolled in a college, university or vocational school, or
  - Not in school?
- 

2) What type of school does this child attend?

- Private, Catholic;
- Private, religious but not Catholic;
- Private, not religious;
- Public school

**OR**

What type of school does this child attend?

*Note: Charter schools are public schools*

- Private, Catholic;
- Private, religious but not Catholic;
- Private, not religious;
- Public school

**OR**

What type of school does this child attend?

*Note: Charter schools, both those that meet in brick-and-mortar facilities and those that are virtual, are public schools*

- Private, Catholic;
- Private, religious but not Catholic;
- Private, not religious;
- Public school

**OR**

What type of school does this child attend?

- Private, Catholic;
- Private, religious but not Catholic;
- Private, not religious;
- Public school

**OR**

What type of school does this child attend?

- Private, Catholic;

- Private, religious but not Catholic;
  - Private, not religious;
  - Public school
- 

3)

a) Does this instruction occur in:

- Brick-and-mortar public school (K-12)
- Brick-and-mortar private school (K-12)
- Online school
- College, community college, or university
- Homeschool

b) How many hours each week does this child go to the following places for instruction? Do not include time spent in extracurricular activities.

- Brick-and-mortar public school (K-12) Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Brick-and-mortar private school (K-12) Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Online school Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
  - College, community college, or university Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Homeschool Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

4) Is this child enrolled in any online courses? *Note: Please include only courses that are for credit.*

- No
  - Yes, for some courses
  - Yes, for all courses
-

## Focus Group 2: Homeschool families with virtual schooling supplement

### 2) Introduction

*[As parents enter the room, greet them. Provide parents sample question items so they can review them and even fill them out as they wait.]*

Hello everyone and welcome. My name is <name> and I am with a research firm called <Sanametrix/Activate Research> who is supporting the U.S. Department of Education in research related to homeschooling. I will be moderating our discussion today about your family's experiences with homeschooling. You were invited here today to share more about your child's education, particularly with respect to homeschooling and online course-taking.

This is a focus group, which is a research method useful for gaining information about a topic in a comfortable environment. As participants, I ask you to maintain the confidentiality of today's discussion and not share the content with anyone outside the focus group. With your permission, we will audio and video record the session. Your identity will not be included in the summary report. The information you share today will be used to improve our understanding of the schooling experiences of children and families like yourselves.

Now I would like you to write the name you would like to be called by today on both sides of the card in front of you. These are the names we will use to talk with each other during today's session, but they need not be your real name.

In order for our discussion to be productive, I ask that you speak clearly and one at a time, and that you think about the questions and answer candidly. Keep in mind that you don't have to answer every question. While at times you may disagree with the comments made by others, please respect their right to say what they think. At this point, if you would like to leave and not participate in the focus group, feel free to do so now. *[IF ANYONE GETS UP, THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME.]*

Now I will distribute a consent form for this project. *[DISTRIBUTE CONSENT FORM AND GIVE TIME TO READ AND SIGN]*. As the consent form states, the purpose of this focus group is to talk about your child's schooling experiences. We will both audio and video record this session. We will keep these recordings on password-protected computers to help us write up what we learned. At the end of the study, we will destroy the recordings. We will use information from this focus group in our study; sometimes we may even use direct quotes from the conversation. In any case, we will never use your name or other information that would allow readers to determine your identity. Please remember that your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to answer questions or you may choose to stop participating entirely. If you have questions about the study right now, I will be happy to answer them for you. If you have any questions about the study later and need to get into contact with the study team, please feel free to reach out to Stephen Wenck. His contact information is on the second page of the consent form. *[POINT TO STEPHEN WENCK'S CONTACT INFORMATION ON THE SECOND PAGE.]*

Please take a few minutes to read this form and if you feel comfortable doing so, sign the form indicating that you agree to participate in this focus group. *[HAVE PARTICIPANTS RETURN SIGNED INFORMED CONSENT FORMS. IF ANYONE DOES NOT WANT TO SIGN, AND CHOOSES TO LEAVE, THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME.]*

### 3) Type of School and Instruction Delivery



You were each invited here today because at least one of your children is currently being homeschooled and also participates in online learning. When answering questions throughout this discussion, please refer to this child or children.

