

APPENDIX F

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP FORMS AND PROTOCOL

F.1 FOCUS GROUP EMAIL INVITATION

F.2 FOCUS GROUP CONSENT LETTER AND FORM

F3. FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

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FOCUS GROUP EMAIL INVITATION

Subject: Discussion group about IEP_M

As part of the Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices (EPSEP), we are looking to talk with teachers implementing the IEP_M program. Mathematica Policy Research, the organization conducting the study for the U.S. Department of Education will be conducting a teacher focus group on [DATE] and [TIME]. This group discussion will allow you to share your opinions about using IEP_M in the classroom and what challenges you have faced. The focus group will last about 90 minutes and each participant will receive a \$50 gift card as a thank you. The research team will ask all participants to keep the information discussed in the focus group private; however, there is a chance other participants may reveal information discussed in the focus group to people who were not in the focus group.

Participation in the focus group is completely voluntary and the data we collect will be used for research purposes only. The reports prepared for the study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district or individual. We will not provide information that identifies you or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

If you are interested in participating in the teacher focus group on [DATE] at [TIME], please send us an email at EPSEP@mathematica-mpr.com or give us a call at (833) 741-0984 by [DATE].

Thank you.

[SIGNATURE]

OMB #: 1850-0938
Approval Date:

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT LETTER AND FORM

Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices Conducted on behalf of the United States Department of Education

Thank you for participating in the Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices (EPSEP)! As you may remember, EPSEP is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences and is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, an independent research company. As part of this study, we are conducting focus groups this spring and next spring. The focus group is an opportunity for teachers to talk about your experiences participating in the Instructionally Enhanced Pyramid Model (IEP_M) program, and to let us know first-hand how things are going with implementing the program in your classroom. Focus groups are a critical component of EPSEP, as they will help us understand what has worked well with IEP_M, what challenges you have encountered, and how IEP_M can have the maximum potential to benefit children in inclusive preschool classrooms. We hope you will agree to participate.

The focus group will take approximately 90 minutes and will be audio recorded. All focus group participants will receive a \$50 gift card. Participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. There are no direct risks or benefits to participating. I understand the study team will instruct participants to keep the information private, however, there is a chance other participants may reveal information discussed in the focus group to people who were not in the focus group. EPSEP has been given Institutional Review Board approval by Health Media Lab Institutional Review Board.

Information collected for this study comes under the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the Institute of Education Sciences (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). Responses to this data collection will be used only for statistical purposes. The reports prepared for the study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district or individual. We will not provide information that identifies you or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

If you have any questions about this study or your rights as a research participant, please talk with the researchers here today or call us toll free at 833-741-0984 or by email at EPSEP@mathematica-mpr.com.

If you agree to participate in today's focus group, please sign the attached consent form. Thank you for your continuing support of this important study.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1850-0916. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 90 minutes, including the time to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202. If you have comments or concerns regarding the content or the status of your individual submission of this form, write directly to: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 550 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20202

OMB #: 1850-0938
Approval Date:

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

I have read this consent form and understand what I am being asked to do as a participant in the EPSEP teacher focus group.

1. Participant Name (Print) _____

Date _____

2. Participant Signature _____

3. Home Phone _____

Cellular/Other Phone _____

4. Email Address _____

5. School Name _____

6. District Name _____

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Evaluation of Preschool Special Education Practices Conducted on behalf of the United States Department of Education

SCHOOL: _____

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS: _____

MATHEMATICA STAFF: _____ DATE : _____

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS GROUP (5 MINUTES)

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us. We are from Mathematica Policy Research, an independent research firm. My name is [NAME OF FACILITATOR] and this is my colleague [NAME OF NOTE TAKER]. We are part of a research team conducting a study funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

We are here today to learn more about your experiences with the Instructionally Enhanced Pyramid Model (IEP_M). Your point of view is extremely valuable. Our conversation today will take about 90 minutes. We will record and take notes during our conversation. This will help us make sure we document what you say correctly. The recording will be erased after we have completed writing up our notes. If anyone would prefer that we not record our conversation, we will not record it.

Privacy Statement: We will keep the information you share with us private. We will only use first names as we talk today. We will not ask for or write down your first or last names; and if we use quotes from this discussion, we will not include the name of the person who made the statement. No one but the researchers will see any of the notes from our discussion.

