



H1.

LOOKING AHEAD – EXPECTATIONS FOR OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

This Community Conversations session moves away from the teacher-as-expert parent-meeting model by embracing parents’ thoughts and experiences as central to any conversation regarding their children’s futures.

SETUP

The room should be set up so that parents easily can break into small groups while still providing the facilitator with a central spot to address the group and space to move around the room. The number and size of small groups will vary. For a workshop of 30 people, five groups of six people would be perfect.

ACTIVITIES

Part 1: Welcome and Introductions

10 minutes

- ➔ Welcome and thank participants for attending this important gathering.
- ➔ Explain to participants that this gathering, beyond providing insight on the topic, is intended to facilitate



TARGET AUDIENCE

Parents, guardians, friends, and mentors of students grades 4 through 8; possibly for the parents, guardians, friends and mentors of students grades 9 through 12



90 MINUTES



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handouts: *Looking Ahead – Expectations for Our Children’s Future* and *Your Child’s Education Begins at Home*

LEARNING GOALS

- ➔ Participants will explore their hopes and expectations for their children’s futures.
- ➔ Participants will explore what it will take for their hopes to be realized.
- ➔ Participants will share their reasons for attending and identify the topics that they are interested in exploring.
- ➔ In small breakout groups, participants will consider the following questions:
 - What do you expect your children to do or achieve for them to reach future success?
 - What worries do you have about your child’s future?
 - What do you expect from educators, including teachers, counselors and administrators that will support your child’s future success?
 - What do you expect to do at home that will support your child’s future success?
 - Where and to whom can you turn for support in helping your children reach their potential?
- ➔ Participants will explore what they can do at home to support their children’s education and reinforce lessons taught at school.

communication among family and community members connected to the school or organization that is sponsoring the event.

- ➔ Tell participants that you hope that this dialogue enables them to build connections, share ideas, and work together in looking ahead and having high expectations for our children’s future.
- ➔ Explain to participants:
 - As their children’s primary caretakers, they have a significant role in helping their children gain educational and career success.
 - Regardless of whether they know the ins and outs of getting into college or preparing for a career, their participation, support and encouragement is crucial.
 - While teachers, counselors and schools play a major role, parents and families hold valuable knowledge and experiences.
 - Educators hold a lot of information and knowledge, but parents are the experts on their children.
- ➔ Ask participants to introduce themselves and state the grade(s) or program(s) in which their children are enrolled.
- ➔ Remind participants:
 - Similar to how we discuss sports, politics or TV shows with our family, friends and neighbors, this session will ask them to share their experiences and thoughts and to brainstorm regarding the topic.
 - Sharing and brainstorming will be done in small- and large-group discussions.
 - It is important to remember that we all have different experiences and views and that at times we may have opposing opinions.
 - We are all here because we support our children and because we each want to improve our ability to help them reach success.
- ➔ It may be necessary to ask participants how they feel about this approach and if they are comfortable.
- ➔ It may be necessary to state that, although the group will benefit from their participation and engagement, it is fine if they do not feel comfortable sharing or only feel comfortable sharing in their small groups.

Part 2: Opening Discussions

 15 minutes

- ➔ Explain to participants that you will ask them several questions regarding their children. After the questions are read, they should raise their hands only if their answer to the questions is yes. Clarify that this will be done in silence and make sure they understand the instructions. Move through questions slowly and make sure to look around to see who raised their hands and who didn’t.

Questions:

- Do you have two children?
- Do you have more than three children?
- Is your child new to the school or district?
- Did you struggle with school as a child?
- Do you hope that your child will reach success by going to college or training for a great job?

Note to facilitator: Research shows that most parents — regardless of race, social/ economic status or educational experiences — are hopeful that their children will continue their education after high school.¹ The expectation is that most parents will raise their hands.

- Now let me ask the question a little differently: Are you confident and do you realistically expect that upon enrolling in 12th grade, your child will have the information necessary to apply to college or enroll in a career training program?



¹See Lippman, et al., *Parent Expectations and Planning for College: Statistical Analysis Report* reference on page 120.

Note to facilitator: Research shows that parents lacking a college education have less information regarding what it takes to help their children prepare for college.² The expectation is that either fewer hands will be raised or that hands will be raised reluctantly.

- ➔ If you notice a difference in numbers, enthusiasm or reluctance in how hands raise between the last two questions, facilitate a discussion as to why this occurred.

Starter questions:

- Did you notice a difference in how hands were raised when the two different questions were asked?
 - Why do you think this happened?
 - Why do you think that parents who are hopeful about their children’s educational future have difficulty considering that success a realistic possibility?
 - What would it take for your hopes to become a reality?
- ➔ It is important to instill a sense of hope in the participants that together as families, students, teachers, counselors and more, we can make all our hopes a reality.

Second Discussion:

- ➔ Now let us shift gears and share a little about why you are here today and why you come to meetings regarding your child’s education.
 - Why is it important for you to be here?
 - What do you hope to gain?
 - How will your children or family benefit from your participation?
 - What type of information do you want to receive?

These questions make a great needs-assessment. If participants raise questions about topics not addressed in this curriculum, you will have a list of topics you can address at future meetings.

- ➔ Validate participants’ responses, encourage their participation, and let them know if topics raised will be addressed by the curriculum or if a session can be planned for the future.

