

Thematic Analysis

Purpose: When looking at a variety of qualitative data sources like focus groups, it is often helpful to identify themes present in the data. The following steps will assist with this process.

Step #1: Look for Common Words, Phrases, or Ideas.

Look for words, phrases, or ideas that are present throughout multiple different sources. Consider the following three sets of interview data:

Ex: When you hear the phrase “I get to do what I do best every day” what two things come to mind?

Group #1	Group #2	Group #3
Getting to use my strengths.	Variety-using technology.	Teacher support.
Mixes of group work, partner work, and individual work.	Less homework-more time to do what I enjoy.	Having lots of variety in my day.
Getting to pick classes I'm interested in.	Lots of choice in learning.	Getting to research or learn about topics of interest.
Having different teachers who tell me what I'm good at.	Picking interesting classes.	Getting to work with people I like.
Writing about things I'm interested in, like superheroes.	Having teachers ask what I am interested in, and letting me learn about that.	Teachers who know me.
Less time on the lecture.	More time to work in groups or with friends.	Choice in how I learn.
		More time working on projects.

Step #2: Group Common Words, Phrases, or Ideas

Theme Group #1	Theme Group #2	Theme Group #3
Group work, partner work. Work in groups or with friends. Work with people I like.	Things I'm interested in. Variety. Choice in learning. Picking interesting classes. Variety.	Teachers who tell me what I'm good at. Having teachers ask. Teachers who know me.

Step #3: Name the Theme Group

Learning with Others	Options	Personal Connections with Teachers
Group work, partner work. Work in groups or with friends. Work with people I like.	Things I'm interested in. Variety. Choice in learning. Picking interesting classes. Variety.	Teachers who tell me what I'm good at. Having teachers ask. Teachers who know me.

Step #4: Cross Reference with Other Data Sources

Look at other related data sources to determine if the themes are also present elsewhere.

Step #5: Write the Themes as Actions

Rewrite the themes as actions to help start the conversation around next steps. Though these are not specific enough to be cycle actions themselves, they do provide the opportunity ask how this might be accomplished. Which of these themes might highest leverage? What might our first step be in the next 45 days?

Theme #1 Action: Increase Opportunities for Students to Work With Others.

Theme #2 Action: Provide Options for Students to Learn and Demonstrate Learning.

Theme #3 Action: Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Dialogue With Students About Interests.