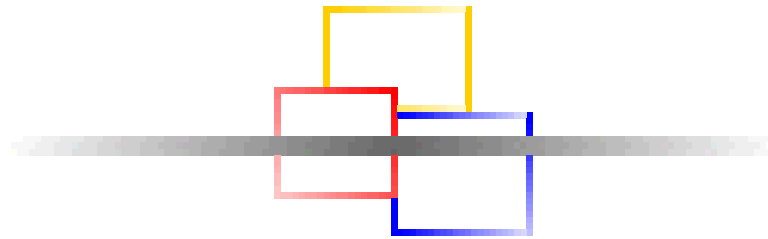


# **A Tool Kit for Parent Coordinators**

## **Measuring Success: Guidelines and Tools for Engaging Families and Communities:**



## **Parent Surveys, Focus Groups & Other Research Methods**

**August 2003**

Prepared by:

**Agenda for Children Tomorrow (ACT)**

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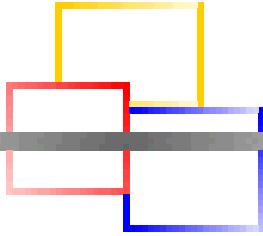
Anthea McLaughlin, Associate Executive Director

# A Measure of How Families Are Doing

The 10 categories listed across the top of this chart are elements of family life that can be measured to determine if and where a family is at risk. The descriptors in the shaded rows are not meant to offer a total picture of families functioning at each stratum of well-being, but instead, are intended to provide general characteristics of families who fall in the three strata.

	SHELTER	NUTRITION	HEALTH CARE	ALCOHOL/ DRUG USE	EMPLOYMENT	INCOME/ BUDGET	ADULT EDUCATION	CHILDREN'S EDUCATION	PARENTING	FAMILY RELATIONS
<p><b>THRIVING</b></p> <p>This family is growing and contributing to its and the community's well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lives in housing of choice</li> <li>spends less than 20% of income for shelter</li> <li>feels safe and secure in home and neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can afford a variety of foods</li> <li>has appliances, utensils to prepare food in a variety of methods</li> <li>has and uses knowledge of basic nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established with health care professionals</li> <li>covered by comprehensive insurance</li> <li>practices preventive health habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members do not use illegal drugs, alcohol used in moderation, if at all</li> <li>former abusers are following effective recovery treatment</li> <li>parents help children learn skills needed for healthy abuse-free lifestyle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>constant new development of transferable skills</li> <li>employed by thriving business offering comprehensive benefit package</li> <li>steady advancement in career of choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sufficient to allow family choices</li> <li>able to save 10% of income</li> <li>established relationship with financial institution</li> <li>pays bills on time, manages debt load without depriving family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has post-secondary education or training</li> <li>positive supportive attitude toward learning, takes advantage of opportunities to learn</li> <li>sets and pursues long-range career and personal goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>little or no absenteeism</li> <li>high marks in most subjects</li> <li>no discipline problems</li> <li>children are leaders among other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children live with parents or permanent guardians</li> <li>mutually agreed upon rules and expectations, conflicts easily negotiated</li> <li>children happy, socially well-adjusted</li> <li>children enjoy parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strong, supportive network of family and friends</li> <li>active in community</li> <li>strong, positive family identity</li> <li>nurturing; consistently care for family members</li> </ul>
<p><b>SAFE</b></p> <p>This family is secure and has the potential to move forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lives in affordable housing</li> <li>spends less than 1/3 of income for shelter</li> <li>able to secure home, feels safe in neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has enough food to satisfy hunger</li> <li>has appliances and utensils needed to prepare food</li> <li>understands basic nutrition</li> <li>eats three meals a day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can get medical care when needed</li> <li>insurance covers partial cost of care, can make arrangements to pay balance</li> <li>sound, basic health, hygiene practices; seeks timely treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no drug or alcohol abuse in immediate family</li> <li>abusers have sought treatment</li> <li>parents discuss use of drugs/alcohol with children and model appropriate behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has attained marketable skills</li> <li>employed by secure company offering some benefits</li> <li>long-term employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sufficient to meet basic family needs</li> <li>plans and sticks to monthly budget, saves when possible</li> <li>able to obtain secured debt</li> <li>pays bills on time, delays purchases to handle debt load</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have high school diploma (GED)</li> <li>ambivalent attitude toward learning</li> <li>sets and pursues short-term career and personal goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>absenteeism is not high enough to be a concern</li> <li>passing marks in all subjects</li> <li>few discipline problems</li> <li>children get along with other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children live with parents and are physically, emotionally safe</li> <li>realistic rules, manageable conflict</li> <li>children usually happy, outgoing, little violence or aggression</li> <li>able to relate to parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>positive extended family support</li> <li>feel a part of the community</li> <li>sense of family unit</li> <li>members physically safe, emotionally secure; seek to change negative habits</li> </ul>
<p><b>AT RISK</b></p> <p>This family cannot meet its needs; growth potential of its members is minimal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lives in temporary or shared housing</li> <li>spends over 1/3 of income for shelter</li> <li>deterioration of housing conditions; feels afraid in home neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not enough food; family members are hungry</li> <li>unable to prepare food</li> <li>little or no nutritional knowledge</li> <li>eats when food is available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can't always get medical care</li> <li>not covered by insurance, inadequate income</li> <li>doesn't care for self, ignores health problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of illegal drugs/abuse of alcohol or prescription drugs</li> <li>abuser denies problem, refuses to seek treatment</li> <li>no discussion of drugs/alcohol usage in home, parents exhibit abusive behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>minimum/entry-level job skills</li> <li>short-term temporary or no employment; no benefits, no growth opportunities</li> <li>lacks job-seeking skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unable to meet its basic needs</li> <li>spontaneous, inappropriate spending; no savings</li> <li>unable to obtain credit</li> <li>unpaid bills; overwhelming debt load</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school dropout, history of academic failure</li> <li>does not consider learning important</li> <li>does not set nor pursue systematic career and personal goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>high absenteeism</li> <li>failing one or more subjects</li> <li>continual discipline problem</li> <li>children in conflict with other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outside placement; threatened children have run away from home</li> <li>unrealistic or nonexistent rules; constant conflict</li> <li>children unhappy, withdrawn, violently aggressive</li> <li>fearful of parent(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members do not relate to one another</li> <li>isolated from others</li> <li>no family identity; family make-up changes frequently</li> <li>nurturing withheld, members are subjected to physical violence</li> </ul>