- a) We are going to go around the room, and I'd like each of you to take a minute or two to walk me through a typical week for your child's education. Where does the child go, who is with the child, and how are they learning during this time? Please start with Monday morning.
- b) *[If not covered in responses to question above]* How does your child receive his or her homeschool instruction? *[e.g., parent, co-op or local homeschooling group, private tutor or teacher. If the parents indicate charter school, probe for their understanding of charters as public/private.]*
- c) Please tell us about the sources of curriculum, books, or online content used by you or others to homeschool your child.
  - i) Who makes the materials?
  - ii) How do you access them?
  - iii) How does the child access them?
  - iv) How do you typically procure these materials? *[Probe for distinction between online retailers and catalog/publisher/other organization who sells materials online but isn't primarily an online retailer. Listen/probe for formality of online resources: YouTube vs. Khan Academy or edX. Also listen for materials from a public charter.]*
- d) In addition to being homeschooled, is your child enrolled in any courses over the Internet? If so, please describe that component of your child's education. *[Choose from the following probes as appropriate, based on what we have not yet learned through responses to the first question.]*
  - i) What type of school is it? *[Probe for: Public/Private/Public Charter, Catholic/religious but not Catholic/not religious, brick-and-mortar, face-to-face/virtual, college or university. Listen for: virtual/online school – what words do parents use to describe this type of school; charter school – and whether parents consider charter schools to be public/private]*
  - ii) About how many hours per week does your child spend engaged in educational activities with this school?
  - iii) How does your child receive this online instruction? *[e.g., online teacher, online program with no instructor, parent; listen especially for how parents talk about the teacher – do they talk about a teacher at all?]*
  - iv) With regard to the virtual or online component of your child's education, how does he or she access online instruction and curricula? Who provides the content? *[Probe for specific terms they might use to describe how instruction is delivered, e.g., platform, school, etc. and listen for whether or not the distinction between who designs the curriculum and who makes the curriculum available to their kids comes up]*

#### **4) Financial Costs or Expenses**

- i) Are there tuition, fees, or other payments that are associated with this part of your child's schooling? *[Listen/probe for "other payments" – books, extracurricular activities.]*

- ii) Who pays for the content and the instruction? [*Listen to find out if, in any cases, the school system (district or state) is paying for their ability to access the content in some cases. How does their language distinguish from who the “provider” is.*]
  - (1) Do you pay out-of-pocket for any of this instruction?
  - (2) Do you receive any support from any sources to pay for this instruction? [*Listen for family, voucher, tax credit, educational savings account, other.*]

## 5) Information Informing Schooling Decisions

Next, we’re going to discuss the information available to you when you made your decision about schooling options for your child.

- c) When you started to consider options other than traditional public school, what types of information did you seek out? *Listen for: media, advertisement, someone from the district, friend, family member, church, some other way]*
- d) Where did you look for information, and to what extent were you able to find the information you needed to make an informed decision about your child’s schooling?
- e) [*If not clear from previous responses already*] When and how did you learn about online courses?
- f) What did you have to do to enroll your child in online courses?

## 6) Reasons for School Choice

Let’s shift gears for a few minutes and discuss why and how you chose the schooling options you did for your child.

- a) Could you each please talk a little bit about the reasons you chose to use online instruction as part of your homeschooling program for your child? What were the most influential factors in your decision to homeschool?

## 7) If Time

- a) We would like to get your feedback on some particular survey questions we’re thinking about [*refer to paper with item language*]. The first question tries to determine how to classify the educational experiences of children. Do you see your family’s experiences represented in this question?

- b) The second question reads as follows:

*There are many different reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children. Did your family choose to homeschool this child because: (a) You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure? (b) You are dissatisfied with the academic instruction at other schools? (c) You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide religious instruction? ... [other options]*

Would you prefer to answer Yes or No for each reason, or to choose among responses such as “not at all important, a little important, somewhat important, very important”? Why do you think [*chosen method*] is a better way to structure the question?

- c) The third question has to do with a number of ways that homeschooling families might supplement their homeschooling curriculum. What do you think of this question?
  - i) What if it said “face-to-face” instead of “brick-and-mortar”? Physical building?

