

Discussion Guide.

To: Department of Education
From: Huge

Subject: Department of Education Messaging
Framework Research
Date: January 17, 2018

Research Purpose

The Department of Education and Huge are planning research to understand top concerns and issues on the minds of parents and their children within the education system today, and initial reactions to proposed messaging frameworks. In parallel, this research will explore perceptions of the education system today. At a high level, the Department of Education would like to understand, from the perspective of parents of K-12 and college-aged students nationwide: (a) top of mind issues in education and their relative importance; (b) perceptions of the department and its approaches to education policy; and (c) reactions to proposed solutions of the department.

In order to ensure we reach the widest, most representative mix of the diverse American makeup, we are proposing focus groups in a mix of geographical settings, structured with the breadth of education levels of the children of the parents we will include in mind. In parallel with the focus groups, we are proposing a micronarrative survey that will complement the insights we will extract during the group settings. This will allow the Department of Education to validate or expand on what was heard in the focus group mix and provide a deeper glimpse into the American psyche.

Methodology

Huge will conduct in person focus groups: six (6) 80 minute sessions. Two (2) sessions in an urban market, two (2) sessions in a suburban market, and two (2) sessions in a rural market.

There will be a total of 10 recruited participants for each session with the expectation that 8 will attend, in each market we will conduct 2 sessions. Respondents will be screened based on the following:

- Mix of M/F
- Parents of Pre-K to college-aged students
- No more than 2 respondents in a private school
- Mix of ethnicity, HHI and education levels
- Not government or marketing/advertising affiliated
- Have not attended a focus group in the past 6 months
- Articulation screener

Schedule

Richmond, VA (Rural Recruit)

Group 1: Parents of PreK-8 Students	01/18	5:00 – 6:20PM
Group 2: Parents of High School and College-Aged Students (or recent College graduates)	01/18	6:40 – 8:00PM

Atlanta, GA (Suburban Recruit)

Group 1: Parents of PreK-8 Students	01/22	5:00 – 6:20PM
Group 2: Parents of High School and College-Aged Students (or recent College graduates)	01/22	6:40 – 8:00PM

Columbus, OH (Urban)

Group 1: Parents of PreK-8 Students	01/23	5:30 – 7:00PM
Group 2: Parents of High School and College-Aged Students (or recent College graduates)	01/23	7:30 – 9:00PM

RESEARCH GOALS:

The primary goals of this research are to:

- Understand top concerns and issues on the minds of parents and their children within the education system today.
- Gauge initial reactions to proposed messaging.
- Explore perceptions of the Department of Education today.
- Top of mind issues in education and their relative importance.
- Perceptions of the Department and its approach to education policy.

DISCUSSION OUTLINE:

1. Introduction
2. Dept. of Education
3. Messaging
4. Conclusion
5. Thank and Close

1. INTRODUCTION (10 MINS)

Section objectives: Introductions, give an overview of the session, set out expectations

- 90-minute focus group
- Participant confidentiality / CASRO code of conduct
- Materials shown are intended to be draft materials and not currently published
- Recording for analysis

MODERATOR:

- This is not a test, and there are no wrong answers.
- I didn't develop any of the messaging that you'll be seeing today. I want you to be honest.
- We are recording, and my team is taking notes in the back. This is for analysis—we won't be sharing it. You won't be on TV or the Internet, I promise.
- The most important thing is that I hear your thoughts, straight from the heart. I'm traveling the country talking to lots of people, and you're invited tonight because I care about what you think—personally.

Set expectations for the session:

- Keep on topic
- A lot to cover today – forewarn may have to move on to keep to timings
- Personal introduction: Independent moderator
- Brief overview of topic – the current American education system
- Group introductions; Age, occupation, family situation, how many children in the education system and age/s.

2. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DISCUSSION (30 MINS)

MODERATOR: I'd like to start tonight's discussion by opening up a conversation about the current American education system. Each of you will have different experiences with your individual children and school district, so please remember to stick specifically to the question being posed.

- In what way do you think American students are either prepared or unprepared? Which way do you lean? Please use the pad and paper in front of you and jot down some notes based on that question.
- **MODERATOR:** Write down their opinions on a flip chart and probe verbally.
 - In your opinion, is there anything else in the education system that is currently lacking?
- How much information do you, as parents, need to help your child/children become more prepared?
- Do you, as parents, question everything about your child's education? If so, how do you question, and to whom?

MODERATOR: Now, I'm going to ask a question for each of you to think about and then write down on the pads in front of you: (Time permitting for written; otherwise, we will ask for verbal responses)

- "What would I want it to look like if I could design an education plan for my child/children?"
 - **Follow-up:** Is it possible to not have a "one-size-fits-all solution?"
- **MODERATOR:** Write down their opinions on a flip chart and probe verbally.

3. MESSAGING (45 MINUTES)

MODERATOR: I'm going to show you some messages that I would like for you to review and give feedback. As you're reading through each one, please think about how well the message would resonate with parents of school-age children. **What jumps out at you first?**

In front of you, you have highlighters and red pens. Please highlight any words, phrases or sentences that you find to be credible, and with the red pen, please underline any words, phrases or sentences that you do not find to be credible.

NOTE: The idea is to go through each message and discuss after they've marked it up. Time permitting, I can tally on a flip chart so we can see the feedback in progress.

- What is the main idea or message?
 - Specifically, what is communicating this message?
 - What thoughts or feelings does it bring to mind?
 - How would you modify this message in order to make it more credible and feasible?
 - Is this message personally relevant to you?
 - How do you think this message could potentially help parents?
 - Is there anything else that should be addressed?
 - Overall, do you like or dislike this message?
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- Who in the news today do you think would deliver a message such as these?

MODERATOR: What are some of your spontaneous thoughts on the following?

- The American educational system as "antiquated"
 - Safety procedures
 - Summers off
 - Early morning start
 - Do you think that families should be allocated funds to allow their children to go to different schools? (Lower income families)
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- Have you ever questioned any of them?

4. CONCLUSION (5 MINS)

- What are some of your final thoughts on what we've discussed today?

- Is there anything else you'd like to share, or anything we've discussed that you'd like to add to, before we finish?

5. THANK AND CLOSE