# Parent Coordinator Do's and Don'ts



## Do's

- Plan Strategically
- Take risks
- Empower
- Avoid parents “affait accomplis” (done deals)
- Be inclusive—not only in who is invited to a meeting but also in making available the language, arguments, facts and feasible choices
- Let parents speak for themselves when they are ready
- Evaluate
- Fight for the underlying tangible program substance
- Use a consensus approach
- Avoid disguising top-down initiatives as bottom-up
- Inventory your school and neighborhood assets
- 

## Don'ts

- Insist everything you do must come from your strategic plan
- Justify your existence
- Compete when you could collaborate
- Rely solely on negative data
  
- Give up on any relationships building without trying three times...or four
- Get hung up on brand names or pride ownership
- Ignore non-geographic communities
- Say “wait a minute before you take that initiative
- Buy into anyone's enemies list
- Chase money for purposes that won't support your priorities

# Tools of the Trade

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Surveys--- the most common way of gathering additional information on a topic. It can be used to measure evidence, opinions, attitudes, and much more.

Focus Group--- is a small group of usually 6-12 people who are asked to come together for an open discussion on a particular topic to gather information. The discussion is led by a facilitator to clarify information that has been gathered by other methods.

Polling---asking specific questions to a smaller section of a population or community to determine the specific opinion and views of the community. Responses are usually reflected as percentages.

Questionnaires--- a standard set of questions that are presented during a survey to gather information. This tool ensures the uniformity of the survey

Observation---information you take in from your everyday interactions in your surroundings

Assessment--- taking information and placing it under closer and more intense study, which includes analysis, documentation, interviews, statistics and synthesis.

Interviews--- direct face to face contact with the people being surveyed

Informal conversations---this does not generate any "empirical" data, but it is an effective tool to understand the feelings of individuals or groups.

Mailing---surveys can be delivered by mass mailing, or be handed out so that those being surveyed can put them in the mail when they are completed.

Internet---can be used to poll large groups of people without geographic boundaries, either by mass email, or by setting up "website" that can record responses. This does limit the people surveyed since computer access is necessary.

