

Appendix D2

FOCUS GROUP GUIDES

The following is the template the parent coordinator developed for parent leaders in the school to use when inviting other parents to the focus groups.

Date _____

Hello _____,

I am calling you to invite you to be part of a focus group of school parents. As you may know, [*name of funding source*] has provided funds to explore ways to focus on the growth and development of school parents. While we regularly work to help parents understand the needs of children, [*name of parent educator/coordinator*] will be asking parents about their own concerns and helping them reflect on the impact of parenting their own children on their own lives as adults.

In response to the principal's request, [*name of parent educator/coordinator*] prepared a draft of a mission statement for this parent education and support initiative. She looks to us to provide direction for this project and to shape and help clarify this statement. As this initiative is the first of its kind in independent schools, it is imperative that we document its development so that it can be replicated in other schools. We are therefore asking permission to tape the session. Names will not be used. The recording will simply be identified by age group and date of meeting. It will be helpful to go back over the tapes for review.

We need to set a time and place to meet. [*name of person*] is available primarily on _____ but she can also arrange other times if there is enough lead time. [*Set time*]. Please feel free to call her before the meeting at [*phone number*]. She will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

2 DEVELOPING CARING RELATIONSHIPS

The coordinator sent the following letter to the parents who said yes:

Date _____

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and a small group of school parents on [date] at [time] a.m. in [place]. As you know from the principal's introductory comments and from speaking with [parent leader], I have been funded through a special grant to explore ways to facilitate the growth and development of school parents. While parents and school staff work diligently to enhance the growth and development of children, it is less often that they pause to look at the effect of parenting and caring on their own growth and development as adults. This initiative is an attempt to explore ways to facilitate this process. It is not an attempt to duplicate work of parent groups, counselors, or teachers but rather a way to institutionalize the school's commitment to parents and teachers in their own right.

This grant will allow the school to develop a model initiative that can be replicated in other schools nationally and internationally. Because it is the first of its kind, we need to document its development. To that end, I would like to ask your permission to tape-record our meeting. It will not include names but rather be categorized by group. If you have any questions, please call me at [phone number] on [days]. I look forward to meeting you next [day] to discuss the initiative and seek your input on its development.

Very sincerely,

[name of coordinator]

Coordinator, Parent Education Initiative

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP GUIDE—GRADE CHAIRS (GRADES 3–5)

1. What do you *enjoy the most* about being a parent of an elementary school student?
2. What is it like to be a *parent* of an elementary school student? (Please contrast it to your parent role when your child was younger.)
3. What is your greatest *challenge* as a parent of an elementary school student?
4. What would you *need* to make your current parenting role more satisfying?
5. Is there *information* that you as a parent might personally appreciate from the Parent Education Initiative?
6. Based on your current contacts with *school parents in your child's grade*, what do you think they might appreciate from a Parent Education Initiative?
7. Are you clear on how the Parent Education Initiative *differs* from initiatives of the parent's council and the school itself?
8. Can you suggest a way that they are similar?

Thank you for your assistance.