

**Snapshot: Example from a Networking Meeting, including Full Text of RBF Follow-Up Memo, Sample Attachments, and Excerpt from Debriefing Meeting**

- Complete text of follow-up memo from Anne Lawrence and Suzanne Marten sent to each participant
- Selected handouts from the meeting
- Excerpt from debriefing discussion

**Complete text of follow-up memo sent to each participant**

***Notes from October 12th's Networking Meeting--Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement***

***From: Anne Lawrence***

***Date: Wed, Nov 30, 2011***

***Save the date for our next networking meeting— Friday, January 27, 2012.***

Note: The e-mail includes seven attachments:

- Menu of Family Involvement Activities
- Notes for thinking about family involvement
- Strategic Planning for Family Involvement\*
- Coalition's Family Art Night Parent Evaluation\*
- Coalition's Family Art Night Calendar for 2011-2012
- Coalition's Favorite Arts and Literacy Parent Workshops\*
- Attendees for Networking Meeting.

\* starred items included in Snapshot

*Everyone is invited to any or all of the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services' Arts and Literacy Family Art Nights to observe, pick the staffs' minds, or give feedback. There are 5 sites: 3 in Bushwick, Brooklyn; 1 in Elmhurst, Queens; and 1 in Corona, Queens. At the bottom of each calendar page, there is contact information for each site. Please call the program you are interested in visiting ahead of time to let us know you are coming. All Family Arts Nights are 5:30-7 pm!*

*Please note that the calendar only includes months in which we are running Family Art Nights and Street Festivals. These events are the culmination of after school programming sessions and do not occur every month.*

To: Peer Networking Meeting Participants

From: Suzanne Marten, Facilitator, Center for Educational Options

Date: November 29, 2011

Re: Notes from ***Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement*** - October 12, 2011  
Networking Meeting

The Robert Bowne Foundation hosted ***Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement*** on October 12, 2011. This topic was in response to past networking participants' requests. Anne Lawrence, program officer for the Foundation, welcomed participants and reminded all of the purpose of the networking meetings: to offer a forum for participants from across the city

and a range of out-of-school time (OST) programs to come together to share their work and to dialogue on important issues in the field.

The structure for this Networking meeting differed a bit from past meetings in that the group engaged in a brief whole group discussion, followed by a “case study”, a presentation on the evolution of family involvement at the Arts and Literacy Afterschool Program at the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services (CHFS) by Laura Paris, the director. Afterwards there were small group activities and discussion to support participants in developing a strategic plan for the next year to increase family involvement in their programs.

### **Framing the Discussion**

Building community with the participants of programs is an essential part of being a quality OST program. Family involvement is an extension of that community building, and just as we work to build relationships with children and youth, we must also work to build relationships with families. While we recognize that families are busy – they have work, academic, and family responsibilities to juggle - OST programs want families to be involved in the life of the program to better serve them. The Networking meeting began from the premise that relationships are not static, but dynamic and require us to engage in a process that evolves over time. This Networking meeting focused on what strategies we can use to nourish and cultivate our relationships with families.

The structure for this meeting was laid out in stages: thinking about how participants currently engage families, articulating the values and program strengths that lend themselves to further family involvement, and developing actions participants would like to take in the coming year to further cultivate the on-going dialogue with families.

### **Many Avenues to Family Involvement**

In order to develop a picture of what participants’ programs already do to involve families, participants were asked to read the following Menu of Family Involvement. (See attachment Menu for Family Involvement) They circled the menu items that they currently engage in, and rated those items as successful or not so successful. They then shared and discussed their practices and ratings with the small group at their table.

#### ***Menu of Family Involvement***

- **Potlucks, picnics, family nights** – opportunities for families to get together and socialize, spend time with their children and other families and afterschool staff.
- **Art shows** – opportunities for families to see their children’s art work or performances. This might include talent shows.
- **Sports events or games** – opportunities for families to see their children play or compete. This could include field day events where others get to participate as well.
- **Workshops** – opportunities for families to learn about a topic of interest. This could be about their children’s work in the afterschool program, such as learning and doing an art activity. But it could also be about a topic that families have asked to learn more about such as homework or child development and health.
- **Conversations** – opportunities for staff and families to talk, for example at pick up, about activities or particular accomplishments, interests, happenings, and ideas.
- **Interviews and surveys** – opportunities to learn more about families, what they value and do together, what knowledge and experience they have, what concerns they have.

