



Bea is for Business Focus Groups are designed for Kindergarten through 5th grade students. The biggest difference between grades/ages, will be the level of support and prompting necessary to maintain a consistent conversation. Example: Kindergarten students will need more support and prompting.

Teachers: The following instructions can be read aloud or you can tweak them to make them more appropriate for your respective class or student. If you do tweak them, we would LOVE to hear from you as to how you tweaked it and how it worked, so we can design more focus groups for you!

The Basic Business of a Focus Group:

- **What is a focus group?** A small group of people who talk about a very specific subject to brainstorm ideas, new products, next-steps, or big-picture solutions.
- **Why we love a good focus group in this context?** To teach students that sharing their personal opinions and ideas and listening to other thoughts and ideas is a fun, collaborative process with results that sell well on the market and in stores, specifically.
- **Why do adults and businesses use focus groups?** To improve a product, generate (that means think up!) ideas from people, or to find out what people want a business to make. Focus groups can inspire newer, better, more useful, or just cooler products.

Specific examples of focus groups in business:

- A snack food company may lead a focus group on potato chips. They might have focus group participants taste the potato chips and give feedback as to whether they liked them or didn't like them. Then, the participants might help brainstorm new ideas for other crazy new potato chip flavors.
- A toy company will conduct a focus group to find out what types of toys are most popular for kids by asking parents who buys certain toys. Then, the toy company can learn what kinds of new toys to make.
- A car company will organize a focus group to hear adults talk about what things they like in their cars. The company can then take all those favorite things and put them all in one car to make it the best – and hopefully get a lot of adults to buy it!
- A clothing company will put together a focus group to get feedback from customers about what articles of clothing people like to buy, how much they're willing to pay, and what they would like to see in stores.

Rules for Focus Groups:

- Everyone takes turns while speaking. Only one person speaks at a time. If you're not speaking, you're listening.
- Stay on topic and only discuss what the focus group is talking about.
- Always bring a piece of paper and a pen or pencil with you to a discussion. You never know when a great idea will hit you, and it's best to be prepared for that possibility.
- Do not interrupt other people. Before the focus group starts, your teacher will lay out the ground rules as to how to "signal" you have something to contribute. That might mean raising your hand and waiting. Write down your idea if you're afraid you'll forget it.
- ALL ideas are welcome. There are no bad ideas in a focus group. Ever.

NOTE TO TEACHERS: For older students, you can have one of the students ask the questions and serve as the moderator. If you do focus groups regularly, it gives many students the opportunity to lead the group, be in front of their classmates, and help progress the conversation.

If you choose to have a student moderate the group, please prepare them or send home information about the intention of a focus group. That way, his or her parents can help prepare and coach him or her. During the focus group, you, as the teacher, can write all the ideas on the white board to help support that student. An additional idea is to consider breaking the class into two or three focus groups to generate more conversation, and then perhaps bring all the separate groups together for a larger discussion.



Pretzel Tasting!

The Goal: Explore how we know the pretzel, and what's possible for the pretzel.

Supplies: A whiteboard and markers for recording ideas/notes; Three different shapes or three different brands of pretzels; (Please plan accordingly if there are health, dietary, or allergy issues with popcorn; This activity can be modified for any snack food.)

Teacher: Questions to kick-off the focus group:

Before you taste the pretzels, which one of the shapes is your favorite?

Why is it your favorite?

Now that you've tasted your pretzels, which one of the shapes is your favorite?

Why is it your favorite?

What other shapes can you imagine having for a pretzel?

How could we make a pretzel even more fun?

What if we changed the pretzel's color? What color do you think it should be?

Has anyone ever made anything fun out of pretzels?

What are some of your favorite things to eat with pretzels?

What time of day do you usually eat pretzels? Why?

Can you imagine re-designing a pretzel to serve it and eat it at a different time of day? Why or why not?

What would be a cool thing for a pretzel company to do with pretzels around holidays like Halloween or Christmas?

In Conclusion:

You can ask older students to write or present a report on the focus group to share the main findings or themes from the group. Then, you can challenge them to lead this same activity with a smaller focus group and a different snack food product – either at school or at home.

Younger students can use pretzels in a craft. Example: Stringing them on a necklace.

Ink Blot Thoughts!

The Goal: Discuss and listen to other's thoughts on what ink blots show.

Supplies: 5–8 ink blotches (you can print them from here: <http://listverse.com/2007/12/08/top-10-inkblot-test-cards/>); Paper or notebooks for each child; A whiteboard and markers for notes.

NOTE: Have paint and paper available for younger students if you're planning to do the ink blot paper craft at the end of this exercise.

