

The Community Café Guide for Hosts:

Changing the Lives of Children through Conversations that Matter



The **Children’s Trust Fund Alliance** (formerly known as the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund) holds the unique position of serving as the membership organization for state children’s trust and prevention funds. Children’s trust funds are the backbone of our nation’s infrastructure to support children and their families.

From 2006 to 2009, the Alliance led a national **Early Childhood Initiative (ECI)** of a 30-state Learning Community that included children’s trust funds and their partners, parents and community members. Through this national initiative, the Alliance focused on strategies that strengthen families, build protective factors, promote individual growth, help systems be more responsive to families and children and strengthen communities’ capacities as safe and healthy environments.

The Alliance was engaged in collaborative partnerships with members of the ECI Learning Community, and because of the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s (DDCF)** support, was able to develop this document and many other valuable resources. The DDCF improves the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, wildlife conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties.

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Photo by Teresa Rafael

This document is part of a series of resources that was published in 2012 as a result of the Alliance’s collaborative partnership with state children’s trust and prevention funds through the national Early Childhood Initiative. All are available at no cost. To see the full array of resources developed, please visit the Alliance web site at www.ctfalliance.org. You may also contact the Alliance at info@ctfalliance.org.

Introduction: How to Use this Guide

Welcome to the *Community Café Guide for Hosts: Changing the Lives of Children through Conversations that Matter*. This guide is intended to accompany a full-day orientation to the Community Café approach and includes a description of a typical planning process along with a tool for each step of the way.

If you are reading this guide without the benefit of an orientation or coaching from a café host, and are interested in hosting a café in your area or adopting this approach into your work, please feel free to contact us. There are others who are already hosting gatherings in their community and would be happy to help you get started. If you are already hosting and seeing this guide for the first time, we are curious as to the questions you have and/or comments about it.

Finally, we wish you the best as you work to strengthen families and join us in reweaving our social fabric so that the protective factors children need to thrive are a birthright for all children!



“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

~ Margaret Wheatley



Hosting a Community Café

Community Café Orientation Guide

This guide is a shorter alternative to the full Host Orientation Guide located at www.thecommunitycafe.com or www.ctfalliance.org. An 84-page document, the Host Orientation Guide is available in English or Spanish and contains visuals for conversation, design tools, evaluation tools, sample invitations, handouts, poetry and a sample proposal for grant writing.

Some Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

- There is some value in every organization and community
- Starting a change process from a position of strength adds power and possibility to the process
- Questions are a good tool for facilitating change
- The kinds of questions you ask determine what you will find
- Stories are an important part of information gathering
- Image (vision, dream) and action are linked
- Having a positive, powerful vision/dream empowers people to take action
- Getting the whole system involved helps bring about change

This guide focuses on the typical steps involved in hosting a Community Café. There are many variations to hosting a Community Café, and this is only a guide to the practice of hosting meaningful conversations in a group setting.

Hosting Community Cafés are part of an Appreciative Inquiry process:

- **Dream** – What is your vision for strengthening families?
- **Design** – What change(s) would you like to see happen in your community?
- **Discovery** – What do you want to learn, need to know?
- **Delivery** – Host a café conversation and commit to action as a result of the conversation. After your café, revisit this process again. Communities are encouraged to adopt cafés as a part of their community function.

Typically, a Community Café is hosted by parent volunteers who live in the community and in partnership with at least one other community entity or organization. Café conversations are intended to spark leadership to develop the relationships necessary to strengthen families. If a group is anticipated to be larger than 12, hosts typically employ the World Café method and principals for convening meaningful conversation. If you would like more information on The World Café model, go to www.theworldcafe.org.

The following seven steps outline a typical process for hosting a Community Café. Each step references tools which may be helpful and can be found in this guide or on the Community Café website at www.thecommunity.com.



Seven Steps to Hosting a Community Café

STEP 1: Define the purpose for this particular café and form a hosting team.

