

Community Café

CHANGING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
THROUGH CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Cafes Comunitarios

CAMBIANDO LA VIDA DE LOS NIÑOS
POR MEDIO DE CONVERSACIONES IMPORTANTES



Tips for Integrating the Community Café Approach into Your Activities

1. What if people need conversation the way fish need water?
 - Ensure you have at least 90 minutes for a café or adequate time in a meeting format to converse
 - Limit small group conversations to three or four people
 - Have opportunities for small group, large group and paired conversations
 - Invite diverse perspectives into the conversation and into the planning, especially family members from marginalized communities
2. What if conversation is how positive change happens for families?
 - Use the Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework (www.cssp.org) to help frame some of the conversations and activities
 - Allow ample time for people to get to know each other
 - Allow people to talk about what is working well now or what has worked in the past; the strengths and gifts they bring to the group and in their lives
 - Craft agenda questions that allow people to share stories
 - Encourage participants to speak from personal experience-discourage giving advice
3. How do we keep people engaged in the meeting process?
 - Be clear about the purpose of the agenda
 - Ensure each agenda activity supports co-learning
 - Announce the purpose of the meeting at the start and in the invitation
 - Allow room on the agenda to ask powerful questions related to the purpose
 - Mix people up to “cross pollinate” ideas
 - Share the facilitation role with a parent
4. How do we create a space that nurtures meaningful conversation?
 - Discuss with your team what a safe, welcoming, relaxed, fun environment would be like for those who are coming (don't forget fun)
 - Care for yourself as lovingly as you treat others as you prepare
 - Check in with yourself and your team: How is your breathing? Are you relaxed? Are you having fun? Are you learning?
 - Plan culturally relevant activities which may include food, art, music, poetry, cultural celebrations

- Greet each person at the door with a welcoming smile
5. What if the gold lies in discovering the big questions?
- Remind participants that their contributions benefit the whole group
 - Let go of needing to come up a solution and instead ask what needs to be learned
 - Use the Appreciative Inquiry process as a guide to plan next steps and designing agenda questions
6. What if no one knows which contribution will be the key ingredient?
- Model respect of everyone's style of communication and point of view
 - Capture conversations with words, pictures, graphic recordings
 - Ensure participants get a summary of the work done and a report of next steps
 - Ask people to share themes or patterns they heard in their conversations
7. What if listening together is how movement happens?
- Invite all to listen and write, draw or doodle during their conversations
 - Make the individual conversations visible to the whole group (post paper table cloths)
 - Allow time for people to recap highlights of the previous conversations
 - Allow time for individual reflections, moments of silence
 - Practice a deep listening activity at each activity
8. What if the harvest provides seeds for action and...?
- Make a plan for sharing notes with others including potential neighborhood, community and state partners
 - Look for themes in notes, share themes with others
 - Ask, "What gift do I contribute? What must we do together?"
 - Document strengths and what is working well (Appreciative Inquiry,)
 - Engage community partners throughout the process
 - Encourage participants to share what they learned with the community
 - Encourage others to lead conversations
 - Allow room in opening and closing routine for sharing insights, ideas, changes they have made as a result of café conversations
 - Celebrate and communicate achievements!

Please visit our website and offer your ideas, harvests, thoughts or questions at www.thecommunitycafe.com or write us at info@thecommunitycafe.com

Questions adapted from: Brown, Juanita, *The World Café*, Berrett Koehler Publ., 2005
www.theworldcafe.org

The Community Café Collaborative

Parents Partnering with Communities & Organizations to Strengthen Families