

Coaching session 5: Development of focus groups for the Early Learning Inventory pilot

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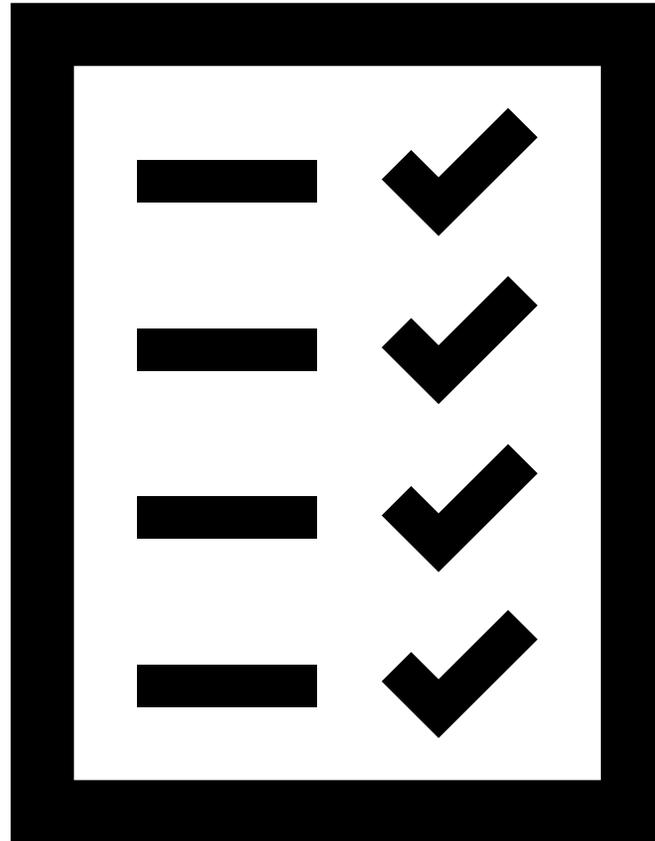
Session objectives

1. Review best practices for developing and conducting focus groups.
2. Determine design of the focus groups.
3. Review draft Early Learning Inventory (ELI) pilot focus group protocol.
4. Develop management plan for focus group development.



Before we get started:
Updates and next steps for the teacher survey

Teacher survey updates



Review best practices for development of focus group protocols

Develop a protocol.

- A focus group protocol should be a guide but not a rigid script.
- Speaking with groups of people can lead conversations in unpredictable directions. The protocol should allow for deviations that are valuable and relevant to the core purposes of the focus group.

Focus on a small number of core questions.

- Focus group protocols should not exceed ~10 main questions.
- Use broad, open-ended questions. Don't ask for a "yes" or "no" response. Ask participants to describe their experiences and perceptions, and to give examples.

Ask participants to speak from their own experience.

- Focus solely on the focus group participants' experiences.
- Don't ask people what they think others think or predict what they might think or do in the future.

Start easy.

- Start with a question everyone will be able to answer and one that does not require much disclosure.
- An easy question to start helps make participants comfortable and helps the facilitator to see participant's styles so they can better manage the group.

End by asking if participants have anything to add to the discussion.

- Participants may provide useful information that you did not anticipate.

Source: Krueger, R. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Considerations about design and content of focus groups

- How many participants will be included in each focus group?
- How long will each focus group last?
 - We recommend 60–90 minutes for each focus group.
- Participant characteristics?
 - What characteristics of teachers (for example, different years of teaching experience or regions) do you want to make sure we have represented?
- When will the focus groups be held?

Review best practices for conducting focus groups

Getting started

- Welcome with introductions, review the topic of the focus group, detail the guidelines, and begin with the first question.
- Stress that there are no right or wrong answers, and that participants should talk to one another.

(Krueger, 2000)

Review best practices for conducting focus groups

Moderator skills

- Listen actively to validate participant responses, express neutrality, encourage equal contributions, and manage time effectively.
- Record conversation, take notes, and conduct a debrief of key findings at the conclusion of the focus group.

(Krueger, 2000)

Review best practices for conducting focus groups

Analyzing the focus group data

- Review answers to main questions and look for common ideas and themes. Where were areas of significant disagreement?
- Are there new questions that should be posed in a subsequent focus group?
- Determine how you will use the results to improve the ELI.

(Krueger, 2000)

Break

Review draft ELI pilot focus group protocol

We want to create focus group questions that will collect information to help us answer our implementation research questions.

1. To what extent do the ELI training and resources prepare teachers to use the ELI?
2. How do teachers report administering the ELI in their classroom, and do they report using the ELI data to inform instruction?
3. What are teachers' perceptions about the feasibility and value of using the ELI in their classroom?
4. What are the key facilitators and challenges for teachers implementing the ELI?
5. What could be improved about the ELI training, measure, and technology platform?

Develop management plan for focus group development

Thank you!

 <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/index.asp>

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