Clarify the purpose of the conversation and what you want to learn. Invite organizations and community members interested in the purpose of the café into the planning. (Tools: “*Planning Team Discussion Guide*” on page 5 and “*Strengthening Families Protective Factors*” on page 6)

STEP 2: Plan the setting for the café.

Where and when would having a café be most inviting in your community? Are there activities that already occur that you could add a café component to? Consider the culture of the community you are inviting. What food, music, poetry, art, language or even usual ways of gathering would you like to consider in creating a welcoming environment? List all the activities and roles that your team decides are needed. For example, include such things as food, inviting others, set up and clean up and a team for hosting the Kid Café (child care.) Develop your list of tasks, needs and resources according to your budget – there is a café for every budget! Include the resources and strengths of your hosting team, their network and the neighborhood in your planning. (Tool: “*Planning Team Discussion Guide*” on page 5)

STEP 3: Design a compelling invitation.

Think about the kind of invitation that would be effective for the culture of the community; it should feel personal and communicate purpose. Include your cultural considerations in your invitation. Including food, childcare and transportation in the invitation help make it more compelling. In most cases, a personal invitation is much more effective than a flyer. Reminder phone calls the week of the café are also helpful. Asking others to help you with the invitation is a great way to enlist others. (Tools: “*Sample invitations*” on page 7 and page 8)

STEP 4: Develop a general idea of the time together.

Cafés usually run about two hours not including clean up and include a great start, eating together, a dyad conversation followed by two rounds of conversation, then a harvest and a beautiful ending. It also includes a Kid Café so all ages can meaningfully contribute to strengthening families. Cafés may include a flip chart and markers, paper and markers for each table of four, elements of art and nature, nametags, a Kid Café area, tablecloths and music. Tables are arranged to seat four, five at the most! (Tools: “*Community Café Flow Agenda*” on page 9 and “*Designing Community Café Questions*” on page 10)

The World Café Model:

- Is relevant for a group of 12 or more. (if less than 12 consider other forms of democratic group conversation such as a circle process.)
- Participants are seated in small café style tables in groups of 3 or 4 (5 at the most).
- There are progressive rounds of two or more questions in small groups.
- People are invited to move to different groups between questions.
- Questions genuinely matter to that community.
- Conversations and ideas are captured on some form of paper and can be written, drawn or doodled.
- Two people act as hosts and one person per table acts as table host.
- Encourage participants to listen for patterns, share insights and connect ideas, thoughts and conversations.
- After at least two rounds of small group conversation, the large group participates in conversation to share discoveries.

~ Adapted from “*Café to Go*”
at www.theworldcafe.org

STEP 5: Design your café and Kid Café activity schedule.

Write out the time, activity and who is leading each activity. Draft two or three questions that promote deep discussions about the café purpose. (Hosts often revise questions several times.) Write out the final café design and distribute it to hosts and helpers. Kid Café activities often include circle conversations related to the protective factors, stories and songs and activities from diverse cultures (Tools: Kid Café Guide at www.thecommunitycafe.com and “Community Café Design Template” on page 14)

STEP 6: Host the café.

Think ahead of time and plan to do what you need to be fully present personally as a host and as a team. Show up ahead of the café start time to set up a welcoming environment without feeling harried and to check in with your team. Greet each person as they enter, invite them to sign in and make them feel comfortable; people enjoy being in the company of others who also care! (Tool: “Tips for Hosting a Community Café” on page 15)

STEP 7: Follow up after the café.

Discuss with the planning team what was learned, what went well and opportunities for growth. Gather and share all relevant information of your café with the community and your partners. Share your harvests with others. You are part of a larger community working

with you to strengthen families. Celebrate your accomplishments then ask what is next! (Tool: “Community Café Harvest Form” on page 17)

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

Participant Comments

- “Through the cafés I knew more about the story of my people.”
- “Thanks to the cafés I found my voice.”
- “The cafés have developed something very deep.”
- “I found my leadership, now I know where I’m going.”



