



RUTGERS

Graduate School of Education
**CIVICALLY ENGAGED
DISTRICTS PROJECT**



Teachers College
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

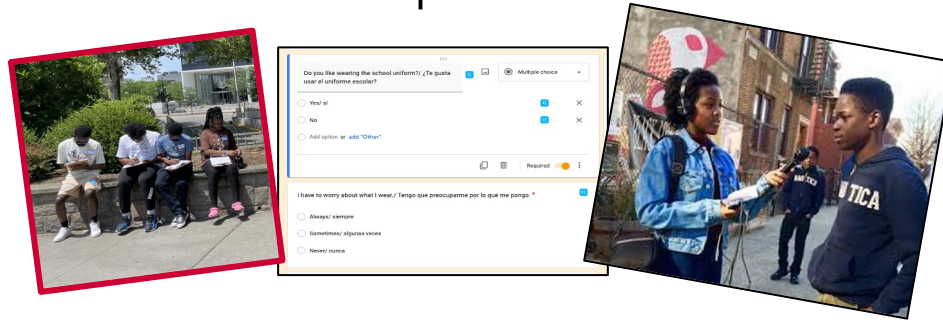
Learning to Research

Brandi Gustafson
Renée Roundy

Various Methods for Research

Your students will not be able to find the answer to their questions in a book or on the Internet.

They will need to investigate the topic/concern that they selected themselves, **collecting their own data** to answer their questions.



Value of Student Research

- Student researchers have perspectives that adult researchers do not, allowing them to ask questions and come up with approaches that reveal new things
- The research process builds civic capacities, skills and engagement
- It also creates a sense of belonging and community investment

Developing a Data Collection Strategy

Your students' data collection strategy will depend on what question(s) they are asking.

Lets learn about a few methods: surveys, interviews, focus groups, and mapping

Research Round Robin

1. Look over “research methods pros/cons” worksheet
1. We have 4 stations. You will spend 10 minutes at each “station,” experiencing one research method and reflecting on its pros/cons.
1. There is a facilitator at each station to help (our returning CED members from last year.)
1. At the end, we will discuss the pros and cons of the different methods.

Research Round Robin

Stations to introduce students to a variety of research methods.

YELL Unit 3, Lesson 10

[Lesson Plan and Materials](#)

Station 1: Survey Station

Facilitator:

1. Read through the survey introduction letter
2. Take the survey, including questions 5 and 7
3. Discuss these questions and use the discussion to fill out your pro/con worksheet for surveys:
 - a. What type of information can be gathered through surveys?
 - b. What kinds of questions work well in surveys?
 - c. What are the benefits of using a survey to collect information?
 - d. What are the weaknesses?

Station 2: Interview Station

Facilitator:

1. Practice interview
 - a. Get into pairs
 - b. Ask your partner the interview questions
 - c. Switch roles
2. Discuss this experience, and use the discussion to fill out your pro/con sheet for interviews:
 - a. What kinds of questions got you to talk more?
 - b. What do you think is good about collecting information from people this way?
 - c. Can you envision any challenges in using interviews for your project?

Station 3: Focus Groups Station

Facilitator:

1. What is a focus group?

A focus group is like a group interview about a specific topic or issue. If this were a real focus group, the discussion would be tape recorded or video recorded, and then researchers would watch or listen to it afterward and take a lot of notes.

Typically, researchers would type everything said and create a transcript of the conversation. From there, they would try to identify themes or ideas that a lot of people agreed on.

1. Each person should write one question that they think would be interesting to get everyone's ideas or opinions about (i.e. What do you do to relax on the weekends? What is your favorite topic to teach?) Write that question on a card and put it in the middle.