- ii) Imagine you were filling out a questionnaire that was sent to parents who homeschool *as well as* parents who don't. Then, we would be asking about total instruction rather than supplemental instruction, and we'd add "homeschool" to the list of options for both parts. [*point to the places on the question where this change would occur*] Would you be able to fill out the question if it looked like that?
- d) The fourth question is specifically about online schooling. What do you think of this question? [*Listen for responses about the credit/curriculum instruction as well as response options.*]
- e) [*Refer to 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey school questionnaire as an example of endorsements as well as the list of organizations on the supplemental sheet.*] If you were to receive a questionnaire and it had endorsements from homeschooling groups on it, would that impact whether or not you fill out the questionnaire? Are there particular groups whose endorsement would make you more likely or less likely to fill it out?

## **8) Wrap up**

- a) Is there anything else you would like to add about your family's experiences with homeschool and virtual school?
- b) Thank you very much for taking the time to share your experiences with us today. Your contribution will help enhance our understanding of school choice in the United States, and the Department of Education appreciates your participation.

## Focus Group 2 (Homeschool) Supplemental Sheet: Items for Feedback

1) Is this person primarily currently:

- Homeschooled instead of enrolled in a public or private school for some or all classes;
- Enrolled in a public or private school, or preschool;
- Enrolled in a college, university or vocational school, or
- Not in school?

2) There are many different reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children. Did your family choose to homeschool this child because:

<i>(a) You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(b) You are dissatisfied with the academic instruction at other schools?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(c) You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide religious instruction?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(d) You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide moral instruction?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(e) This child has a physical or mental health problem that has lasted six months or more?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(f) This child has a temporary illness that prevents him/her from going to school?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(g) This child has other special needs that you feel the school can't or won't meet?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(h) You are interested in a nontraditional approach to children's education?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>(i) You have another reason for homeschooling your child? — Specify.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

OR:

There are many different reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children. How important were the following reasons in your decision?

<i>(a) You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(b) You are dissatisfied with the academic instruction at other schools?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(c) You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide religious instruction?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(d) You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide moral instruction?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(e) This child has a physical or mental health problem that has lasted six months or more?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(f) This child has a temporary illness that prevents him/her from going to school?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(g) This child has other special needs that you feel the school can't or won't meet?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(h) You are interested in a nontraditional approach to children's education?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> A little important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important
<i>(i) You have another reason for</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> A little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Very

homeschooling your child? — Specify.	important	important	important	Important
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3)

a) Does this supplemental instruction occur in:

- Brick-and-mortar public school (K-12)
- Brick-and-mortar private school (K-12)
- Online school
- College, community college, or university

b) How many hours each week does this child go to the following places for instruction? Do not include time spent in extracurricular activities.

- Brick-and-mortar public school (K-12) Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- Brick-and-mortar private school (K-12) Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- Online school Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- College, community college, or university Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

a) Does this instruction occur in:

- Brick-and-mortar public school (K-12)
- Brick-and-mortar private school (K-12)
- Online school
- College, community college, or university
- Homeschool

b) How many hours each week does this child go to the following places for instruction? Do not include time spent in extracurricular activities.

- Brick-and-mortar public school (K-12) Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- Brick-and-mortar private school (K-12) Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- Online school Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- College, community college, or university Hours: \_\_\_\_\_
- Homeschool Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Is this child enrolled in any online courses? *Note: Please include only courses that are for credit or are part of your homeschool curriculum.*

- No
- Yes, for some courses
- Yes, for all courses

5) Some questionnaires are endorsed by organizations. For instance, the 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey school questionnaire was endorsed by several groups (please see example on following page).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

OMB No. 1850-0598: Approval Expires 07/31/2014  
Conducted by:  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

# SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

## SCHOOLS AND STAFFING SURVEY

### 2011-12 SCHOOL YEAR



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*(Please correct any errors in school name, address, and ZIP Code.)*

**THIS SURVEY HAS BEEN ENDORSED BY:**

- American Association of School Administrators
- American Federation of Teachers
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Middle School Association



**This survey is authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, 20 U.S. Code §9541(b) and §9543(a). The results will only be produced as statistical summaries.**

FORM **SASS-3A**  
(7-18-2011)



What do you think about asking homeschool groups to endorse a questionnaire?

Possible groups to ask for endorsements could include:

Homeschool Legal Defense Association

National Black Home Educators

Coalition for Responsible Home Education

Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out