Photo by Teresa Rafael

Planning Team Discussion Guide

Where: _____ When: _____ Time: _____

Café planning conversations	Tasks	Who will do it? When?	What do we need? What do we already have?	Will this need resources? About what will it cost?
<p>The Invitation: What is the compelling issue that is relevant to our group? How does it relate to strengthening families?</p>				
<p>Relationships: Who is in your community? How will you invite guests to come? How will you nurture relationships? Who is your team? How will you communicate?</p>				
<p>Children: How can all ages have meaningful participation? How will you ensure safety and a pleasant experience?</p>				
<p>Environment: What does a welcoming setting smell, look, feel, sound and taste like? Food, music, culture, plants, etc.</p>				
<p>What is already happening in our community that we can build on?</p>				

Families Need All of These to Thrive!
Strengthening Families Protective Factors



1 COURAGE

Parental Resilience: I will continue to have courage during stressful times or after a crisis.



2 FREEDOM

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: I am attuned and responsive to what my child needs so she/he has the freedom to grow and develop.



3 HEALTH

Concrete Support in Times of Need: My family has access to basic needs including access to services such as mental health support.



4 COMMUNITY

Social Connections: I have people who know me, friends and at least one person who supports my parenting.



5 COMPASSION

Social and Emotional Competence of Children: My child feels loved, a sense of belonging and can get along with others.



You are invited to join our gathering

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
— Margaret Mead

Parents, neighbors and community members join in conversations to awaken dreams, discover our collective strengths and possibilities that will improve the lives of all children in our community!

Communities are one living system; if one part is not well, the whole system is impacted

- What could a group of people in a community with a shared intention of strengthening all their families and loving every child accomplish?
- What else would happen if multiple groups across the state, with the same intention, could dialogue with each other?
- What patterns will we begin to notice?
- What questions will communities grapple with to create the ownership needed to ensure the well-being of their children?
- What power would be created in learning this together?

Join us: _____

this event is free



Changing the lives of children through conversations that matter



Come Talk Story and Eat with Us!

Monday, May 10, 2010

8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Come join us to talk story about how to make our Kalihi community stronger for our children and families. Food will be served. If you can come or if you have questions, call or e-mail