- **Parent councils or advisory groups** – opportunities for families to participate in program decision making, to have a voice in the program or organization.
- **Advocacy work** – opportunities for families to organize around policy issues of importance to their community and the afterschool program.
- **Family volunteers** – opportunities for families to lend a helping hand to support the afterschool program, including trip chaperones, support staff, administrative tasks, etc.
- **Social Services** – services to support families beyond afterschool programming such as art therapy, counseling, healing circles, ESL classes, computer labs, etc.
- **Newsletters and flyers** – opportunities to inform families of activities and upcoming events in the afterschool program, to make them aware of issues of importance in afterschool, education, health, and community.
- **Parent libraries** – spaces and collections of materials that are useful and responsive to families' needs and interests.

Additional items added to the menu were: email blasts, alumni networks, and staff showcases. Of note were the layers of involvement – getting information out to families, showing children's and the program's work, and families doing something with or to serve and support the program.

### **A Case Study: Laura Paris and Coalition for Hispanic Family Services' Arts and Literacy Afterschool Program**

Laura Paris, director of the Arts and Literacy afterschool program, presented the history and evolution of family involvement in her program as a way for participants to consider how they engage families and how they might improve family involvement at their programs.

Laura explained that some years ago they realized that what parents expected and wanted and what Arts and Literacy saw as their mission was at odds. Families wanted homework to be completed and the program offered some time for homework help, but their focus is developing literacy through the arts. Their belief is that academics would be supported through the arts.

The program told families what they provided, but they did not have a forum other than informal discussion to articulate how they supported academics through the arts. Families naturally wanted their kids to succeed at school. In addition, families were under pressure from school to get homework done and done correctly.

From that experience, Arts and Literacy developed the idea to "train" the families in how to look at homework, how to evaluate what was good homework, and how the families could help at home. While the topic seemed appropriate only about 20 families attended these sessions. Staff knew they needed to reach more families if they were to understand Arts and Literacy's mission.

Next, they conducted a survey to learn families' interests. Questions included were: What topics for workshops would they be interested in? What did they want to learn more about? This garnered some more information, but still did not reach the level of engagement they were hoping for.

Then, Laura described an epiphany that they had - they are an arts program, they should have art shows! This idea evolved to include introductions to the art shows that explained HOW the children are engaging in reading, writing and math throughout the art projects. These were tremendously successful; most families attended and the children were very excited. They built on this by adding a workshop after the art show. These workshops engaged families in an art activity with their children so that they could experience what the children were learning and that

they could also do these activities at home. (See attached Coalition's Favorite Arts and Literacy Workshops and the example of Coalition's Family Art Night Program)

Now Arts and Literacy hosts Family Art Night every six weeks. Families really get what the program's focus is. In addition, Arts and Literacy staff have learned much more about what families are interested in and what they need.

Two major languages of CHFS families are Spanish and Chinese. Translating materials for families into Spanish and Chinese, in addition to English has been crucial to negotiating language barriers. She emphasized that getting the translation perfect was much less important than just making the effort to communicate.

In addition to these Family Art Nights, Arts and Literacy does a number of other things to involve families. Among them is a one-hour intake interview to better understand a family's needs, history, and to be able to provide social services as appropriate. The staff has been able to assess group needs through looking at the data and information gathered from intake interviews. This has led to parent groups around issues such as immigration and negotiation with teachers about appropriate homework. Laura noted that Arts and Literacy moved from a lecture approach to families to an engaging presentation and workshop format which has proven to be very successful.

Laura also discussed providing different ways to get feedback from stakeholders – the families themselves and from staff. In addition to meetings and ongoing conversations, Arts and Literacy uses a survey at the conclusion of their events. (See attached evaluation) Families are asked to complete them. While noting that they could be improved upon, they do provide valuable information to the program to make decisions about other needs of the families. Laura invited everyone who is interested to visit a Family Art Night at Arts and Literacy. (See her contact information below and attached calendar.)

### **Taking Stock of our own Programs**

Using Laura's case study of the Arts and Literacy afterschool program as an example, participants were asked to respond in writing to the following questions (See attached notes for thinking about family involvement):

- List the core values of your program.
- List the main program elements or components (literacy, arts, sports, social justice work...).
- Using your lists above, what the components or values that naturally lend themselves to inviting family involvement?
- Who are the main stakeholders in your program (staff, families, youth, children...)?
- How will you get feedback from those stakeholders?
- What is your vision of a new series of events to involve families
- What parts of your vision are flexible and can be adjusted as you go?
- What obstacles or challenges do you foresee?

In triads, participants discussed what they had written. These triads stayed together for the remaining discussions and activities. Each member noted their triad partners and their contact information so that they would be able to follow up with each other over the coming months as their plans unfold.