Phone interviews---usually random cold calls to ask a set of basic questions on a particular topic. Surveys can also be conducted where people can call in to be polled and give their responses by touch-tone.

Door to Door---picking a geographic area to survey and attempting to interview people in the community by visiting them at home, in places of business, or other public locations with predictable traffic in the same geographic area.

Asset survey--- a dynamic categorization of community assets, which is any organization activity, individual attribute, physical structure, or condition, which can aid in promoting a community in a positive, comprehensive and accurate manner.

Needs Assessment--- a systematic method for identifying, understanding, analyzing and documenting what problems are of concern to community members; how serious each problem is; how to prioritize problems; what strategies could be developed to generate new resources; and where to target additional resources for the greatest impact. (David Rubel, How to conduct a needs assessment of a community.)

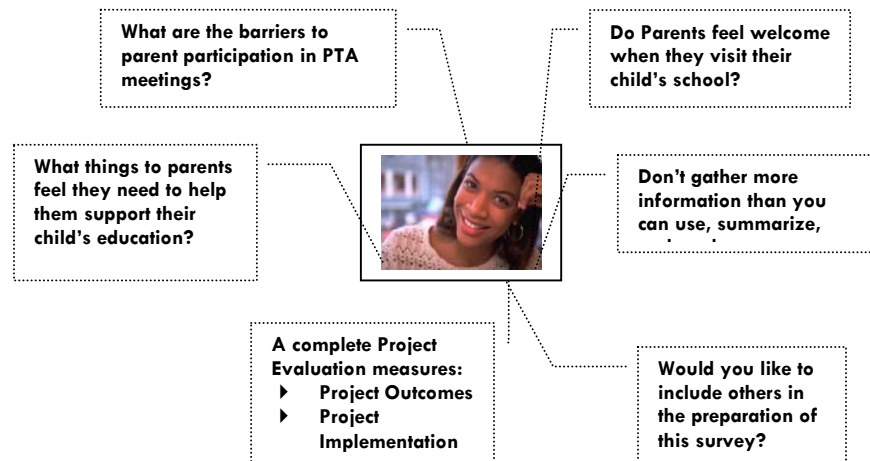
## **Seven Stages of Public Opinions and Polling**

1. People begin to become aware on an issue.
2. People develop a sense of urgency about an issue
3. People start to explore choices for dealing with the issue.
4. Resistance to facing costs and trade-offs kicks in, producing wishful thinking.
5. People weight the Pros and Cons of alternatives.
6. People take a stand intellectually.
7. People make a responsible judgment morally and emotionally

# Surveys... A Closer Look

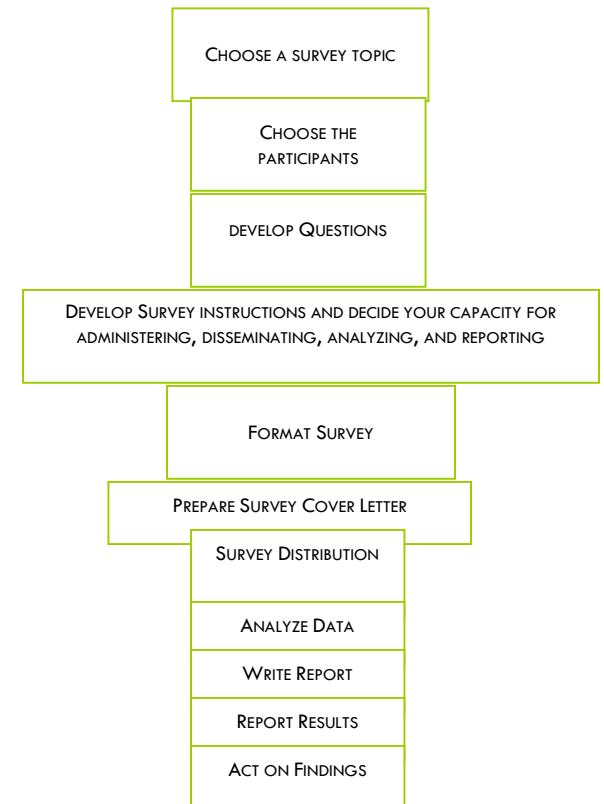
What a survey can do

- Can give you the information you need to develop powerful arguments to change the status quo.
- Can help you establish priorities.
  
- Can help you assess the needs.
  
