

STRATEGIES FOR AMERICAN INDIAN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

(Revised Updated Version, May7, 2007)

EXHIBIT C: PROTOCOL FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

WELCOME TO PARTICIPANTS

Participants will be welcomed by the facilitator and the note-taker in a culturally appropriate manner.

OPENING COMMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS

- **Introduction of facilitator and note-taker**

***NOTE:** Facilitator and note-taker will introduce themselves by providing their names and affiliation with the study. Facilitator will provide further information on her tribe/nation and other culturally appropriate information.*

- **Purpose of gathering¹**

The purpose of our conversation today is to gather information about how American Indian parents and families get involved in their children's education. This conversation is one of four being conducted by McREL to determine how American Indian parents and family members become involved in the education process. We are particularly interested in identifying barriers to your involvement, as well as strategies that encourage you to participate more fully in your children's education.

- **Importance of their participation**

Some teachers and school personnel who are not of American Indian descent know little about the way American Indian families prefer to participate in their children's education. In order to give American Indian children the best possible chance of achieving to their full potential, we have invited you to participate in these conversations and share your ideas about how you encourage your children to succeed in school and how you interact with the schools they attend. Once we gather information from this and the other conversations, we will provide the information to schools and districts so they can develop better ways to welcome you into the schools. We also hope that the information gathered from these conversations will help increase the participation of all American Indian parents and families in their children's education.

¹ Although this protocol is scripted, it is expected that the facilitator will read the scripts with careful observation and reading of cues from participants and will adapt the scripted statements and phrasing to accommodate the communication needs and styles of the participants. In order to gain access and an adequate level of trust from participants, the facilitator will explain the information in a way that makes sense to participants. Flexibility in the facilitator's role is critical to obtain the type of information sought in the study.

- **Session expectations**

It is important that you know that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will be asking; all of your responses, comments, and questions are good and important. Feel free to ask for clarification about anything you don't understand. You will not only help yourself, but all of the others who are engaged in this discussion. We would like for all of you to participate. Your opinion is very important to us, but you should not feel pressured to share any information that you don't want to share. It is okay to disagree with the opinions of each other and to share what is on your minds. We're interested in the variety of opinions this group represents. In order for us to have a friendly and productive conversation, we would like to establish some rules on how we want to communicate with each other during this session.

- Try to speak up so we all can hear each other.
- To be able to hear each other, try to speak one person at a time (a talking feather or a talking stick will be used for this purpose).
- Be respectful of each other's ideas and opinions.
- What is said in the group stays in the group: Keep all comments confidential.
- Are there any questions?

- **Agenda for the focus group session**

As we explained earlier, we hope to hear your perspectives on being involved in your children's education. Our purpose is to learn how teachers and other educators can work together with parents and families of their American Indian students. To begin, I'll ask you to introduce yourself/ves. Following introductions, I'll ask some questions about parents' and family involvement in their children's education. Before we finish the session, I'll ask you if we have left anything out of the discussion that is particularly important to you that we understand. At that time, you will be able to share anything else that is on your mind about the manner in which you and your child's teachers interact. Introduction of participants

We would like for you to introduce yourself by sharing with all of us the following information:

- Your name
- Your Tribe/Nation affiliation
- How many children you have and their ages
- The schools and grades your children attend

NOTE: Each person will introduce himself/herself to the group.

Thank you. You bring important perspectives to this discussion. We will now start with the questions for our more formal conversation.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- **Topic One: What is parent involvement?**

In the field of education, we talk a lot about the importance of parents participating in the education of their children. This first set of questions deals with parent involvement and your perceptions about what it means to be involved in your children's education.

Lead 1: Have you heard the term parent involvement? What comes to mind when you hear people talk about parent involvement?

Lead 2: How do you think schools want parents to be involved in their children's education?

Probe 1: Has anyone in your school — a teacher, the principal, or another person — explained to you how to participate or helped you to be involved in your children's education? Could you give us a few examples?

Lead 3: Why do you think schools want parents to get involved in their children's education?

Probe 1: Are there any benefits to being involved? What are they?

Probe 2: Are there any disadvantages to such involvement? Give us a few examples.

- **Topic Two: How do American Indian parents and other family members become involved in their children's education?**

As we explained earlier, we are very interested in finding out how American Indian parents and other family members get involved in the education of their children. The following questions refer to how you and other family members participate in the education of your children.

Lead 4: There are many ways in which parents and families participate and become involved in their children's education. Which of your family members is involved in your children's education?

Probe 1: How do you, as a parent, prefer to be involved in your children's education?

Probe 2: What about other family members? How do they prefer to get involved?

Lead 5: What things do you do to support your children's education?

Probe 1: Do you encourage your children to go to school? If yes, how do you do that? If no, why not?

Probe 2: Do you encourage your children to work/study hard? If yes, how do you do that? If not, why not?

Lead 6: How do your children feel about your involvement in their education?

Probe 1: Do they like that you are involved in their education? Why?

Lead 7: Do you think that your involvement/participation in your children's education helps them do better in school? If so, why?

- **Topic Three: Barriers to parent involvement**

The following questions deal with things that discourage or prevent you from participating in your children's education.

Lead 8: Have you ever encountered any difficulties or obstacles to getting involved in your children's education?

Probe 1: Have you ever wanted to get involved in your children's education but found that your school discouraged it? Can you provide some examples?

Probe 2: Have you ever participated in your children's education but found that the way in which you were involved was not considered useful by the school? Describe the situation(s) or provide some examples.

- **Topic Four: Facilitating parent involvement**

The last few questions are about what have you experienced in the schools that has helped you be more involved in your children's education.

Lead 9: Schools sometimes try to get parents to participate in their children's education. What strategies have schools used that have helped you, as American Indian parents, get involved your children's education?

Probe 1: What things do schools do that you like or that encourage American Indian families to participate in their children's education?

Lead 10: Do you have any suggestions for schools or districts that would help you get more involved in your children's education?

Probe 1: What would you like schools to do to make you feel that you are better supporting your children's education?

- **Additional comments**

That's all of the questions that we have.

Are there any other questions that you think we should have asked, but didn't? Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us?

Thank you very much for all of the comments and experiences you have shared with us. Your participation in this study will help us understand what works for the American Indian community in terms of your participation in your children's education. This study is very important because we are certain that if parents, families, and schools work together, children will benefit.

**BURDEN STATEMENT/REVISED
TO FIT THE NEEDS OF THE FOCUS GROUP**

DATA COLLECTION FORMAT

(This burden statement is *not applicable* to this instrument because participants will not see it. This is a protocol that the group facilitator will use to conduct the focus group session)

PAPERWORK BURDEN STATEMENT

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1850-xxx. The time required to provide the requested information is estimated to average a maximum of 1.5 hours including the time to get instructions, sign consent forms, and respond to the group facilitator's questions. **If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to:** U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4700. **If you have comments or concerns regarding this group session, write directly to:** Sandra Garcia, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Room 506C, Washington, D.C. 20208-4651.