Station 3: Focus Groups Station

3. The facilitator will pick questions from the pile for the group to discuss.

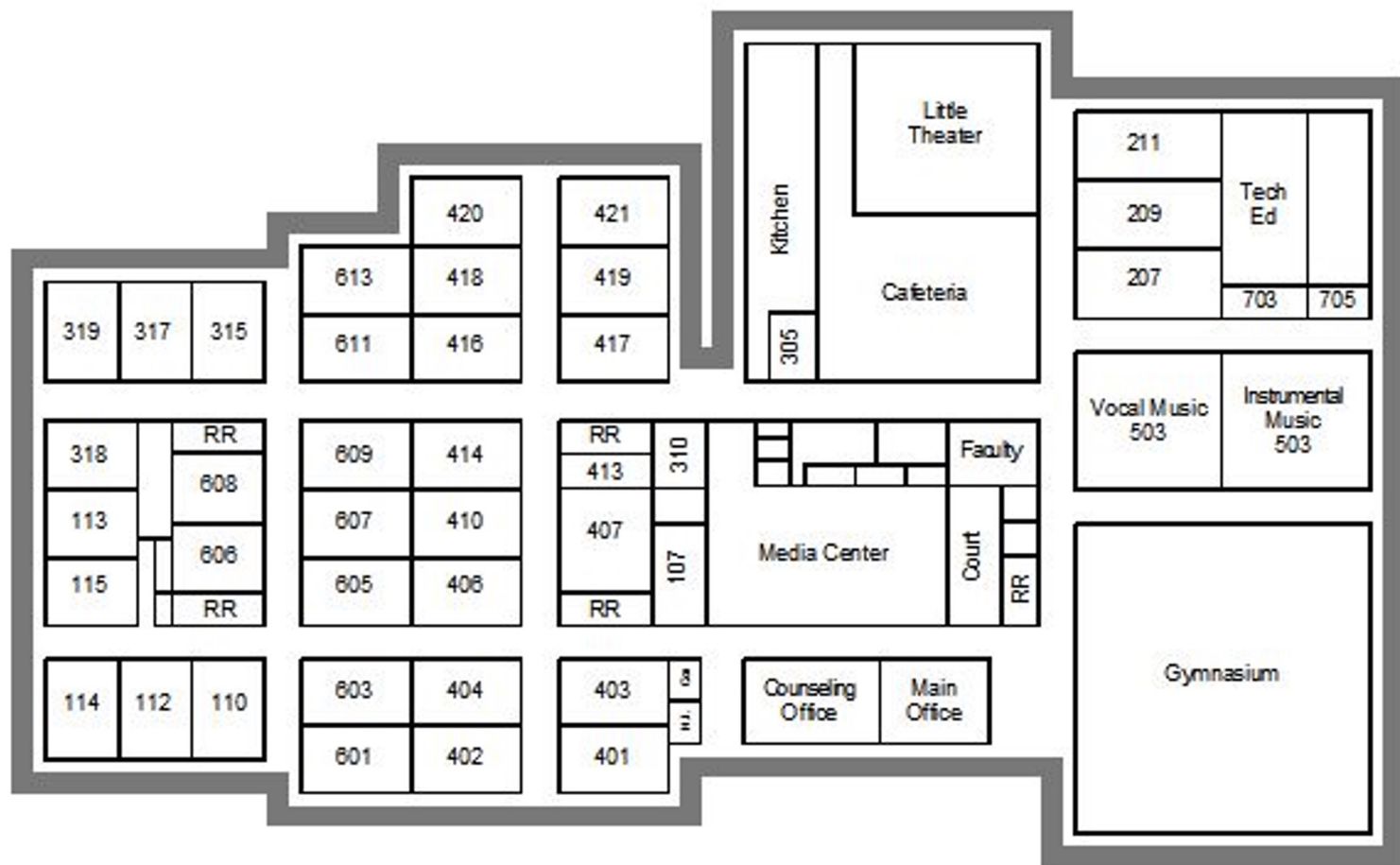
4. Discuss these questions and use the discussion to fill out your pro/con worksheet:

- i. What do you like about focus groups?
- ii. What do you think would be difficult about doing this kind of data collection?

Station 4: Photos or Mapping Station

Facilitator:

1. Each person should take a copy of the school map. Pretend it is your school, and identify the places where youth spend the most time (yellow) and the least time (blue). Then highlight the safest areas in the school (green) and the least safe areas (red). Share.
2. Discuss these questions and use the discussion to fill out your pro/con worksheet:
 - a. What did you notice about your map and the maps of other people in your group?
 - b. What do you think is good about collecting information from people this way? What might not be good about it?
 - c. What would you take pictures of to show that areas were safe, unsafe, crowded, or empty?



West Middle School

Let's look at some examples of
different approaches taken by
action research groups.

Example 1: High School students ask...

How is our school district budget being spent?

Methods:

1. Photo walk
2. Located article on Uncommon Schools Newark \$47 mill+ budget
3. Meet with Uncommon Schools finance team to continue background research



Example 2: Middle School students ask...

How do we feel about our district's uniform policy?

Methods:

1. **surveys** for students, teachers, and parents
2. **scholarly research** to negate "pros" such as safer schools and support "cons" such as schools uniforms are predominant in high minority and high poverty areas.
3. **Online shopping to develop cost analysis** of 5 days of clothing to compare and show that uniforms are costly to parents.