- Can understand opportunities that are in front of you and what lies ahead.
  
- Can capture the different types of resources that exist.
  
- Can clarify different perspectives and opinions.
  
- Can identify problems, if there are any.
  
- Can deepen your understanding of the communities strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.
  
- Can offer new information to generate new resources for yourself and the community.
  
- Can develop new strategies for improvement and for change.
  
- Can help you to market and promote your ideas, thoughts, and programs.
  
- Can help to galvanize a constituency and to gain support.



## What is a Survey?

A survey is the most common way of gathering additional information on a topic. A survey usually comes in the form of a standardized questionnaire so that everyone who is asked to participate is asked the same information. Surveys can be used to measure evidence, opinions, attitudes, and much more.



# SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

## Closed-Ended

Where do you currently find information on childcare and early education programs for your children? **PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child's School            | <input type="checkbox"/> Health clinics                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supermarket               | <input type="checkbox"/> Community center                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care center               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laundromat                | <input type="checkbox"/> Head Start center               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Book                | <input type="checkbox"/> "Word of Mouth"                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship          | <input type="checkbox"/> Hair/Beauty Parlor              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work Place                | <input type="checkbox"/> Your educational program/school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please list) _____ |  |

## Rating Scale

The information I receive on child care and early education programs is helpful. **PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT MOST ACCURATELY REFLECTS YOUR EXPERIENCE.**

1= Strongly Agree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

## Open Ended

How did you find your current child care provider? **PLEASE EXPLAIN.**

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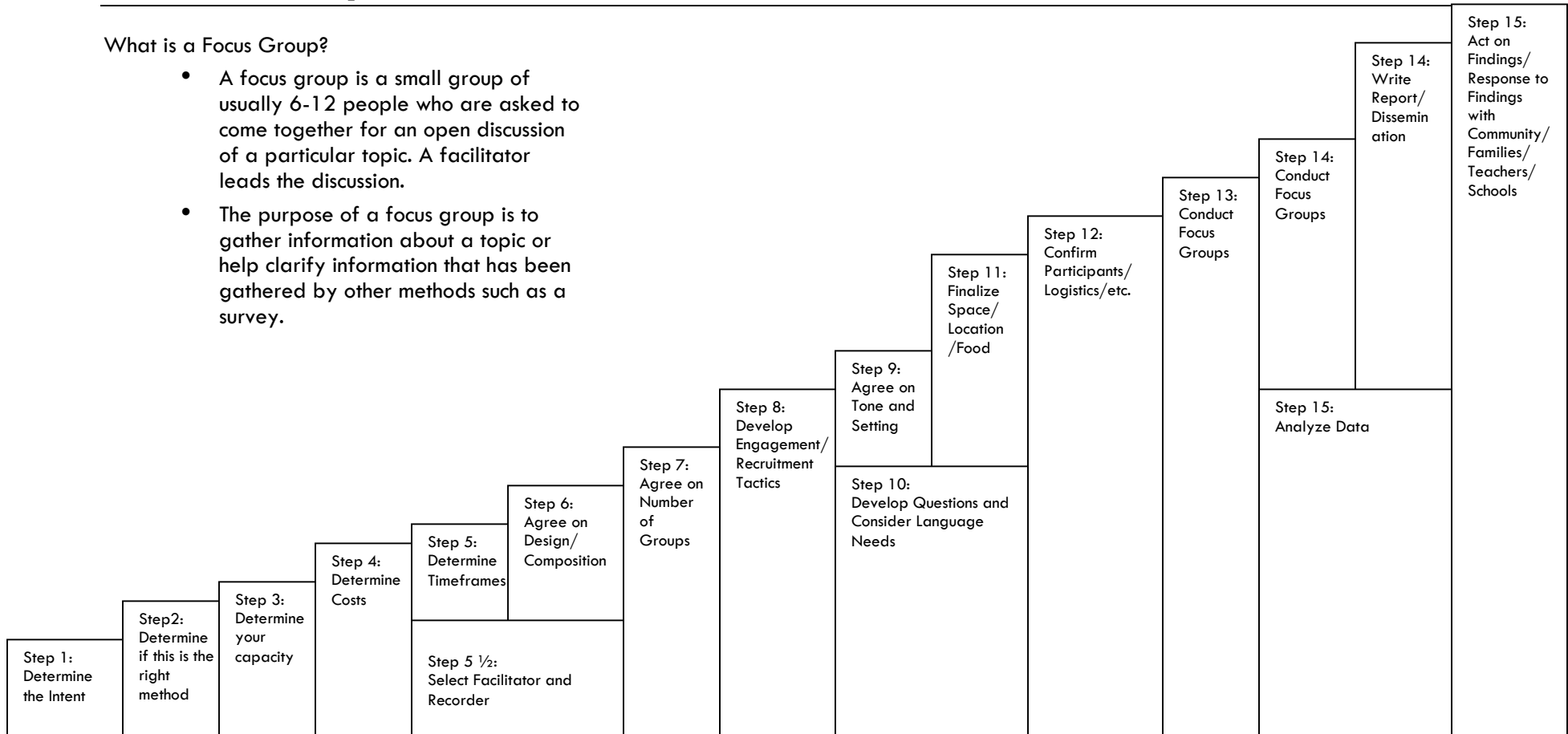
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# Focus Groups...A Closer Look

