



H5.

ROOTS AND WINGS

— ROOTS
TO THE
COMMUNITY,
WINGS TO
THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

Moving away from typical parent meetings in which the facilitator is the expert who provides parents with information on how to help their children succeed academically, this Community Conversations session places parents at the center of the conversation. Through facilitated discussion and small-group brainstorming sessions, participants will share what they have experienced and anticipate experiencing in the future as they watch their children grow. In addition, participants will consider how they can prepare themselves for their own transitions.



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

- Handout: *Roots to the Community, Wings to the World*

LEARNING GOALS

- ➔ Participants will identify and explore transitions in the lives of their children.
- ➔ Participants will discuss how they have reacted and adjusted to these transitions.
- ➔ Participants will discuss where they can find support and resources as they experience their own transitions.
- ➔ In small groups, participants will consider the following questions:
 - What have been some of your feelings about what your child has gone through in his or her schooling, including positive, negative or life-changing experiences?
 - How have you adjusted to and handled these experiences?
 - How can you have a constructive conversation with your child about your feelings during these transitions?
 - What resources do you have or can you utilize to help you through your own transitions?

SETUP

For guidance with setup, see Community Conversations H1: *Looking Ahead — Expectations for Our Children’s Future*.

ACTIVITIES

Part 1: Welcome and Introductions

 10 minutes

For guidance with welcome and introductions, see Community Conversations H1: *Looking Ahead — Expectations for Our Children’s Future*.

Part 2: Opening Discussions

 15 minutes

First Discussion:

- ➔ Read the following Chinese proverb to the group out loud: “Give your children two things — roots and wings.”
- ➔ Ask participants the following questions:
 - What does this proverb mean to you?
 - What are some ways we give our children roots?
 - What are some ways we give our children wings?

Second Discussion:

- ➔ Discuss with participants the following questions:
 - What is your role in the lives of your children?
 - How does it make you feel each time your children have an experience that allows them to become more independent?
 - How does that relate to the transitions we must make as our children grow older?
- ➔ You might want to use the poem “Children” in the *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran (easily available on the web) to help guide the conversation. The idea behind using this poem is to have parents explore the fears and anxieties they have experienced or anticipate they will experience. Parents need to tune into their own feelings as their children grow, as well as help support their children. We want parents to walk away knowing the importance of analyzing their fears so that their fears do not negatively affect their child’s academic future. We want parents to be able to talk openly and honestly about their fears and anxieties in regard to their children moving on and possibly moving away to go to college, and to discuss why we would not want those fears to hinder their child’s progress.

- ➔ Validate participants’ responses and encourage their participation.

Part 3: Group Breakout

 30 minutes

- ➔ Break participants into small groups.
- ➔ Provide a *Roots to the Community, Wings to the World* handout to each participant.
- ➔ 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 ideas raised by the group during brainstorming. 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 questions.
- ➔ Let participants know when they only have 5 minutes remaining.

Part 4: Regroup and Share Out

 20 minutes

- ➔ Get participants’ attention.
- ➔ 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 and discussion by using the questions below as a guiding tool; make sure to touch upon the key points below each question.
 - What have been some of your feelings about what your child has gone through in his or her schooling, including positive, negative or life-changing experiences?
 - Give parents an example, such as: Your child is accepted to a weeklong summer academic program at a prestigious university across the country. He or she will have to travel alone by plane and stay in the residential dorms as part of the program. Do you allow him or her to attend a program that is so far away but is an amazing opportunity, or do you have them go to the local program to have him or her closer to home because it makes you feel better?

- How have you adjusted to and handled these experiences?
 - Encourage parents to project how they anticipate they will handle transitions they will face in the future.
 - How can you have a constructive conversation with your child about your feelings during these transitions?
 - Talk to parents about the importance of having conversations with children about transitions before they happen. For example: When your child is getting ready to go off to college, it will be important to negotiate compromises that are important to you, like how often you will agree to call each other, or having access to your child's grades in college — which you cannot have without your child's permission.
 - What resources do you have or can you utilize to help you through your own transitions?
 - Suggest that they seek out families who have already gone through a particular transition and talk to them about their experience. Encourage them to seek mental health resources at school or in the community if they feel they need professional help.
- ➔ Read the first question aloud, and then 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.
- As you facilitate these discussions, you may wish to capture responses by having someone take notes on butcher paper or poster board or by collecting a notetaker's personal notes. Later, you may be able to use this information to prepare a handout for your school or program to provide to participating families.

Part 5: Distribution of Resources and Information

 10 minutes

- ➔ Thank participants for sharing their thoughts and recommendations.
- ➔ Ask them to identify which of the ideas in the handout have already been raised in discussion.
- ➔ Review the items that were not covered in the discussion.

Part 6: Closing

 5 minutes

- ➔ A closing discussion and question could be: As your children grow, they will still need your support, but they will need it in different ways. It is important that parents are ready and willing to make these adjustments. What are some ways that you can maintain a close relationship with your children while respecting their independence and individuality?
- ➔ If your school or program is conducting this session concurrently with the *Believing the College Dream* student curriculum, this may be a good place to inform participants of the topics students are covering in class and encourage them to ask their children about what they are learning 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 Community Conversations gathering.

RESOURCES

- ➔ *The Prophet*
 - Gibran, Kahlil. *The Prophet*. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1970.
- ➔ NYU Lagone Health
 - <https://med.nyu.edu/departments-institutes/child-adolescent-psychiatry/>



HANDOUT: ROOTS TO THE COMMUNITY, WINGS TO THE WORLD



NAME

“Give your children two things – roots and wings.” —*Chinese Proverb*

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 have been some of your feelings about what your child has gone through in his or her schooling, including positive, negative or life-changing experiences?

2. How have you adjusted to and handled these experiences?

3. How can you have a constructive conversation with your child about your feelings during these transitions?

4. What resources do you have or can you utilize to help you through your own transitions?
