Coding your Focus Group Data

By Rebecca Kaplan, adapted by Melissa Campanella

To prepare for this activity:
- ➔ Write your Aim Statement. (suggested)
- ➔ Gather your team or teams.

Note: This activity can be especially fruitful if you are able to discuss findings across teams or among people who come from different contexts, ex. across schools, across states.

Facilitator Guide

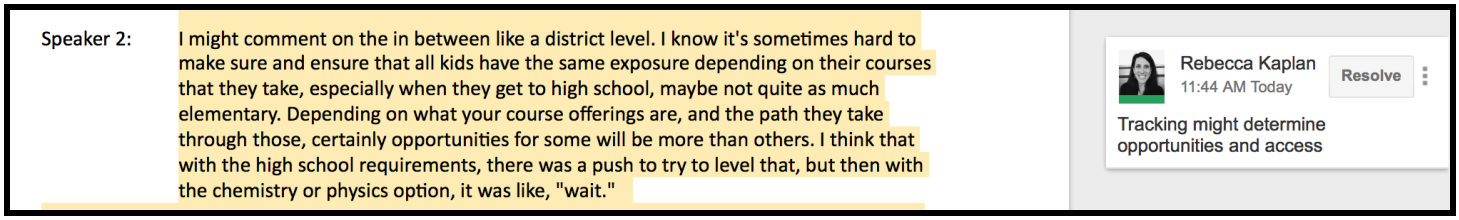
After gathering focus group data, you and your team will need to make sense of it. As you analyze using qualitative coding, you will want to attend to two questions:

1. How are people envisioning equity and equitable science instruction in your state?
2. What supports do people think are important for promoting equitable science instruction?

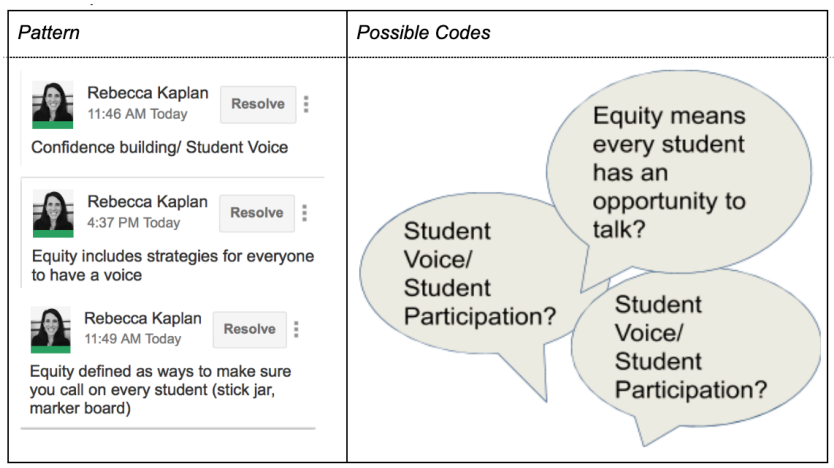
Coding is a way to organize and sort qualitative data. Codes serve to summarize and synthesize what is happening in the data, and coding is the basis for analysis. Here's how it works:

First, read through the data and write comments to summarize what was there and to remind yourself of things you want to come back to. You can do this individually, or as a group.

For example:



Next, read through your comments and look for patterns. When you find a pattern, think about a possible title, or code, for that pattern. Discuss the pattern and name of the code with your team. Deliberate if the code is appropriate for the data.



Once the team agrees on the code, add it to the coding chart (see below or click here for your own copy of the template), and enter the relevant data points.

Coding to Understand Answers to Equity Questions:

Code	Data Points	Preliminary Claim or Conclusion
Equity = Finding ways to make sure that "everybody's voice is being heard"	• "It sounded like that was an example of how you could demonstrate that there was some equity happening and building that confidence and so forth for students. That everybody's voice is being heard in that way." (Speaker 3, 11/9/16 Focus Group) • "I'm hoping kids are comfortable enough and push them to become comfortable enough to share opinions first with their lab group and everybody has a different colored marker. Everybody's marker has to have something written on the big marker board. Nobody can leave it blank." (Joe, 11/9/16 Focus Group) • "Then the stick jar, you're stick is in here, if it's drawn, you have to answer the question or talk."(Speaker 4, 11/9/16 Focus Group)	

Repeat the process for the remaining excerpts within your data. Add any additional codes as needed.

After this, take some time to look at each code in your chart. Is there a preliminary claim or conclusion that encapsulates the data? Are there at least three data points that support that claim or conclusion? If not, consider if the statement is useful for your team.

Deepen your analysis by returning to the vision for equitable science education outlined in *Framework* and revisiting your Aim Statements, and Driver Diagrams. Share your claims with evidence and interpretation, then discuss:

- What comes up for you and your group as you consider these preliminary claims about the needs or assets for promoting equitable science instruction in your context?
- What similarities and differences emerge across groups?
- How might we revise our aims and driver diagram to reflect the data we've analyzed?

Finally, individually reflect on your experience with these focus groups (whether you facilitated some, or just analyzed data from them today).

- What stands out to you as interesting or important about teams engaging in this process and considering this data?
- What are you thinking about your work in your context now that you weren't thinking about before coding?

References:
Kaplan, R. G., Riedy, R., Van Horne, K., & Penuel, W. R. (2019). Going on a statewide listening tour: involving education leaders in the process of research to enhance the practical value of qualitative research. *Evidence &*

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