What is a Focus Group?

- A focus group is a small group of usually 6-12 people who are asked to come together for an open discussion of a particular topic. A facilitator leads the discussion.
- The purpose of a focus group is to gather information about a topic or help clarify information that has been gathered by other methods such as a survey.



**Summary of Steps:**

- Articulate and build support for groups' purpose among interested parties.
- Define the characteristics of the focus group participants
- Determine the number of groups to be conducted and how to arrange participation (all parents, parents and teachers, a mix?)
- Agree upon a timeline for planning, holding and writing up groups... and using the intelligence gained.
- Decide who will receive reports and feedback from the focus group findings and when.
- Determine participant recruitment process;
- Determine who will record the focus group discussions. Permission is required from participants if video or audio recording devices are used.
- Determine contact person for participants who have after thoughts, questions, or otherwise desire feedback.
- Cross-sell future opportunities
- Hand-out useful information

## Focus Groups...Continued

### If you are a facilitator, don't forget the following tips:

- Thank participants for agreeing to participate:
  - o Introduce yourself and, if applicable, other facilitators and the recorder. Indicate where you are from, who you are representing, and your role and the note taker's role;
  - o State the purpose of the focus group, specifically and tell participants who wants their input and for what purpose.
- Provide an overview of the discussion:
  - o Assure participants that individual identities will not be associated with opinions in the report;
  - o Let them know that what they say will not be repeated, there are no right or wrong answers, and that everyone's opinions and ideas are valuable.
- Encourage participants to speak freely, and state their opinions and ideas.
- Ask participants not to judge others' whose opinions might differ from their own.
- Indicate how the information will be presented to the client.
- Ask participants if they have any questions or concerns before you get started.
- Make list of participant rights and responsibilities available.
- Tell participants whether or not they will receive a transcript or summary report.

### Examples of when to use a survey and when to use a focus group...

METHOD	USES	EXAMPLES/SCENARIOS
Survey	Plan an event or program	You want to plan a "Back to School Night" and you need to determine how many people want to participate
	Evaluate an event or program	You held a "First Day Activity" and want to determine if parents found it welcoming and useful
	Measure attitudes about and responses to a program	You coordinated a training for parents on how to provide homework help to their children and want to find out if parents who attended are putting to use the skills they learned to help their children.
	Measure attitudes about and response to policy implemented or proposed by decision-makers	School administrators delineated a dress code for students and you want to determine how parents feel about it and what they would or would not require or allow. Ideas for implementation might also be gathered (e.g., trial or phase-in).
Focus Group	Explore attitudes around a new policy/program and explore possible solutions	You want to know how parents feel about the new school structure
	Gather information from a small group of people	You want to determine how parents of children in your schools gifted and talented program feel about the curricula
	Supplement information gathered from a survey	You determined from your survey (see above) that most parents are opposed to the school uniform policy but you want to find out why they are opposed in more detail and want to explore solutions

## References – Bibliography – Websites

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Rubel, David. "How to Conduct a Needs Assessment Study of Your Community: a research planning and advocacy manual for New York City community leaders and human service staff". **Community Planning and Development 1997**

Kaiser Permanente. "Guidelines for Conducting Focus Group Research", Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program. California Division.