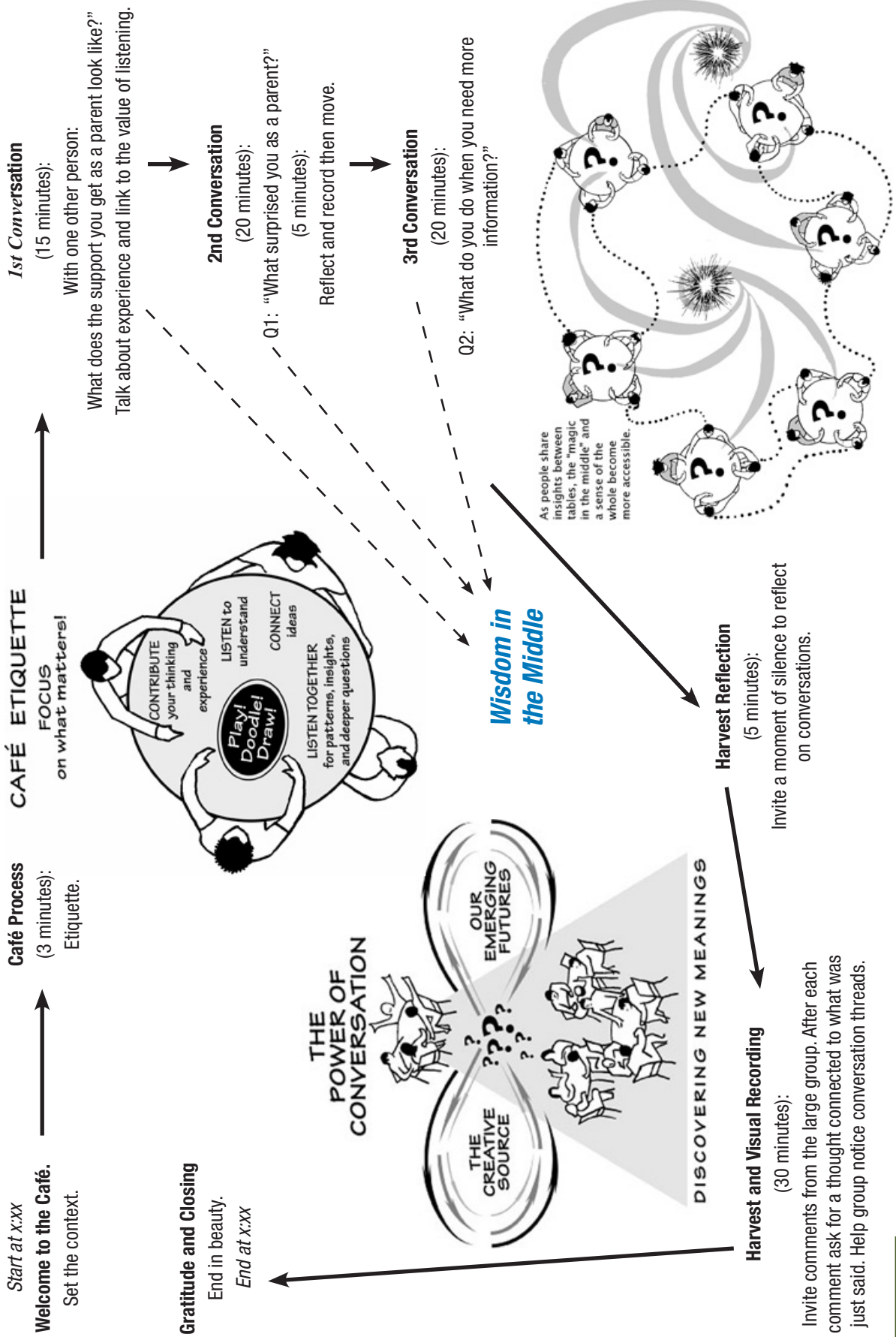
The Place: The Falé at Kuhio Park Terrace

