3.10a Research Methods Pros and Cons (Example)

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| Your research topic: Emotional and Physical Safety at School at in the Community | | | |
| Ways to gather data | Type of information you will get with this method | Pros? (What is good about this tool compared to others?) | Cons? (What are the drawbacks of using this tool compared to others?) |
| Surveys | Statistics: The percent of people who think x or y  Comparisons: This groups thinks x and this group thinks y. | Can give to a lot of people.  Gives general idea of how different groups of people think about certain things. | Answers might depend on the person’s mood that day.  Question might be understood differently from the way you planned.  Some people might not do it or might not take it seriously. |
| Focus Groups | Contrasts and similarities: What people say in interviews and surveys, and what they say in a group, whether people agree or not. | Get a lot of opinions and information at one time  People might feel more comfortable talking as a group  Gives people a chance to talk about and clarify any disagreements | People can change their opinions and agree with others even if they don’t really think that way.  Some people are too shy to participate.  Finding a time that everyone can make it. |
| Interviews | Depth: Room for follow-up questions and individual focus | Can get opinions and personal thoughts.  Hear emotions in voice.  You can ask specific questions.  You can explain your questions. | MIght be influenced by the interviewer.  Might say what they think you want them to say.  Might be too shy.  Can’t record their expressions. |
| Photos or mapping | Visual: “Proof” you can see.  Change: Can show before and after; changes over time. | Some people are visual learners - seeing helps them understand the issue. | Access to equipment can be challenging.  Privacy concerns - can’t be anonymous. |