
Issue Date: October 23, 2023

Focus Group: Attribute Sort

Purpose

This protocol is designed for teams developing a Portrait of a Graduate that is aligned to the Vermont Portrait of a Graduate.

Use this protocol during focus group discussions. This strategy is ideal for gathering feedback from large groups of people (community members, students, and/or staff) to generate ideas and prioritize themes for developing a Portrait of a Graduate (PoG). This protocol is similar to the Visionary Document Sort, but is designed for teams that want to use **only** the [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate](#) language to guide feedback collection.

Goal

To facilitate focus group conversations and collect feedback from a community partner group.

Materials and Setup

- Sticky Notes
- Pens
- Pre-made Chart Paper Grids (See Appendix A)
- Set up tables and chairs to accommodate groups of approximately 4 people and enough space for a chart paper grid
- A device to take pictures after each sort
- Question strips (See Appendix B)

Agenda

This procedure will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.



Time	Description
5 minutes	<p>Directions and Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide the people into groups of approximately four people. Preferably one group per table. Each group will need a stack of sticky notes, writing utensils, and a chart paper grid. • Groups will work collaboratively to brainstorm responses to four separate questions in each of the brainstorming rounds below.
10 minutes	<p>Brainstorm and Sort Round 1:</p> <p><i>Question to consider: What are your hopes and dreams for all graduates?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each person individually brainstorms their answers to the question. • Each unique idea is written on a separate sticky note. • The group then discusses and sorts the sticky notes on their chart paper with the VT PoG grid on it. • The question strip is placed in the upper left-hand corner of the chart paper grid. • When groups are done sorting, take a picture of their chart paper (make sure the question and team code are included). View an example of a completed round in Appendix A.
10 minutes	<p>Brainstorm and Sort Round 2:</p> <p><i>Question to Consider: What do all students need to know and be able to do by the time they graduate?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants repeat the process they followed for round one. • Sticky notes can be removed, shifted, and/or added. • This new question strip replaces question number 1 in the upper left-hand corner of the chart paper grid. • As groups complete the sort, take a second round of pictures.
10 minutes	<p>Brainstorm and Sort Round 3:</p> <p><i>Question to Consider: What are your district's schools (Pre-k-12) currently doing well?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants repeat the process they followed in previous rounds. • Again, sticky notes can be removed, shifted, and/or added. • This new question strip replaces question number 2 in the upper left-hand corner of the chart paper grid. • As groups complete the sort, take a third round of pictures.

Time	Description
10 minutes	<p>Brainstorm and Sort Round 4:</p> <p><i>Question to Consider: What are areas for improvement for your district's schools (Pre-k -12)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants repeat the process they followed in previous rounds. • Again, sticky notes can be removed, shifted, and/or added. • This new question strip replaces question number 2 in the upper left-hand corner of the chart paper grid. • As groups complete the sort, take a third round of pictures.
5 minutes	<p>Wrap Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank participants for participating • Provide an overview of next steps

Appendix A: Chart Paper Grid Templates

Directions: Presenters will want to prepare chart paper grids prior to the feedback gathering session. Each group of participants will need their own chart paper grid. These pre-made chart paper grids become the framework groups will use to sort their feedback written on sticky notes.

The Group Identifier in the upper right-hand corner allows for individual group responses to be correlated during the analysis process. The code can be any numbering system including simply 1, 2, 3, etc.

Layout for the chart paper grids chart paper that each focus group will use to sort their brainstormed ideas:

Question Strip Space	Other Ideas	Group Identifier
Learner Agency	Global Citizenship	Academic Proficiency
Well-Being	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Communication

Example of a completed chart paper grid:



Appendix B: Question Strips

Directions: Determine the number of focus groups participating in the feedback session. Photocopy and cut up a set of questions for each focus group.

----->✂
What are your hopes and dreams for all graduates?
----->✂

What do all students need to know and be able to do by the time they graduate?
----->✂

What are your district's schools (Pre-k-12) currently doing well?
----->✂

What are areas of improvement for your district's schools (Pre-k -12)?
----->✂