Superintendent Focus Group Guide

[Check that all consent forms received as participants join the group. Hand out short demographic survey for participants to fill out while they are waiting for the focus group to start]

**Introduction**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this group. We are researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Connecticut, my name is [MODERATOR NAME] and this is [ROOM ASSISTANT NAME]. It is now [current time] and the group will end at [ending time]. Is everyone able to stay until [end time]? Please let us know if you need to leave for any reason.

As you know, we are interested in hearing your impressions about local wellness policies (LWP) in your school districts. These focus groups are part of a larger study, the National Wellness Policy Study, where we are looking at the impacts and implementation of Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act policies. You, as Superintendents and/or Assistant Superintendents, are an important voice in the field of education, and we are very appreciative that you’re taking the time to participate in this research.

**Ground Rules:**

There are a few ground rules I want to cover before we start. First, everyone’s opinion is valuable. There are no right or wrong answers, just different opinions. Please allow each person to speak and do not interrupt while someone is speaking or have side conversations. Even if you whisper, it will be picked up by the audiotape and will be disrupting your colleague’s voice. Second, if you agree or disagree with a statement by someone, please wait until they are finished speaking and then share. Third, if you’re not sure about a question I’ve just asked, please ask us to repeat or clarify the question. Fourth, please do not share the names of other participants or any comments that you heard in this focus group with others outside of this room. We ask that you respect the confidentiality of our discussion here this morning.

On your consent forms, you’ve indicated that you are ok with the focus group being audio recorded. I just want to make sure that this is ok? This is mainly for our purposes and will only be heard by research personnel. Your names or personal information will not be disclosed in any of our reporting documents.

[Obtain verbal consent from each participant]

**Introductory Questions:**

To get started, let’s go around the group for introductions.

1. Please tell us your first name and, the state where you work, and how long you’ve been working in this role as Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent.

**Awareness of LWP**

First, we want to start with your general awareness and impressions about local wellness policies. Please note that we don’t expect you to know all of the answers, instead we want to understand what you’re aware of in your roles and what remains unclear.

1. Have you heard about the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act?
   * Probe: [If yes]: Can you tell me what you know about this law?
   * Probe: [If no, provide a brief description]
2. When I say school wellness policy, can you tell me what comes to mind?
   * Probe: Are there any federal guidelines that you’re aware of that pertain to school wellness policies?
   * Probe: Are there any state guidelines that you’re aware of that pertain to school wellness policies?
   * Probe: What are the required components of the school wellness policy?
3. As you may know, a final rule for wellness policy was adopted last year, have you heard recently about any changes within your district as a result of this?
4. Are you aware of the school wellness policy that your school board adopted at your district?
   * Probe: [if yes]; What are the provisions of the policy? E.g. nutrition education
5. Are you aware if your school district has formed a wellness committee?
   * Probe: [If yes]: Are you involved in the committee? What types of activities is the committee involved in?

**Oversight and Reporting**

Now, we’d like to hear about any ways that you have been involved with implementation, monitoring and evaluation of your district’s local wellness policy and wellness initiatives.

1. What are your responsibilities, as Superintendents, with respect to the wellness policy?
2. Are you aware of who is responsible for implementing the wellness policy at the district level?
   * Probe: What kind of staff person?
   * Probe: How frequently do you communicate with them?
   * Probe: What do they update you on?
3. Are you aware of who is responsible for implementing the wellness policy at the school level?
   * Probe: How does this person communicate with you or the district?
4. Does the district publically report on updates to the wellness policy?
   * Probe: Who is responsible for public updates?
   * Probe: Have you sent flyers, newsletters, emails, website, text alerts?
   * Probe: Have you worked on updating/revising the wellness policy, involving stakeholders, updating the public, establishing policy leadership, evaluating, etc.
5. Does your district collect or receive data about the health of students in your district? E.g., obesity data
   * Probe: How does this influence your wellness initiatives, if at all.

**TA and Resources**

Next, I’d like to ask you to recall the types of resources you may have seen or used related to wellness initiatives, such as nutrition education, physical activity, as we’ve just discussed.