Part 3: Group Breakout

 30 minutes

- ➔ Explain that the participants will break into small groups.
- ➔ Provide everyone a *Looking Ahead – Expectations for Our Children’s Future* handout.

- ➔ Ask groups to select one member of their group to take notes during their discussion.
- ➔ Encourage the note-taker to document all areas of discussion and brainstorming ideas raised by the group. They do not all have to agree or come to a consensus.
- ➔ As participants work in small groups, walk around the room to make sure that everyone understands the instructions and the questions.
- ➔ Let participants know when they only have 5 minutes remaining.

Part 4: Regroup and Share Out

 20 minutes

If you want to capture responses, you can either have someone take notes on butcher paper as you facilitate discussion or collect the note-taker’s notes. You may be able to use this information to make a handout that your school or program can provide to participating families. It may be that, through the discussions, participants raise additional needs or other unaddressed information.

- ➔ Inform participants that the whole group will be discussing each question and that they should feel free to share what was discussed in their group at any time. Everyone is free to share.
- ➔ Begin to facilitate conversation by using questions as a guiding tool.
 - What is your child responsible for when it comes to preparing for their future?
 - What do you expect from educators, including teachers, counselors and administrators, that will support your child’s future success?
 - What do you expect to do at home that will support your child’s future success?
 - How do the lessons you teach at home reinforce the academic behaviors expected at school? (Examples may include: doing neat work, keeping an organized binder, arriving on time and being prepared.)
- ➔ Read the first question aloud; ask participants to share what was discussed in their group.
- ➔ As the facilitator, feel free to make connections to previous discussions or points made by participants and to ask for clarification or examples.

²See Perna, “Promoting College Enrollment through Early Intervention” in *Early Intervention*; also see De La Rosa and Tierney, *Breaking through the Barriers to College* reference on page 120.

Part 5: Distribution of Resources and Information

 10 minutes

- ➔ Thank participants for sharing their thoughts and recommendations.
- ➔ Distribute the *Your Child's Education Begins at Home* handout and review it with participants.
- ➔ Give parents a few moments to review the handout.
- ➔ Ask them to identify specific examples for each suggestion.

Some examples:

- Just ask: “Yesterday, you told me you were beginning to study the solar system. Did you learn about a specific planet today?”
 - Meet their teachers: Ask your children’s teachers questions: Does my child come to school prepared? What could we do at home to support my child’s learning? What subject does my child need the most support with? What resources are available here at school?
 - Praise your child every day: Offer praise: “Wow, your project is not due until Friday and you are beginning one week in advance; that is great!”
- ➔ Review examples and strategies in large-group discussion format.

Part 6: Closing

 5 minutes

- ➔ If your school or program is conducting this session concurrently with the student curriculum, this might be a good place to inform participants of the topics students are covering in class and to encourage them to ask their children about what they are learning about in school.
- ➔ Ask participants if they have any final thoughts.
- ➔ Thank participants for their presence and participation.
- ➔ Inform participants of the date and location of the next meeting.

RESOURCES

- ➔ *The Ditchdigger's Daughters*
 - Thornton, Yvonne S. *The Ditchdigger's Daughters: A Black Family's Astonishing Success Story*. New York: Birch Lane Press, 1995.



HANDOUT: LOOKING AHEAD – EXPECTATIONS FOR OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE



NAME

Select one person to take notes and another person to read the questions one at a time. Take turns discussing your thoughts. Brainstorm ideas and possible ways to answer the question.

1. What is your child responsible for when it comes to preparing for their future?

2. What do you expect from educators — teachers, counselors and administrators — that will support your child’s future success?

3. What do you expect to do at home that will support your child’s future success?

4. How do the lessons you teach at home reinforce the academic behaviors expected at school?

HANDOUT: YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION BEGINS AT HOME

The California Teachers Association and the California state PTA have joined together to offer some tips for helping your children learn. Here are some ways you can give your children the best opportunities to succeed in school.

1. Just ask. Ask your children what they studied in class today — what they liked and what they learned. Asking questions shows that school is important.
2. Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available. Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.
3. Study quietly. Choose or decide with your child on a place for home study. Make sure the room is quiet during that time and that it has a table. Creating a quiet place goes a long way toward helping your children learn.
4. Establish a regular schedule. Set up a certain time of day that is dedicated to homework. Follow up with your children to be sure their homework is complete and turned in on time.
5. Help your child with time management. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
6. Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework. Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go quickly when fatigue begins to set in.
7. Learn together. If you want your children to read their assignments, give yourself an assignment too. When it's time for them to do homework, take a break and spend a few minutes reading a book, magazine or newspaper.
8. Learn everywhere. Increase your children's interest in homework by connecting school to everyday life. For instance, your children can learn fractions and measurements while you prepare favorite foods together.
9. Meet their teachers. Meet with your children's teachers to discuss their progress and find out what they are learning in school.
10. Praise your child every day. Praise your children for successfully completing homework. Nothing encourages children more than praise from their parents.
11. When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him/her.
12. Read together. Pick a book to read together or read your books or magazines when your child is doing his/her required reading.

Additional Suggestions:

- Children should read as much as possible, including books, newspapers, magazines, directions, etc.
- Parents should check children's homework every night.
- Parents should provide children with regular opportunities to make decisions and solve problems at home and in the community.

RESOURCES

- ➔ California Teachers Association
 - <https://www.cta.org/get-involved/parents-and-community/family-involvement>