

Lesson Plan: Writing Questions

INVESTIGATE: SURVEYS: WRITING QUESTIONS

By San Francisco Peer Resources – 90 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- To begin to create survey questions
- To be able to identify types of bad or leading questions
- To be able to fix types of bad or leading questions

MATERIALS

- “Types of Questions in Survey Monkey” handout (1 per participant)
- “Violence Survey” handout (1 per participant)
- “Writing Survey Questions” handout (1 per participant)
- Visual of Questions Guidelines

PREPARE BEFORE

N/A

WARM UP

Review bias. What is bias? Why is it important to be unbiased in our survey questions?

EXPERIENCE

Have everyone in the GROUP get into pairs. Hand out the “Violence Survey.” In pairs, they should complete the worksheet, trying to determine what the question is trying to ask and what is wrong with each question or answer choice.

REFLECT

When everyone is done, review answers for what was wrong with the question. Put types of mistakes into categories (e.g., the question doesn’t make sense, is biased, only allows one answer, is too personal, is asking too much).

As a full group, come to a consensus on what these questions are trying to ask.

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SUMMARIZE

Writing a question that is neutral, clear, and thoughtful is not easy. All questions should follow these guidelines. This question:

- Makes sense
- Is concrete and specific
- Has no biased words or phrases
- Does not reflect personal beliefs
- Is not too personal
- Is only one thought
- Has no culturally specific words or phrases

Hand out the “Types of Questions in Survey Monkey” handout and review as a full group. Make sure everyone knows the different kinds of questions they can ask and potential pros and cons of asking it.

DEMONSTRATE

As a full group, pick one of the questions from the “Violence Survey” to revise. Look at what the question is trying to ask and what the problems were with the question. Select a question type and an answer type that will get you the information you are looking for. Then, write the question together. Make sure it meets all the criteria for a good question.

Everyone should get in new groups of two. Each group will get 2 of the questions from their worksheet to rewrite. They should decide on the question type, the answer type, and what the actual question should be.

If the pair gets stuck, ask the following probing questions:

- What kind of information is this question trying to ask?
- What type of question will get this information?
- What type of answer choice will get this information?
- Are there multiple ways to ask this question?

Have each pair share and go through the questions.

As a group, decide if it meets the criteria and revise as needed.

REVIEW

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What are some key things to remember in writing a survey question? What do we want to find out from our survey?

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