We are also talking to other teachers participating in this program. We will take our notes from our conversation today and combine it with information from other conversations with teachers like you. This will help understand how IEP_M is working and what teachers like you think about it.

Please keep in mind:

- There are no right or wrong answers to our questions. We are just here to learn about your experiences with IEP_M and what you think about it.
 - Being part of our discussion is completely voluntary. You do not need to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.
-

- Refusing to participate or answer a question will not negatively affect you in any way.
- Please remember to be respectful of everyone’s opinions, even if they are different from your own.
- Please do not share what we discuss today outside of this room. Please respect one another’s privacy.
- Would anyone like to add any additional ground rules for our discussion?

II. INFORMED CONSENT (10 MINUTES)

We need to have everyone sign a consent form before we get started. Informed consent is when we explain:

- The purpose of this study
- The way our discussion today will work
- How we will use the notes we will take during our conversation today before you agree to participate, and
- Information about your rights and the risks for you.

This is all detailed on the consent form. Is there anyone who hasn’t yet completed a consent form? Please let me know if you have any questions.

MODERATOR SHOULD CONDUCT INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS (for teachers who have not already signed the form)

- Pass out two copies of the informed consent form to each teacher.
- Ask the teachers to read the consent form and ask if they have any questions.
- Answer all questions.
- Ask teachers to sign it, give you one copy and keep one copy for him/herself

Okay, if there aren’t any additional questions, let’s get started.

III. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS (75 MINUTES)

A. Program Implementation (25 Minutes)

Let's start by talking about your training and participation in IEP_M.

1. How long have you been participating in IEP_M? Did all of you start with the initial training in MONTH before the beginning of the school year or did anyone begin sometime later?
 2. **[YEAR 1 ONLY]** Let's talk about the formal group training sessions. The first one was in July/August, another in October, and one in December. What did you think about these training sessions?
 - PROBE: What did you like best? Which aspects of the trainings were most helpful?
 - PROBE: Was there any topic you wished they had spent more time on?
 - PROBE: What did you think about the length of the trainings?
 3. **[YEAR 2 ONLY]** Let's talk about the formal group refresher training that took place over the summer of 2020. What did you think about this refresher training?
 - PROBE: What did you like best? Which aspects of the refresher training did you find most helpful?
 - PROBE: Were there any topics you wish the training spent more time on?
 - PROBE: What did you think about the length of the refresher training? Did you think it was effective?
 4. **[YEAR 1 ONLY]** What did you think about the three separate trainings? Did you like having each tier introduced separately? Why or why not?
 5. IF ANYONE STARTED AFTER THE INITIAL TRAINING OR MISSED A TRAINING
ASK: Tell me a bit about your training experience. How did the IEP_M provider team make sure you got all the information from training sessions you missed?
 6. What do you think about the materials provided on IEP_M?
 - PROBE: How do you feel about the training manual you received? Was it clear? Helpful? Do you find yourself going back to it?
 - PROBE: Has your coach provided any materials to you? If so, what kind of materials? How useful have those materials been to you?
 7. Let's turn now to your coach specifically. What are your feelings on having a coach? Have those feelings evolved over time?
 8. In general, how would you characterize the relationship you have with your coach?
 - PROBE: What do you like about the relationship? What is hard about the relationship?
-

9. What is your opinion on the quality of the coaching and feedback being provided to you?
- PROBE: Do you feel like your coach has expertise in IEP_M and can provide the help you need to become proficient? Do you feel that the coach was readily available when needed over this school year?
10. Do you feel like your school and your supervisor are supportive of the IEP_M program, and your participation in it (and the time it requires from you)?

