

Some Thoughts on Focus Group Work

Focus Groups are key to helping build the logical argument for the action plan. Make their work count!

Structure the work in small work groups (5-7). For example, have several small groups respond to the same criterion. Your work will be to collapse and edit. At a next meeting, share drafts and ask a new small group to add, clarify, correct. You must bring it back together! Consider multiple focus groups to share the load.

Respond to the criterion using indicators and prompts for the criterion as well as using the questions around critical learner needs to focus your work. The “mini-study” around critical learner needs is key to a strong action plan that builds on important successes and strengthens areas of weakness. Use the “**suggested evidence**” to stimulate thought/ideas. These lists of “suggested evidence” are not intended to be required evidence, an outline for the criteria response, NOR research topics for group members.

Differentiate and disaggregate by indicate who is or who isn't within your statements by groups: Student groupings (AVID students; EL students, women students); Grade level groups (ninth....; lower grades, middle grades...); Department groups (in Fine and Practical Arts, in the English Department, in all departments except Knitting)

Use “chunky” evidence. However, sometimes you must be very specific.

Create consistent language, for example:

Faculty = credentialed teachers, counselors, library media teacher, administrators

Pupil personnel = counselors, speech therapist, psychologist

Staff = everybody

Classified/Support staff = not faculty

If you know the number, use it. Use whole number % only. 75%; 27%

If you don't know the number, but want to quantify, consider this hierarchy

Almost all = about 90%

Most = about 75%

About half = 50%

Some = about 25%

A few = about 10%

If you don't know all the details, **include the big idea.** Someone else will know the details.

If you think some ideas don't fit within your criteria, indicate where you think it should go. For example, something about tutoring in the Assessment and Accountability response might better go in the Support response.

You'll get lots of ideas about how to fix the problem particularly when they build on some identified strength. Capture them! They go in the Action Plan. Help that work along!

Complicated language may make your report read like an educational journal, but it may also make it unclear or vague. Write for readability. If you don't like reading your report, neither will anyone else! Ensure you're making the case for the action plan.