



Moderator's Guide

Student Focus Groups for Food Service Input

The purpose of the focus group sessions is to understand the choices students make for the foods selected at schools and their related perceptions, and to use this information to inform the design of food service staff training and methodologies to improve the nutritional environment of the school.

If applicable, allow students to get lunch and have them sit around the tables.

Introduction

Hello. My name is [Full Name]. Please call me [First Name]. I'm going to be leading a discussion for the next half hour or so about your eating habits and preferences, particularly during the school day.

Why are we doing this? We've been asked by the people who run the food service department operation at your school to talk to you because we want to get student input on the food served in your school, what changes you think should be made, and what kinds of products you think should be available.

Since you may not have given this topic too much thought before, I want to encourage you all to say what you think, no matter what it might be. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. I don't work for the people who prepare and serve your meals at the high school, so nothing you say will hurt my feelings. In fact, the more honest you can be the better. I really need to know what you truly think.

Again, today we'll be talking in general about the food you like to eat and the food service operation at school.

Ground Rules

We're recording our discussion on this cassette player so that I don't have to write everything down. To allow our conversation to flow more freely, I'd like to offer a few guidelines to keep us all on the same track.

First, it's very important that you try to talk one at a time.

Second, I need to hear from everybody today, but not at the same time, don't feel like you need to answer every question.

Third, feel free to address all your comments to me and please don't interrupt anyone else and don't hold side conversations.

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Fourth, we're going to ask you to fill out a short survey form, and will collect that at the end of the session.

Fifth, I've been asked to find to as much as I can about your feelings concerning what you eat at school, and what you'd like to see the cafeteria do differently. Remember, there are no wrong answers. So even if what you believe is different from everyone else on a particular point, please speak up anyway. Your personal opinion is important and it's critical that you be authentic (tell the truth). You're the customers – the ones that eat and buy food in your school, and I'm really interested in hearing everything that you have to say about the subject of food and eating at school.

Finally, we aren't attributing specific answers from specific people, so don't worry that we're recording who said what.

I'd like to start by having everyone introduce themselves. Please just say your first name and what grade you're in.

[Pause for responses]

Questions

1. What do you like about the food prepared and sold at your school?

Possible Prompts:

- Is it fast and easy to get?
- Is the food tasty?
- Does the food look good?
- Is the food hot enough? Cold enough?
- Does the food served at your school smell good and inviting?
- Are the portion sizes ok?

2. What would make you eat food prepared or sold at school more often OR what would make you like this food more?

3. What do you think about the selection of foods available to you on campus?

Possible Prompts

- Number of Choices
- Variety
- Other foods you'd like to see offered?

4. What types of menu choices/foods are important to you?

Possible Prompts

- What foods do you like most?
- What foods do you think are good for you?

5. How would you describe the quality of foods sold and prepared on campus?

Possible Prompts:

- Do you think the food is good?
- How do the foods taste?

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- How do the foods look?
- Do you get enough food for the price?

6. Would you pay more for something different, and if so, what would those different foods be?

7. How much more would you be willing to pay? (A quarter, 50 cents, a dollar, more than a dollar?)

8. How nutritious/healthy do you think foods sold and prepared at school are? Is the food sold good for your health?

9. Are there enough healthy food choices available at school?

10. What are some additional healthier items that you would like to see sold or prepared?

11. What do you think of the service in the cafeteria?

Possible Prompts

- How do you feel you're treated?
- Is it a happy environment?
- Is the service speed good?

12. What do you like about the places you go to eat outside of school?

Thank students for their participation and remind them to leave their worksheets behind (see next page).

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Student Focus Group Questionnaire

Date _____ School Name _____

Time of Day (What time is it now?) _____

1. How often do you eat food prepared or sold at school?

Put a checkmark (x) in the boxes that best apply.

| Locations | Never | Once | Twice | Three Times | Four Times | Five Times |
|--------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------------|------------|------------|
| School Meal Serving Line | | | | | | |
| School Vending Machine | | | | | | |
| A La Carte Line | | | | | | |
| Pizza Cart | | | | | | |
| From Home | | | | | | |

2. On average, how much do you spend at lunch per day? (Circle one.)

- a. \$0
- b. \$0-\$0.99
- c. \$1-\$1.99
- d. \$2-\$3.99
- e. \$4-\$6
- f. More than \$6

3. What are the 3 things you like MOST about the foods sold or prepared at school?

4. What are the 3 things you like LEAST about the foods sold or prepared at school?