Available at www.thecommunitycafe.com and www.ctfalliance.org

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Community Café Flow Agenda

Café's name: _____ Date and Time: (number of hours) _____



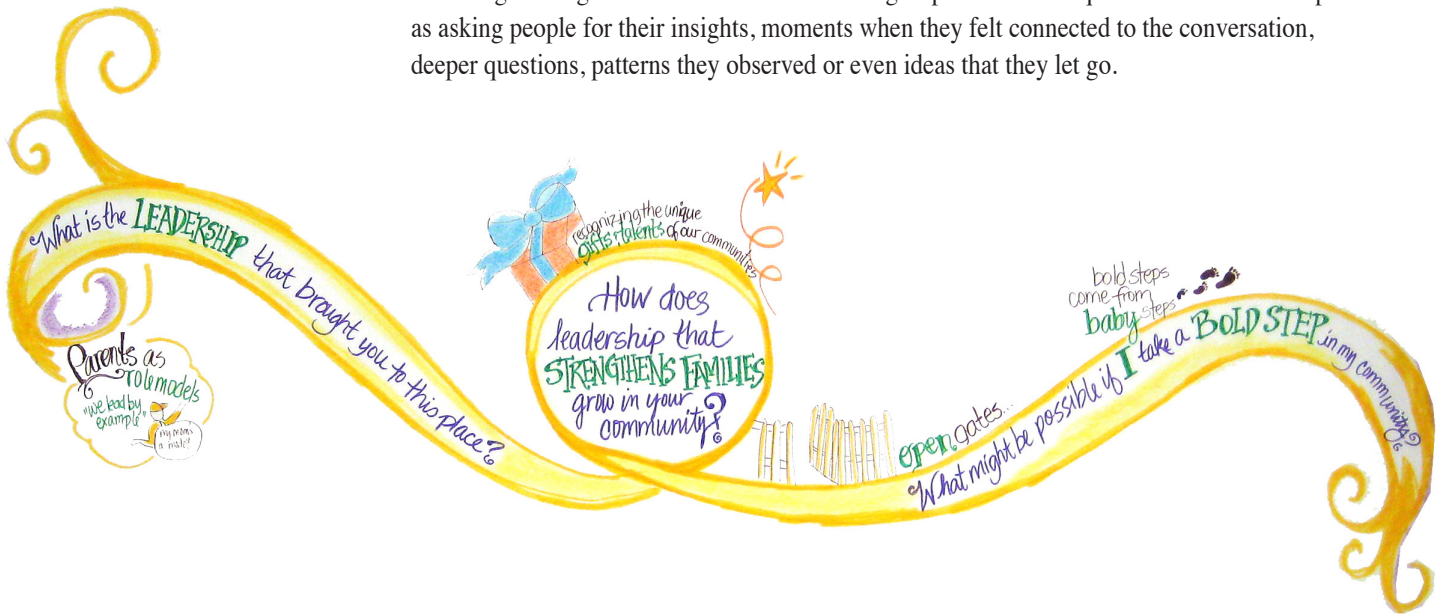
Designing Community Café Questions

Hosts plan a Community Café together. This involves designing questions related to the intended purpose of each café. Questions are designed to plant seeds for meaningful conversation. For many reasons, what is a powerful question for one community may not resonate in another, so it is important that people who can relate to the culture of the community in which the café is being hosted are a part of the planning.

The work that is accomplished when a hosting team spends time designing questions is very valuable. Often, designing questions is an opportunity to work as a team to:

- Clarify the purpose of the conversation
- Document what the hosting team would like to learn
- Focus on possibilities
- Trust what will emerge from the collective wisdom of the group
- Build a stronger partnership

Besides designing the questions for meaningful conversation, the hosting team should consider how to ask the harvest questions. The “harvest” is the large group conversation where focus is gathering the collective wisdom of the group. The harvest questions can be as simple as asking people for their insights, moments when they felt connected to the conversation, deeper questions, patterns they observed or even ideas that they let go.



Sample Questions Shared by Café Hosts

How would you change these questions to make them more powerful for your community?

School/Education System

1. What does a successful student look like?
2. What are you wondering about your child's education?
3. What concerns you as a parent that you would like answered?
4. How do we tear down these road blocks?
5. What would it look like if our seventh and eighth graders were connected to each other and their learning community?
6. Think about a tough time you had in high school/middle school/elementary school and who you trusted to get through it?
7. Who could you count on when you were in school (high school/middle school) Why?
8. What do you do to reinforce your child's learning during the summertime when school is out?
9. Describe a time when you or your child felt connected in school.
10. What issues do I/we need to explore to create a place where parents, students and staff feel connected?

Parenting

11. What surprised you about being a parent?
12. How do I make sure my kids never _____?
13. How to support parents in grief and crisis?
14. What questions, if asked, would help our kids to thrive?
15. Where do we go from here?
16. What behaviors are challenging for you and how do you deal with them?
17. How can you be supported in dealing with these behaviors and proper consequences?
18. What gives you strength?
19. When have you experienced courage and what was that like before, during, and after?
20. What do you need to let go of to move forward with courage?
21. What can we name as the work of men/fathers?

