

Focus Group/Interview Questions

The following focus group/interview questions* are appropriate for focus groups and interviews. Typically, focus groups have fewer questions (5–10 maximum) and encompass broader categories. Individual interviews tend to yield more in-depth information since the interviewer can probe for greater detail. Be sure to reassure all focus group participants and interviewees that their responses are confidential and the information being gathered is for research purposes only.

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Focus Group/Interview Questions for Teachers

Select only those questions that target your areas of interest.

- Why did you become a teacher?
- Why did you choose to teach at this school?
- Have you taught at other schools? If yes, why did you?
- What do you think teachers should know and do so that all students reach their potential?
- What skills do current teachers lack?
- Do you think your pre-service education prepared you for teaching? Why/why not?
- What are the most important teaching qualifications and credentials?
- How successful are the students at your school? To what do you attribute this?
- What do you think of the quality of teaching in your district as a whole? Do you think the quality varies significantly from school to school? If so, why?
- What measures should the district use to hire teachers?
- What measures should the district use to evaluate current teachers?
- How would you rate the system the district uses to assign teachers?
- Does the district provide and/or facilitate professional development that helps you become a better teacher? That helps new teachers? That helps teachers as a whole?
- Do the working conditions at your school help, hinder, or have no effect on your teaching? Why?
- Is the district compensation system (including salary, benefits, and incentives) *fair*—in terms of how much individual teachers earn—and is it *adequate*—in terms of how much teachers earn overall?
- Do you feel supported by your principal? By the district staff? By the superintendent? By the school board? By the public?
- What changes would you make in how your school is run?
- What changes would you make in how the district is run?
- What should be done to make sure we have highly qualified teachers in our schools?
- What else would you like us to know about being a teacher in this district?

Background information: Collect the following background information on teachers, and the context in which they teach, when conducting teacher interviews and focus groups.

<p>SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS</p> <p>Which best describes the school in which you teach?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Low poverty: <35% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Medium poverty: 35 to <50% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> High poverty: 50 to <75% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very high poverty: >75% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch</p>	<p>TEACHER EXPERIENCE</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Years teaching</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Years at this school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Years at current grade level</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Years teaching current subject area</p> <p>Certification(s) held: _____</p> <p>Degree(s) held:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor’s degree (Major) _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Master’s degree (Major) _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree (Concentration) _____</p>
<p>GENDER</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p>	<p>ETHNICITY</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White, Non-Hispanic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Black, Non-Hispanic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaskan Native</p>

Focus Group/Interview Questions for Local Residents

- What should teachers know and be able to do?
- What qualifications and credentials should teachers have?
- What are the most important characteristics of quality teaching?
- If you were to write a job description, what would you list as the key skills of a good teacher?
- What has the greatest impact on the quality of teaching in our state?
- What should be done to make sure that we have quality teaching in our state?
- In what types of school-related activities have you participated during the past year?
- If you do not participate in such activities, what keeps you from doing so?
- What would encourage you to become more involved?

Background information: Collect the following background information from local residents when conducting interviews or focus groups.

Age _____	▪ How many years have you lived in our city/community/locale? _____
Female ____ Male ____	▪ How many years have you lived in your neighborhood? _____
Ethnicity _____	▪ Did you attend any of our public schools? _____
	▪ Do you have any children? _____ If yes, do they/did they attend our public schools? _____

Focus Group/Interview Questions for Students and Youth

- Have you ever considered becoming a teacher?
- What would motivate/inspire you to become a teacher? What would discourage you from becoming one?
- Do you think you would make a good teacher? Why/why not?
- What would you need to do to prepare yourself for teaching?
- Do you feel your teachers treat students as individuals?
- To what extent have your teachers paid attention to your particular strengths, weaknesses, interests, and needs, in their presentation of subject matter or in their methods of teaching?
- What one thing has helped you the most to achieve in school?
- What one thing has prevented you from achieving more?
- If there were one thing you could change or do differently to help students to learn and achieve more, what would it be?

Background information: Collect the following background information from students and youth when conducting interviews or focus groups.

Age _____	▪ Grade Level: _____
Female ____ Male ____	▪ Do you attend public school in the district? _____ If yes, which school(s)? _____
Ethnicity _____	▪ How many years have you attended this school? _____