1. Have you partnered with any state agencies or other organizations for wellness policy implementation, monitoring or evaluation?
   * Probe: Local/county agencies, non-profits, universities?
2. Have you heard of or used Team Nutrition resources from the US Department of Agriculture?
   * Probe: [If yes] how did this info come to you?
   * Probe: [If yes] How do you use Team Nutrition at your district?
3. What other types of resources or support would be helpful or would have been helpful for your district to implement the wellness policy?
4. What other types of resources or support would be helpful or would have been helpful for your district to monitor and evaluate the wellness policy?

**Perceived Benefits & Barriers**

Next, we’d like to hear about any positive outcomes or benefits that you’ve observed as a result of the wellness policy or any barriers you’ve experienced with implementation.

1. How, if at all, do you feel that changes made as a result of the wellness policy have impacted academic performance in any way?
   * Probe: Data collected? Anecdotes?
   * Probe: Do you think that wellness initiatives have the potential to impact academic performance in the future? How?
2. How, if at all, do you feel that changes made as a result of the wellness policy have impacted students’ health in any way?
   * Probe: Data collected? Anecdotes?
   * Probe: Do you think that wellness initiatives have the potential to impact health in the future? How?
3. Have you observed any benefits or positive impacts as a result of wellness initiatives in your district?
   * Probe: Staff health, student knowledge of health, absenteeism
   * Probe: Does the wellness initiative have the potential to impact [Fill in from above] in the future? How?
4. What have been the challenges of engaging with wellness activities as a Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent?
   * Probe: Awareness, cost, time, resources, other mandates or priorities
5. What is your understanding of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)?
   * Probe: Do you see potential to align wellness initiatives with provisions of ESSA?
6. What, if any, future challenges do you see with sustaining the changes made from the wellness policy?
7. Do you see your fellow Superintendent colleagues engaging with wellness initiatives in their respective districts?
   * Probe: [If no]: What would it take to motivate you and/or your colleagues to be more involved with wellness efforts in your district?
   * Probe: Do you believe fellow Superintendents would be more engaged in wellness initiatives if they personally valued health?

**Food Marketing**

Next we’d like to shift to a specific wellness policy topic that focused on food marketing.

1. [Show one at a time, 1-5 example pictures of score boards, vending machines, etc that show logos or food ads].
   * Do any of your schools have these types of ads on campus outside of the cafeteria?
   * Probe: Do you consider these examples to be food marketing? Why or why not?
   * Probe: Has your district made any recent changes to the types of food marketing on campus?

**Smart Snacks & Meal Patterns [Time permitting]**

Lastly, I have some questions about another specific component of the wellness policy, the Smart Snacks and school meals provisions.

1. Have you heard about the Smart Snacks standards? [Clarify, if some are unclear]
2. What recent feedback, if any, have you received about Smart Snacks?
   * Probe: Have you dealt with any issues or complaints? If yes, how did you manage these issues?
3. What recent feedback, if any, have you received about the school meal program?
   * Probe: Have you dealt with any issues or complaints? If yes, how did you manage these issues?

**Closing Questions**

1. Is there anything else you’d like to share about LWP or wellness initiatives at your school district?
2. Do you have any questions for us at this time?

Thank you so much for participating in this group. We really appreciate your time and contribution to this project. Before you go, please make sure we have your correct address so we can send your gift card.

If you have any questions or wish to know the results of this focus group, please feel free to contact myself or [ROOM ASSISTANT] at any time. [Provide contact information].

Please note that we may also reach out to you shortly to invite you to participate in a telephone interview. We would like to hear more about your personal, specific experiences at your school district and would like to call and schedule a time at your convenience. This is also voluntary and you are not obligated to participate because you participated in the focus group. If you prefer not to be contacted for a follow up telephone interview, please let us know before you leave.

Superintendent Follow Up Interview Guide

[Double check that consent forms received prior to the call]

**Introduction**

Thank you very much for participating in the focus group at the AASA conference and thank you again for agreeing to participate in this follow up interview. My name is [MODERATOR NAME] and [NAME] is also on this call to take notes. This interview will last until approximately [TIME], will you be able to speak until that time? Please let me know if you need to go at any time.

As you know, both the focus group and now this interview are part of a larger study, the National Wellness Policy Study, where we are looking at the impacts and implementation of Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act policies. At this time, we’re looking to hear details of your personal experiences with implementing local wellness policies (LWPs).