Qualities of Powerful Questions

Here are some typical qualities of powerful questions:

- Open ended
- Vague – can be answered or interpreted in different ways
- Generates energy
- Asks something hosts are genuinely curious about
- Elicits answers from a personal perspective
- Relevant to the culture and issues of the community
- Simple – easily read out loud
- Focuses on strengths – what is possible verses asking for solutions to problems
- Invites any perspective – anyone in the room can answer the question
- Is designed by people who live in the neighborhood or can relate to the participants (e.g., parents and students designing questions for a school café)



Parent Partnerships

22. How should our partnership be structured and what capabilities will we need to succeed?
23. What images can we begin to see of the future that we want to begin building in the present?
24. What are the parent support needs in our community regarding _____?
25. What does the perfect parent to caregiver relationship look like?
26. What do we know about the children and families we want to support, and how should we focus our efforts?

Community

27. What is community?
28. What do we need to let go of to create a community at _____?
29. What gifts can I offer the children in my community?
30. What do I need to leave behind to rediscover community?
31. When have you answered the call to step up to help your community? What did it look like?
32. Why is community important to children, and how do we teach them?
33. What are the ways in which my cultural values and strengths are helping to improve the conditions of the community/neighborhood?
34. How would you engage a friend in community activities?
35. Describe a time when this community was connected and how social support was demonstrated by the community members.

Family

36. What about my family history impacts how I relate to _____?
37. What do I need to forgive and what do I want to pass on to the next generation?
38. How do we keep families safe?
39. What does my family history have to do with my ability to make change?
40. Growing up, what was your family story about _____? How does it show up in your life?
41. What is your earliest joyful memory and how does it show up in your life today?
42. How do families show that they feel connected to their neighborhood and community?

Community Cafés

43. What will the community café process help you achieve that other programs or approaches may not?
44. How will you know that the Community Café process is increasing the capacity of parents to engage in parent partnerships?
45. How can we further embody and encourage listening from the heart?
46. How will we harvest at the end of the day?
47. What is the power of connection that we could give attention too?
48. What questions, if answered, could make the most difference in how we effectively assess the impact of Community Cafés?
49. What opportunities can you see to share this with others?

Organizational Change

50. What can we learn from what doesn't happen?
51. How might we inspire ourselves and others into a bigger commitment?
52. From what does motivation really come?
53. What if trust is what helps scale our work?
54. What if I didn't need to do it by myself?
55. How can we further build momentum in a frantic/distracted/hectic world?
56. What are feasible action steps or ideas given current or obtainable resources?
57. How will we reach all of the children that our initiative aspires to impact?

A Provocative Question:

- Does not have a right or wrong answer.
- Doesn't create a brainstorm list.
- Creates a little discomfort.
- Sticks with you even after the conversation is over.
- Invites people to contribute feelings, stories as well as what they know (whole self is welcomed into the conversation).
- Does not create a predictable conversation (e.g., "What do you think is better...?").



Community Café Design Template

Café's name: _____ Location: _____ Date and Time: _____

Dream Statement: _____

Hosted by: _____

Objectives for the Café: *(List each specific objective.)*

Clock time (Do last)	Activity (What is the group doing? What are the hosts doing?)	Purpose/Objective (From the top or your own reasons)	Lead (Name)	Notes/Context/Comments (Anything you need to write to prepare for this section as well as the context for the question, harvest, etc.)
	Set up			
	Welcome and settling in			
	Café conversation Dyad or dinner conversation Q1: Q2:			
	Harvest			
	End in beauty			

Tips for Hosting a Community Café

① What if people need conversation the way fish need water?

- Create numerous opportunities for relationship building
- Enlist others in your planning
- Invite diverse perspectives into the conversation

② What if conversation is how positive change happens for families?

- Invite rather than persuade or try to get people to come
- Encourage participants to speak from their own personal experience; discourage giving advice

③ What are ways hosts keep conversations focused?

- Agree on the purpose of each café and design the questions about that purpose
- Invest the time to develop powerful questions that provoke conversation about the topic
- Announce the purpose at each Café as well as at the start of a new question
- Create a group tradition that signifies the beginning and the end of each café
- End each café in beauty

④ What if we could create a space that nurtures meaningful conversation?