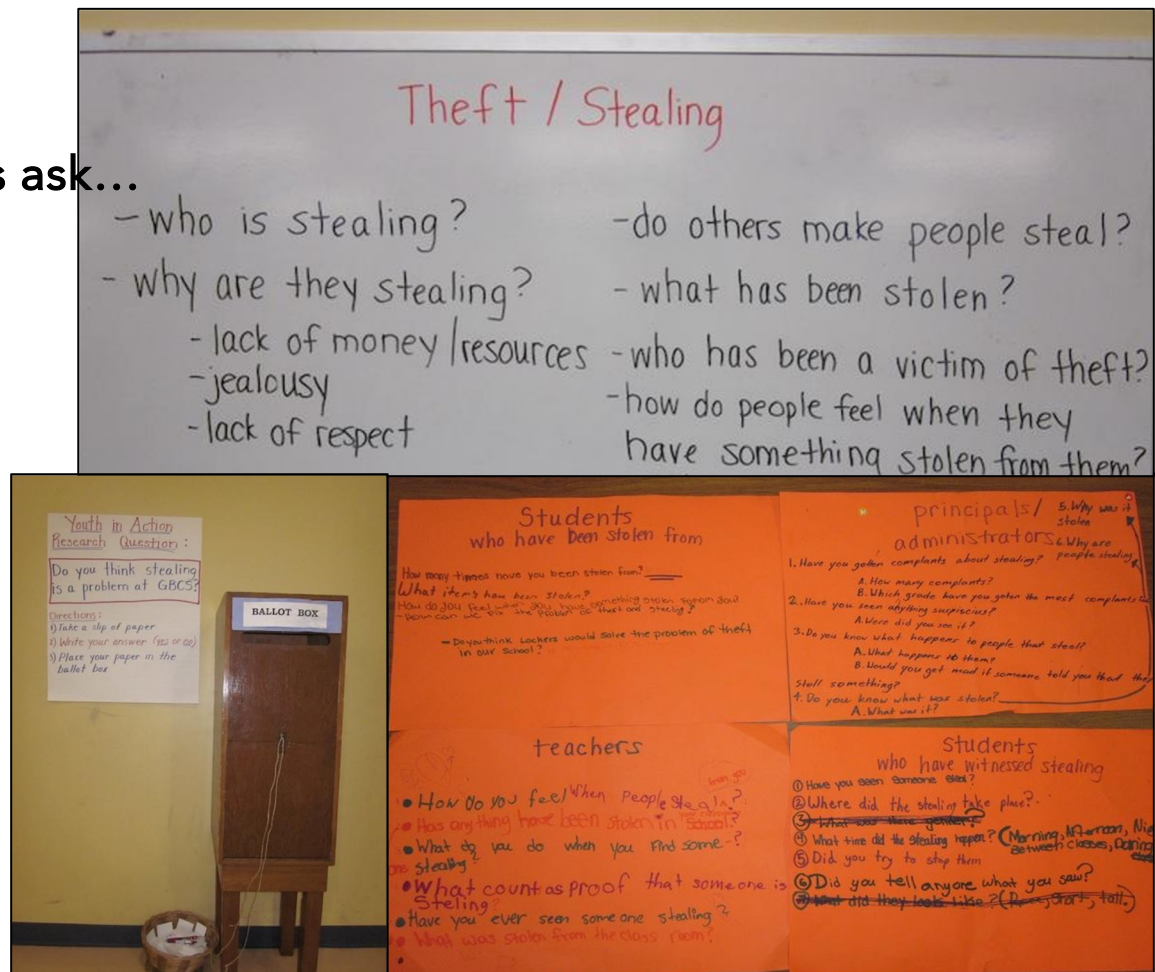
The screenshot shows a digital survey form with two questions. The first question, "Do you like wearing the school uniform?/ ¿Te gusta usar el uniforme escolar?", is a multiple-choice question with options "Yes/ sí", "No", and "Add option or add 'Other'", each with a radio button and a blue "X" icon. The second question, "I have to worry about what I wear./ Tengo que preocuparme por lo que me pongo.", is a radio button question with options "Always/ siempre", "Sometimes/ algunas veces", and "Never/ nunca". The interface includes a "Multiple choice" dropdown menu, a "Required" toggle switch, and icons for copy, delete, and help.

Example 3: Elementary School students ask...

Is there a lot of
stealing at our school?
Why? What can be
done about it?

Methods:

- Survey of students
- Interviews of students and teachers
- Cafeteria poll
- Photos and video



Debrief

- Which of these research methods apply to your topic? How would you apply them?
- How might you use this to introduce research methods?

Mentor Check Ins

Please provide your availability for four 1-hour virtual meetings to check in with mentors where you can ask questions and receive support.