B. Coaching Activities (15 Minutes)

11. How often do you meet with your coach?
- PROBE: Do you feel this frequency is too often, not often enough, or just right? Do you feel that coaching could have a bigger impact with more visits? Or do you think the number of visits could be reduced without undermining the coaching?
- [YEAR 2 ONLY]** What did you think about the frequency of the coaching in Year 2 compared to Year 1? Did you feel that the number of meetings was sufficient to make progress in Year 2?
12. How often does your coach observe your classroom and provide feedback? Do you get feedback from your coach in between observations? What form is that feedback in – face-to-face, email, or phone?
- PROBE: Do you feel this frequency is too often, not often enough, or just right? What happens if you have a question in between coaching sessions?
13. Describe a typical session with your coach.
- PROBE: What is your role in the coaching session? What activities take place during a coaching session? To what extent does the coach make clear the importance or relevance of the feedback he or she is giving you ?
14. Do you have formal goals you are working towards with your coach?
- PROBE: How well do you think the goals are suited to you as a teacher and your particular needs and those of the children in your classroom?
- [YEAR 2 ONLY]** How have your goals evolved from Year 1 to Year 2 of participating in IEP_M?
15. Do you plan together with your coach for what you'll accomplish at each coaching session? If so, could you tell us more about what you plan and how?
- PROBE: Do you feel that your coach is prepared for your meetings? Do you have time to prepare for the sessions (if needed)? [If there is no formal planning] Could you elaborate on how you know what to expect in each coaching session?
16. What kinds of things have you been working on with your coach? Could you give some examples?

17. **[YEAR 2 ONLY]** Has the focus of what you've been working on with your coach evolved from Year 1 to Year 2? Could you explain how?
18. How well are you able to understand the feedback from your coach and integrate it your day-to-day practice? To what extent does your coach provide feedback in a constructive, non-judgmental way? How does the feedback make you feel?
19. What aspects of coaching do you find most useful/helpful? Why?

C. Improved Practices and Behaviors (25 Minutes)

20. Thinking about the tiers of IEP_M, let's start with Tier 1. Discuss what aspects of Tier 1 you feel you are able to implement well. What aspects have been challenging?
 - PROBE: Can you give some examples? IF NEEDED: Can you tell me in what ways this has happened, for example in supporting children's play, communication, providing positive feedback and encouragement of appropriate behavior, encouraging family engagement and support?
21. Have you rearranged your classroom to improve peer-to-peer and teacher-to-child interactions since starting IEP_M?
 - PROBE: How did you rearrange your classroom? Do you think it has improved interactions in the classroom? How?
22. Now, thinking about Tier 2, what are the aspects that you have been able to implement well? What aspects have been challenging?
 - PROBE: Can you give some specific examples?
 - Do you feel able to identify the children who need Tier 2 supports and what to do to support them in the moment?
 - Do you feel that you have enough familiarity or practice with the Tier 2 supports to employ the one/s that are most effective for individual children?
23. Now, thinking about Tier 3, first, do you have any children in your classroom who have severe and persistent challenging behavior? How many children?
24. Have you created and implemented a behavior support plan for children with these challenging behaviors? To what extent were you able to follow the steps to develop the plan? To implement the plan? Was your coach available to help you with this process? **[YEAR 2 ONLY]** To what extent has your capacity to create and implement a behavior support plan changed from your first year of participating in the program to the second year of participation? What role has your coach played in these changes?
25. What was most difficult about developing and implementing the plans?
 - How did you address these challenges?
26. Now let's talk about how you feel overall in terms of teaching in an inclusive preschool classroom. How confident do you feel in your ability to work with children with disabilities? Has your confidence changed since the start of this school year? How?

[YEAR 2 ONLY] Has your confidence changed since you started the coaching program in the 2019-2020 school year? How?

27. Aside from what has already been mentioned, are there other practices you have put into place in the classroom that you learned from your coaching sessions?
 - PROBE: Has it gone well in the classroom? Why or why not? Can you give examples?
28. Do you find that you don't have time to do things you used to do that were beneficial for you or for the children you teach because of the time you need spend on IEP_M?
 - PROBE: What is it that you have stopped doing? Can you give examples?
29. Do you feel as though IEP_M is reasonable to learn and implement?
30. Do you feel as though you could easily integrate within the general curriculum (whatever curriculum you are using in the classroom)?

D. Coaching Suggestions/Closing/Thank You (10 Minutes)

31. Is there anything else you think is an important aspect of IEP_M for me to understand?
32. What are the biggest obstacles you see in making IEP_M a success? Is there anything the coach could be doing differently? **[YEAR 2 ONLY]** Have these obstacles changed from Year 1 to Year 2 of the program?
33. **[YEAR 1 ONLY]** What if any changes in the IEP_M program or coaching would you like to see for next year?

Thank you for your participation today!

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