FTC Critical Thinking for Tweens

Online Focus Group
Discussion Guidelines
(Educators)

FEDERAL TRADE
COMMISSION

I. **Introduction and Warm-Up (5 minutes)**
   Moderator will introduce himself to the participants and:
   - Explain basics of conversation: be honest, speak your opinions, no right or wrong answers, we don't need consensus but we require respect for others, some of my colleagues will be listening in.
   - Ask for participants' verbal approval to record interviews.
   - Explain that the purpose of the discussion is to talk about how to increase critical thinking skills about privacy, scams and online safety for tweens.
     - Remind teachers to focus on their 8- to 10- or 11- to 12-year-old students.
     - For reference: The goal of this project is to help a generation of children learn and practice critical thinking skills they can use every day to protect themselves online, spot and avoid scams, and become good digital citizens.
   - Have respondents introduce themselves and say one surprising thing they've discovered/become interested in recently online.

II. **Educational Technology (20 minutes)**
   - Describe your comfort level with using technology for classroom instruction. Which tools have the best efficacy/results? Which tools provide useful data?
   - What subjects/topics do you use technology with?
   - What is your school's access to technology? What challenges, if any, do you face?
   - How are your students' technology skills?
   - What are some educational sites or games that you've used that you think your students like and that really work? [LIST]
     - Why are these ideal for this age range?
     - What do they do for kids?
     - What makes them unique?
     - Do they have anything in common in terms of:
       - Approach
       - World
       - Characters
       - Game play
       - Device/platform
       - Evaluation

III. **Content Topic Areas (30 minutes)**
   Set the stage for the conversation with this quick review of topic areas.
   1. **Privacy and personal safety** (e.g., protecting personal information, location-based services, etc.)
   2. **Spot and avoid scams and find fakes** (e.g., freebies, fake surveys, phishing scams)

3. **Digital citizenship** (e.g., protecting personal information, using good judgment and treating others with respect to make the online world a more welcoming place for everyone)

- What are some of your concerns or fears about your students being online or spending a lot of time on their devices?
- Do you think they have the same concerns?
    - How are their concerns similar or different?
- What skills do you feel would help them be safer online/on their devices, and would reassure you?
    - What would you want to teach them?
    - What kind of skills or information is *not* helpful?
- What's a good term to use to describe all of this stuff:
    - Digital Safety? Online Safety? Online Privacy? Digital Citizenship?
- Are these ideas of **[use term determined above]** different for different devices for your students? For different sites or apps?
- Are they different with different people? In different places?
- Are they different when your students think about them for themselves versus how they affect other people?
    - What about how their actions affect other people?
- How do you keep students safe online? Do you feel you are provided with accessible curriculum, information, or tools for addressing this?
- What are you sure your students know about **[term]**? MAKE LIST
- What are you sure your students are not so sure about? MAKE LIST
- What are students' big questions or concerns on the subjects? MAKE LIST
- What do you think that your students think these things are or mean?
    - Determining trusted sources
    - Native advertising
    - Smart devices
    - Sharing embarrassing content
    - The long life of online content
    - Misinformation
    - Behavioral marketing
- Where do your students go to find answers about this topic?
    - Do you feel like they're getting the right answers?
- What other resources might you suggest they try to use to get answers?
    - Do you think they'd actually use those sources?
- What's missing from these sources?
    - What would you add to make them better?
    - What would you take away?
- What are some of the core issues you would want to see included in an educational program on online privacy and safety/digital citizenship?
    - What is missing from the current offerings?
    - What can be improved?

IV. **Curriculum Options/Design (30 minutes)**
- What is the best way we can we deliver this content to you, that will help you engage your students, and provide you with a program that is easy for you to use?
- Where would this content fit best in the curriculum and standards you are already teaching?
- What are some ways we could give kids creative authorship of this type of content or within these activities?
  - How do you do that in your current teaching environment, if at all?
- If you were considering optimizing an interactive educational/entertaining tool for your students, what elements would it need to…?
  - Include
  - Exclude
  - Emphasize
  - Explain
- What types of in-class, game-based activities would be useful?
- How do you think tweens would respond to this?
- What makes a program like this easy to use in the classroom?
- How would you use this kind of resource in your classroom?
- What would the program need to contain for you to be able to evaluate your students?
- What is the ideal balance between paper/pencil and online instruction, assessment, etc.?
- What types of discussion guides or lesson plan formats and interactive online quizzes should be considered?

V. Wrap-Up and Additional Questions (5 minutes)
- Questions from colleagues
- Thanks