Teacher: Students can number the paper or notebook pages from one to ten. Display each of the ten ink blot images, and ask each student to write down what she sees. After you go through the ten images, you can start the focus group. Write ideas on the white board for all to see not only the ideas, but also the thought process.

Questions to kick-off the focus group:

Example: Consider Inkblot Image #3: what did you think the picture represents? (Get several answers, and write them on the board.)

Does anyone else share the same ideas? Who has different ideas?

What about the picture makes it look like that? Can you see why others might think it looks like something else? How?

How would you change the picture to look like something else?

What if you turn the class' favorite picture upside down? What does it look like now?

Have the class vote on a favorite image. Why is it the favorite?

If you had to turn this image (Example: Inkblot Image #3) into a specific product, what does it look like? What would you add to it or take away from it? Why?

If you had the opportunity to name the image, what's the best name given the image? What name(s) make(s) sense? What names do not make sense?

In Conclusion:

Younger students can do an ink blot craft with paint and paper – fold paper, so that the paint, or ink, “blots” to the other side to create their own ink blot image. Then, the class can have a focus group discussion based on the ink blot images created IN the class.

Older students can write or present a report on the focus group to share the main findings from the group. They can also do the paper and paint ink blot activity, but challenge them to turn 10 ink blots into coffee table books to sell.

Island of Not-So-Misfit Toys!

The Goal: Create a NEW toy!

Supplies: A whiteboard and markers for notes/ideas. For younger students, paper and markers/crayons are needed if you'll be asking them to draw the toy.

Teacher: If you can, whenever students start to talk and share ideas, try to write them on the white board for all to see not only the ideas, but also the thought process.

Questions to kick-off the Focus Group:

What kinds of toys are your favorites? Why?

When are your favorite times of the day and of the week to play with toys?

Do you prefer toys that make noise or quiet toys? Why?

What are your favorite colors for toys?

What are the best features about toys? What is your #1 favorite thing about your toy collection?

What are the annoying features about toys? What is your #1 least favorite thing about your toy collection?

Would you want your toy to do something useful/helpful or fun?

What are some examples of toys that are useful? That are fun? That are both useful and fun? Or are neither useful nor fun?

What's the toy you'd LOVE to have, but no toy company has made it yet? What does it do? What does it look like? What kind of kid enjoys it?

Who would you want to play your toy with? Why?

In Conclusion:

You can ask older students to write or present a report on the focus group to share the main findings or themes from the group.

Younger students can vote on different toy attributes that the classroom discussed (examples: colors, sizes, shapes, needs/wants, etc.) and then draw what the new toy would look like.

For either age group, they can share these drawings with the class, and perhaps create a "pitch" to another class to "sell" their toy. The other class would "vote" on the best new toy. The winning team can get a prize for creating a great, new idea.



Focus Groups

Pop Crazy!

The Goal: Ask the class to create the newest, most fun and crazy popcorn flavors to hit the market.

Supplies: A whiteboard and markers for notes/ideas; Popcorn for the students to taste and rate. (Please plan accordingly if there are health, dietary, or allergy issues with popcorn; This activity can be modified for any snack food.)

Teachers: If you can, whenever students start to talk and share ideas, try to write them on the white board for all to see not only the ideas, but also the thought process.

Questions to kick-off the Focus Group:

Do you like popcorn? Why? Why not?

Who do you like to eat popcorn with?

Do you ever make popcorn at home or just eat it from a bag?

Do you like popcorn with flavors? What are your favorite flavors of popcorn?

What are some of your favorite food flavors, in general? Why do you like those flavors?

What are some flavors you know you don't like to eat?

Now, let's think of some CRAZY flavors by thinking of flavors of different foods . What are some of your favorite flavors of ice cream, jelly beans, or lollipops?

After thinking about flavors of other food, can you come up with some new, crazy popcorn flavor ideas?

Who would like those flavors – adults and/or kids? Why adults? Or why kids?

How would this popcorn be different or better than other popcorns they sell today?

In Conclusion:

For older students, consider conducting a popcorn taste test. Create a rating scale on the white board to help them vote for how much they like the popcorn (Example: For a rating scale, it's easy to use 1 to 10). Ask them to talk in terms of noting the similarities/differences between the popcorns, and how that changes their rating, and their likelihood to buy that popcorn. Older students can report on the findings of the group and create a name and a package (picture/drawing) of a new popcorn flavor.

Younger students can have a popcorn taste test, Tip: You can do a rating scale on the white board to help them vote for how much they like the popcorn (from 1 to 10). Tip: Use smiley faces for "10" and frown faces for "1".