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- Nesser, David L. How to run a focus group. *Public Relations Journal* 44:33-4 Mr' 88

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- Brodkin, Margaret. "A Quick Guide to Civic Involvement for Parents and youth", *Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth*, 1999

### MAPPING ASSETS

- Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, ACTA Publications, 1993

### POLING / SURVEY EXAMPLES

- Research, Davis Binder. "San Francisco: a city that cares about all its Children". *Coleman Advocates for C*

### Resources for Community Strategies

- Asset Based Community Development Institute - provides tool kits on community building. Phone #: 847-491-8711. Website: [www.nwu.edu/ipr/abcd.html](http://www.nwu.edu/ipr/abcd.html)
- Children Defense Fund: working to build a broader support base for children. Phone #: 202-628-8787 Website: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)
- Civic Practice Network: Assist groups interested in conducting public problem solving in communities. Phone #: 617-736-4890 Website: [www.cpn.org](http://www.cpn.org)
- COM-ORG: Provides information used to learn, teach and do community organizing Website: [uac.rdp.utoledo.edu/docs/comm-org/cohome.htm](http://uac.rdp.utoledo.edu/docs/comm-org/cohome.htm)
- I Am Your Child: Making early childhood development a national top priority. Phone #: 888-447-3400 Website: [www.iamyourchild.org](http://www.iamyourchild.org)
- Industrial Areas foundation: Provides resources technical assistance and training** Phone #: 312-245-9211
- Kids Campaigns: Provides information on community building and civic renewal.** Phone #: 202-638-5770 Website: [www.kidscampaigns.org](http://www.kidscampaigns.org)
- National Association of Neighborhoods: association of community-based organizations.** Phone #: 202-332-7766
- National Civic League: Creating "Communities that work for everyone"** Phone #: 303-571-4343 Website: [www.ncl.org](http://www.ncl.org)
- National Community Building Network: working to reduce poverty and create social/economic opportunities.** Phone #: 510-893-2404 Website: [www.ncbn.org](http://www.ncbn.org)
- National League of Cities: Assistance in developing and implementing community based actions plans** Phone #: 202-626-3030 Website: [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)
- Kaiser Permanente Medical care Program: Provides Organizational research. Phone #: 626-564-3730 Website: <http://Kpweb.kpscal.org/Orgrdept>
- The Pacific Institute of Community Organizations: provides training, consultation and technical assistance to church-community organizations.** Phone #: 510-655-2801
- Kids for Community: Volunteer opportunities. Website: [www.kidsforcommunity.org](http://www.kidsforcommunity.org)

## Research and Reference sites

Office of the New York City Comptroller: Obtain information about NYC government agencies and services  
Website: [www.comptroller.nyc.gov](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov)

Promising Practices Network: Evidence based information on services, approaches and policies that achieve positive results for children.  
Website: [www.promisingpractices.net](http://www.promisingpractices.net)

National Center for Children in Poverty: Research forums on Children families and the New Federalism.  
Website: [www.researchforum.org](http://www.researchforum.org)

## Children's Issues and research

The Guidance Channel: Free online newsletter.  
Website: [www.guidancechannel.com](http://www.guidancechannel.com)

National Center for Children in Poverty: publications that provide tools to help keep children safe and emotionally healthy.  
Phone #: 212-304-7100 Website: [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

The David and Lucile Foundation: Publish a journal on issues that children deal with.  
Website: [www.futureofchildren.org/cct/index.htm](http://www.futureofchildren.org/cct/index.htm)

Harvard Family Research project: publications on early childhood care and education.  
Website: <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp>

How Parents and peers influence teen smoking.  
Website: <http://news.excite.com/news/r/010123/18/health-peers>

Census Monitoring Board: Website: [www.cmbp.gov](http://www.cmbp.gov) / [www.aauw.org/2000/latinapress.html](http://www.aauw.org/2000/latinapress.html)

Kids in Foster Care Speak out:  
Website: [www.connectforkids.org/newsletter-ur11570/newsletter-urlshow.htm?docid=3962](http://www.connectforkids.org/newsletter-ur11570/newsletter-urlshow.htm?docid=3962)

Children and Foster Care: Kids links to programs and organizations in your state.  
[www.connectforkids.org/content1552/content.htm](http://www.connectforkids.org/content1552/content.htm)

Agenda for Children Tomorrow (ACT)  
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For engagement stories referenced in the Training Presentation:

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[www.citylimits.org/index.htm](http://www.citylimits.org/index.htm)