



**Facilitator's Discussion Guide:**

**COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

**Introduction**

- The Parent Advisory Council is a group of parents with children in public schools who advise the Board of Education as they decide on policies in the school district. The PAC makes sure that parent voices are part of the discussions & decisions that are happening in our district. We work a lot with other parent and community groups to reach out to hear from as many parents as possible.
- (Thank the school/community group for arranging this meeting.) We really appreciate your giving us this time, for giving your time to meet with us, and we look forward to learning from you!
- Over the past two years the PAC has been hearing from parents a lot of concerns about after-school programs. Most schools have a program, but some of them can't serve all the students at the school. At other schools there are private programs, but many families can't afford them.
- This spring the PAC is meeting with parents at schools and community centers to hear about your needs, concerns and ideas about after-school programs for our children.
- At the end of this process, we're going to present recommendations to the Board of Education about ways to expand access to high quality after-school programs.
- We are not here to evaluate your school's after-school program, or its staff. We can't promise that anything will change or that new programs will come here in the near future.
- We are here to learn about your needs, concerns and ideas based on your family's experience. We want to see what families in different communities have in common – and to identify ways to make sure that all children have access to high-quality programs.
- We also hope that this conversation will strengthen the relationship between parents and our schools – and to engage you in making recommendations to the Board of Education about policies that affect your children & your families.
- Your remarks in this conversation will stay anonymous. We are taking notes to be sure we can report accurately on your perspectives, but no one will be quoted by name.

## Agenda

This is what we'll be talking about during this conversation:

Access to After-School Programs  
High Quality Programs  
Communication with Program Staff  
Ideas for Expanding Access  
Survey  
Next Steps

## Ground Rules

We have a few ground rules for our conversation, so everyone can feel comfortable.

- Everyone participates; no one dominates.
- There are no “right” answers. We want to hear about your experiences, views and beliefs.
- Help keep the discussion on track & try to stick to the topic.
- It is okay to disagree, but don't be disagreeable.
- Have fun!

**Would anyone like to add anything to the ground rules?**

**Is everyone okay with these?**

## Getting Started

If the meeting is at a school site: Ask everyone to say their name, and what grade(s) their child(ren) are in. They can also share if they have kids at other schools.

If the meeting is with a community group: Ask everyone to say their name, what schools their children go to & what grades they're in.

The Facilitator should share this information, too.

## Access to After School Programs

Ask people to raise their hands if...

- Your child goes to the after-school program here at the school
- Your child goes to different site for an after-school program
- Your child has other activities after school – such as sports practice or music lessons
- Your child goes home
- Your child goes to someone else's house

Is your child currently enrolled in the after school program you would most like him/her to be in?  
If not, why not?

Were there any obstacles for you or your family to enroll in the program? What were they?

What were the main things you looked for when you chose a program for your child?

What do you think the priorities should be for admitting students to after school programs?  
Should it be income, grades, first-come first-served, or some other factors (such as...) ?

What do you think most needs to be changed or improved about the process for getting enrolled  
in after school programs?

Do you think all students at your child's school have equal access to after-school programs?  
Why or why not?

## Program Quality

What should a quality after school program look like? What kinds of activities should it offer?

What about your child's after school program is working well for your child or your family?

What kinds of benefits do you expect your child will experience from being at an after school program?

(PROBE: Some parents may expect the child's academic performance to improve, some may like to see their child improve social skills, and some just want the child to like school better.)

What would you like to see improved or different about the program? What are your "wishes" for the after-school program?

Follow-up questions, if needed:

- Why is that important?
- What would that look like?
- What difference would that make?

What if the program could have more staff but with less experience, or fewer staff but with more experience? What would be your preference or priority?

What is your sense of how the children spend their time at your child's after school program? Do you wish they did more or less of anything in particular?

Does the after-school program have a similar set of expectations, rules, and style of discipline that there is during the school day?

Do you think your child's after school program is doing a good job meeting the needs of all students who participate?

## Communication to Parents

Do you know who the director of the after-school program is? Have you ever met/spoken with them?

Is there a way for parents to provide input into the after-school program? For example, to participate in evaluations, to help plan programs or activities, or set priorities? Is there a way to voice concerns or ideas?

What do you do when you or your child has a problem at the after-school program? Who can you talk to? Do the problems get resolved/addressed?

What kind of concerns do you think the families at your school or in your area have about after school programming?

How does the after school program inform you about how your child is doing? Does this work for you? What are the best ways for your child's program to communicate with you?

How would you like to become more involved in your child's after school program? What can the program do to encourage parental involvement?

## Expanding Access to After-School Programs

Explain that there are different types of after-school programs in San Francisco:

- Some are free, and some are expensive;
- Some are run by the school district & others by community organizations or private companies.
- Some schools have more than one after-school program at the school, that are run separately and serve different students.
- Many schools with free programs have to limit the number of students they can serve, because they have limited resources.

Some parents at schools with free programs that serve a limited number of students have proposed having "sliding scale" fees so they can pay something to help expand the programs, so they can serve more children.

What do you think of this idea?

## Do the Survey

- Hand out the surveys & pens.
- Give people 5-10 minutes (depending on time you have)
- Try not to let people leave without doing the survey! If it seems that people are heading out, explain that we're almost but not quite done, and to please complete the survey.

## Next Steps and Conclusion

Is there anything I didn't ask you about, that you would like to add?

We're going to conduct conversations like this one in different schools & community centers, and we're distributing this survey at a few big events. The City's Department of Children, Youth & Families is also working on this, and is doing a big phone survey to be able to reach more parents to talk about these issues. We're going to write a report on what we learn, and present our Recommendations to the Board of Education.

If you sign in with your contact information, we can send you a postcard to let you know when this report is finished.

Thank people again – remind those who didn't sign in yet to please sign in (show where the sign-in sheets are).

Collect the surveys.