- Building trust and the freedom to express personal truth requires safe, predictable, and accepting environment
- Care for yourself as lovingly as you treat others, model self leadership
- Hosts honor culture by considering culturally relevant activities into their routines, foods they serve, communication styles and art
- Participants are greeted at the door with a welcoming smile

⑤ What if the gold lies in discovering the big questions?

- Powerful questions tend to be, relevant to all in the room, open to interpretation, easily read and heard, stimulate conversation rather than develop lists, cause a little discomfort, consider the culture of the participants
- Remind participants that their contributions benefit the whole group
- Release yourself and others from needing to come up with the right answers
- Your planning team chooses questions intended to deepen the dialogue on the five protective factors, leadership and parent partnerships with community





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
- Highlight conversations with words, pictures, verbal, non-verbal communications
- Keep café tables to about 4–5 people
- Have opportunities for small group, large group and paired conversations

⑦ What if listening together is how movement happens?

- Everyone is responsible for listening and documenting what is meaningful to them so it is visible to others
- Make the individual conversations visible to the whole group
- Take time to retell the conversations and for the group to express what was meaningful to them
- Document the stories
- Hosts and storytellers reflect what they hear
- Hosts encourage listening for patterns, the deeper meaning and other questions that arise

⑧ What if the harvest provides seeds for action and...?

- Have a networking mechanism in place ahead of time
- Engage community partners from the beginning
- Encourage participants to connect the group wisdom to the community
- Give the group a chance to build relationships with each other
- Follow up with story tellers; encourage them to become hosts
- Allow room in opening and closing routine for sharing aha(s), seeds of inspiration or thought, changes they have made
- Follow up with story tellers; encourage them to become hosts
- Celebrate and communicate achievements!

Brown, Juanita, *The World Café*, Berrett Koehler Publ., 2005

Please complete this or a similar form after a café event and send to thecommunitycafe@gmail.com.
This helps others who are interested keep up with what is happening in your community. Thank you!

Community Café Harvest Form

Date: _____ Location: _____

Hosts: _____

What community partners helped to support this café? _____

How many participants? _____ How many children? _____

What was the purpose for this café conversation? _____

What questions were used at this café _____

What were some highlights, insights, themes from the café? _____

What's next for this café community? _____

What happened at the Kid Café? _____

Who will you share this harvest with? (The Community Café Leadership Team posts harvests we receive on our website. Let us know if you prefer that we not post your harvest.) _____



Acknowledgements

Members of the Washington State Community Café Leadership Team authored this document. They wish to express gratitude for their partnership with the Thurston Community Network, the Council for Children and Families, the Foundation for Early Learning, the Children's Trust Foundation and the Children's Trust Fund Alliance (formerly known as the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds) for their assistance in helping more people receive Community Café resources (www.thecommunitycafe.com). We are also grateful for the World Café organization (www.theworldcafe.org) for providing us with the World Café principals and their resources.

The authors also express appreciation to the Children's Trust Fund Alliance for providing technical support for this guide: to Martha Reeder, Alliance Senior Associate who directed the Alliance's Early Childhood Initiative; to Norma McReynolds for the graphic design; to Teresa Rafael, Alliance Executive Director, for the stone photos; and to Claire Bronson (www.c2bdesign.com) for the visual harvest artwork.

This guide and all Community Café tools are offered free of charge. They are available both at www.thecommunitycafe.com and on the Alliance's website at www.ctfalliance.org. If you wish to distribute these materials, it is the request of the authors and the Alliance that the materials be provided free of charge and that you cite the source of the materials.

NOTE: In 2020, the Children's Trust Fund Alliance updated this quick guide with our new name, logo and brand identity. However, because this is a historical document, we did not change the content. Published in 2012 as part of the Alliance's national Early Childhood Initiative, it is still a viable tool for using the Community Café approach to engage parents and other community members in meaningful conversations about things that matter to families.



ctfalliance.org