

# What is a Community Conversation?

A Community Conversation is a "town hall" type event where community members come together (usually for about three hours) to discuss the topic of differences in the learning success among children (referred to as "achievement gaps"). The Community Conversation revolves around three different approaches to closing these gaps:

1. Making schools accountable for these measurable differences
2. Increasing the level of resources to schools
3. Increasing the involvement of parents, families and the community in children's learning

The basic goal of the Community Conversation is to give participants a chance to voice their opinions, talk about the areas where they agree, and begin to discuss how the community can come together to improve educational opportunities for all young people in that community".

What does a Community Conversation look like? Participants come to the event location and sign in. Usually a meal is served at the beginning of the evening. Then, a presentation is made to the entire group to help define what is meant by "Closing Achievement Gaps." After that, community members break into small groups to discuss the issues. A moderator and recorder team is assigned to each small group discussion, helping to keep the conversation going. Moderators and recorders do not give their opinions about the topics. Their job is to remain neutral. After the small group sessions end, everyone re-convenes to report on what was discussed in their rooms.

Who Should Participate? Anyone who has an interest in the success of young people in the community is invited to attend. This can include -but is not limited to -parents, teachers, students, community and business leaders, elected officials, law enforcement personnel, religious leaders, sorority and fraternity leaders, minority group representatives, medical and social work professionals, and youth workers.

How does a Community Prepare for a Community Conversation? Usually an Organizing Committee forms - made up of representatives from a variety of organizations in the community - to help set up the structure for carrying out the Community Conversation. Organizing Committee members may want to form sub-committees with volunteers who can help put together the Community Conversation. Some of the tasks and committees might include:

- Identifying moderators and recorders who will be trained to help lead the small group discussions
- Helping with publicity to make sure that community members know about and come to the Community Conversation
- Overseeing the meal arrangements
- Helping to set up child care at the Community Conversation location
- Assisting with registration at the Community Conversation

What's Next? After the Community Conversation takes place, the Organizing Committee will look at the results and then help come up with a plan for helping to move the community toward closing the achievement gaps among its students.

**IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED OR IN LEARNING MORE:**

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