Before I begin, in your consent form, you’ve indicated that you are ok with being audio recorded. I just want to make sure that this is ok? This is mainly for our purposes and will only be heard by research personnel. Your names or personal information will not be disclosed in any of our reporting documents. Also, I want to make sure that you’re aware that there is no additional incentive for participating in this interview, beyond the $50 gift card you received/will be receiving for your participation in the focus group.

[Obtain verbal consent from participant]

[If participant declines audio tape, switch to note taking]

The interview is designed to learn more in-depth about your personal experiences and perspectives. In the focus groups, you shared pieces of the topics but to create a more comprehensive picture, we may touch on similar questions again throughout the interview so thank you in advance for your patience.

**Introductory Questions:**

1. Please remind me how long you’ve been working in this role as Superintendent/ Assistant Superintendent at [district name].
2. Please tell me what types of wellness initiatives is the district currently working on? How would you describe your role(s) in these efforts?
3. Since the focus groups in New Orleans, have you made any new progress or additional changes to your wellness initiatives at the district?

**LWP Monitoring, Evaluating, Reporting:**

In the focus groups we asked about the structures in place to monitor and evaluate LWP implementation.

1. Please tell me more about the process of monitoring and evaluating your district’s LWP?
   * Probe: What challenges have you had with monitoring and evaluation?
2. Are there ways that you evaluate the LWP to see how and if it is affecting outcomes?

* Probe: E.g., academic performance, health etc?

1. Does your district collect health data on students? How do you use the data?
   * Probe: What are barriers to collecting health data in your district?
2. How have changes to the LWP been communicated within the district?
3. How have changes to the LWP been reported to the public (e.g., parents, community members)?

**Resources and Technical Assistance:**

In the focus groups, most people said that the responsibility for implementation ultimately falls on the superintendent. One of the purposes of this study is to understand how to better support Superintendents to be engaged in wellness initiatives in their respective districts.

1. What recommendations do you have for local and state departments and other organizations to better support Superintendent engagement?
2. What type of resources or literature would be helpful to engage Superintendents? (e.g., professional associations, news, journals)
3. What topics would be most helpful to share with Superintendents, linking wellness initiatives to specific outcomes?
4. What mediums would be best to reach Superintendents? E.g., Webinars, conferences
5. Training for Supt

**Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Whole Child:**

In the focus groups, many Superintendents spoke about social-emotional learning as a priority in their district.

1. Is social-emotional health an issue in your district?

* Probe: Is SEL a component of your wellness policy?
  + Probe: What initiatives, if any, have you implemented in this area?

1. Have you heard of the Coordinated School Health Approach or the **Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Approach**?
   * Probe: If yes – In what ways have you implemented this approach at your district?

**Perceived Benefits & Barriers**

Next, we’d like to hear about any positive outcomes or benefits that you’ve observed as a result of the LWP or any barriers you’ve experienced with implementation.

1. Have you observed any benefits or positive impacts as a result of wellness initiatives in your district?
   * Probe: Staff health, student knowledge of health, absenteeism
2. What future challenges do you see with sustaining the changes made from the LWP?
3. Are there additional wellness initiatives that your district has not yet explored that you’d like to pursue in the future?

**Marketing:**

Next we’d like to shift to a specific wellness policy topic that focused on food marketing.

[Show one at a time on gotomeeting, 1-5 example pictures of score boards, vending machines, etc that show logos or food ads].

1. Do you consider these examples to be food marketing? Why or why not? PTA/PTO? Booster Club
2. Do any of your schools have these types of ads on campus outside of the cafeteria?
3. [For those with bans on marketing and local food only]: When did this ban happen? Is it adopted in the wellness policy? What prompted your district to adopt this ban? What has been the reaction to this in the community?
4. Has your district made any recent changes to the types of food marketing on campus?
5. Do you have concerns about food marketing?

Recently the new administration announced that they will relax school meal standards for whole grain, sodium etc. and delay some of the required components.

1. How will your district respond to the ‘relaxing’ of NSLP standards?

**Closing Questions**

1. Is there anything else you’d like to share about wellness initiatives at your school district?
2. Do you have any questions for us at this time?

Thank you so much for participating in this group. We really appreciate your time and contribution to this project. We will send you a summary of the findings once we complete the analysis.