

LMAC Focus Group - Anonymous Meeting Minutes

Goal: To evoke the viewpoints of participants on their experiences with the waste reduction activities hosted by *enuf* at LMAC.

Types of data to be collected:

- 1) Participant viewpoints and experiences on the waste audit and sorting projects at LMAC.
- 2) Whether participants continued waste sorting and reduction practices at home.
- 3) Future project ideas to be hosted at LMAC.

Role of focus groups:

- Focus groups are an informal conversation;
- Focus groups are designed to evoke the views of all participants;
- Focus groups are not a space for the researcher to discuss their work;
- Focus groups are influenced by the interactions between participants;
- Focus groups are a data collection activity and are recorded.

Round 1: Introduction to the focus group (3 mins)

Moderator: I am the moderator of this focus group discussion. We are going to discuss your experiences participating in the waste reduction activities hosted by *enuf* at Laurier Mac.

This group is a way for you to voice your viewpoint on the activities so that they could be improved in the future.

I need to hear from everyone, but you don't have to answer every question. Speak up when you have a different idea from someone else or to add additional info to an answer. Please respectfully respond to one another, not to me; even ask each other a question for clarification. I am here to keep the discussion focused. I also keep time, so I may need to interrupt you at times.

I am not affiliated with the projects, so feel free to be as open and candid as you see fit. There are no right or wrong answers, the point is to get your opinion.

Round 2: Introductions

Moderator: Let's begin by introducing ourselves. Please give your first name so others can talk to you, and tell us quickly how you were involved in the activities.

Round 3: Question 1 (15 mins)

Please describe your experience participating in the initiative:

- Shock (negative) expressed that teenagers don't know how to sort waste

- Student role in the initiative was important to get the message across
- Sorting waste was difficult at first as students weren't responsive initially
- As time went on, friends would ask where things would go, asking for help with sorting, becoming more involved
- The compost project helped reduce waste a lot
- In regards to waste auditing - it was satisfying to see the progress of the waste contamination reduction
- Nice to see the students making an effort
- It seems students are becoming more interested
- Saw a difference from last year - the younger students seem more aware
- Seems younger students' teachers talk more about the environment

Anything you would change about the initiative in the future:

- Older audience wasn't as engaged, bored, maybe because they aren't used to it as much due to not talking about it when they were young
- Need to find ways to captivate the older students
- Lack of interest may be related to city compost being really new (only last 2-3 years)
- People in older grades should find the students who are interested and bring them into the green team
- Unfortunately, if it's not someone you like that talks to you about it, it won't be integrated as well
- Students started another type of environmental club to promote awareness (posters, competitions about incorporating initiatives in their household, social media presence, raising awareness on different types of pollution)
- Students felt they learned about waste sorting and were able to take that home to tell their parents, and they got to hang out with their friends at the same time while helping with the waste sorting

Round 4: Question 2 (15 mins)

Have you tried to transfer these practices at your homes? How so?

- Last year, one of the students started doing compost at home, and has noticed that parents and siblings are getting more engaged and used to it
- Some parents are not getting into it, stubborn, but some have been composting since before the students participated in the initiative
- One of the students lives where there is no city compost, but they do their own, this student helped their parents set that up
- Some students have one household that does it but not the other (separated parents)
- Doesn't seem that any more could have been done to prepare students to have conversations about compost with family
- Maybe add campaigns on social media, radio, tv, could get older audiences interested in compost and to debunk that it's a lot of work
- Feel that older people are not as well equipped (would have to bring out three different bins) – barriers to access

Round 5: Question 3 (7 mins)

Moderator: Thank you, everyone. Let's move on and start with the final round.

What project ideas would you like to work with the school on?

- Plates are compostable at the cafeteria, maybe could switch to reusable plates to reduce waste
- All students given plastic water bottles at the beginning of the year
- Maybe talk more about using sustainable water bottles, talk about why using plastic water bottles is bad, entertain while telling students
- How to engage students more while waste sorting:
 - Create games about sorting with small prizes
 - Sec 1s have to make a board game or video game, maybe integrate that
 - Integrating it into classes
 - Integrating their house activities, make a lunch activity about (e.g. environmental trivia)
- Maybe go on field trips, where the subject of environmental issues is discussed like C-vert, more excursions, tree planting, clothing exchange, make art about the environment

Other feedback:

- Older grades would have liked more information
 - I.e., how can we reduce our waste consumption?
- Pace of presentation and content may be causing confusion for younger grades
- More time needed for students to speak or answer questions
- Overall, students liked the games and activities
- Presenters were professional and well-spoken