Many important points surfaced in these discussions. Participants began to articulate values that were tied to the main program components. For example, a sports OST program values teamwork, cooperation, discipline, respect and self-control. An arts OST program values creativity initiative, diversity and community. A community-based OST program values social/emotional development, academic support, health and community so they offer a range of programming from tutoring and college preparation to peer counseling and training as health educators to their young people.

Participants spoke about:

- The need to be thoughtful in the use of language about and around families as family composition is often complex.
- The importance of being alert to families' needs for assistance.
- And families need to receive a unified message from all staff. This requires that programs be clear with staff about their mission and vision and practice.

Some questions surfaced as well. How do you get families to attend programs or events that are for them? Several ideas were posed in response. Arts and Literacy mandates that families attend. Laura explained that this is enforced verbally. Staff tells families that their children are counting on them and they emphasize that it does not have to be the mother or father. Staff will work with the family to have someone from the family attend. They also follow up with emails and phone calls. Maria Santana of New Settlement offered their model; they require families to attend 4 out of 7 family events held every year. This way families are required to attend, but also have some flexibility in when they attend.

Another question arose around the involvement of families with middle school and high school children. As kids get older they are responsible for getting themselves to and from program. It can be rare to see any family members, so how do we get them involved? It can also be sensitive for teens who want the program to be theirs and not to involve their families too much. This question remained a challenge for participants serving this population.

Many participants who work with younger children noted the incredible value of the informal conversations that happen regularly between staff and family members when children are picked up. Leonor Colon from Henry Street Settlement described how they keep track of these conversations on a log sheet. This allows her to, at a glance, see who has spoken to whom, any issues that are coming up, and which families might not be in such close contact.

### **Strategic Planning and Small Group Discussions**

Next participants engaged in some strategic planning toward deeper and more meaningful family involvement. Participants were asked to use the Menu of Family Involvement, the notes they had developed in response to the questions about values, program elements, and stakeholders, and ideas from Laura's case study presentation to map out a series of events, activities or projects they would like to take. They were asked to imagine where they would like to be in one year and what activities, events and products would build on the strengths and values of their program to build a bridge to families in support of dialogue and involvement.

Participants were directed to the Strategic Planning Sheet with a time line, boxes for three events or activities, and guide questions about planning each event or activity, the logistics of each, and a process for getting feedback (see attached Strategic Planning sheet). Participants worked individually and then in their triads to develop a wide range of activities and events for the coming year.

At the close of the meeting, participants shared what excited about the work done during the session:

- Interviewing families during intake;
- Never give up on families;
- The OST field has accomplished much in the last 20 years;
- Developing a format for how to plan and initiate parent events;
- Having families stop by to observe programming;
- Involving families by serving them, for example workshops on better business writing;
- Involving parents before there are problems, or for good things;
- Using family contact logs for tracking conversations;
- Helping families understand the values and programming, for example art vs. homework;
- Combining big events like art shows with information workshops;
- Developing a Coaches vs. Families basketball game and debriefing afterwards on the challenges that youth face;
- Looking for organic moments of contact with families;
- Setting high expectations for families to be involved;
- Reaching out to families and forming relationships with them;
- Using the Menu of Family Involvement to grade or evaluate what they are doing;
- Supporting families' relationships with each other;
- Discussing family involvement with other programs;
- Exploring art therapy for kids and families – this idea had come from families at program;

We look forward to gathering again in March to hear back from participants on what they have tried and how it is going. Many wonderful and creative ideas arose for the collaborative discussions and planning.

### **Next Meeting**

The next **Robert Bowne Foundation Networking meeting** will be Jan. 27, 2012. Look for an announcement from Anne.

**Contact your triad partners to check in and update them about your progress and challenges.**

**Contact Laura to visit a Family Arts Night.**

### **RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

Contact Laura Paris to visit a Family Art Night at one of the Arts and Literacy afterschool program sites:

Laura Paris  
Coalition for Hispanic Family Services  
315 Wyckoff Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11237  
718-497-6090  
lparis@hispanicfamilyservicesny.org

Anne H. Lawrence  
**Program Officer**  
**The Robert Bowne Foundation**  
6 East 39th Street, 10th Floor

New York, NY 10016  
Phone number: 212-792-6250  
anne.lawrence@bownefoundation.org  
[www.bownefoundation.org](http://www.bownefoundation.org)

## **Selected Handouts from the Meeting**

### **Attachment #1:**

#### ***Coalition for Hispanic Family Services' Favorite Arts and Literacy Parent Workshops***

*What is Art?*

*Playdough, Literacy and Math*

*Experiments with Music and Memory*

*Media Literacy-a Look at "Family Guy"*

*What is in my Kid's Head?*

*Games Fostering Teamwork and Conflict Resolution*

*Illustrated Family History Books*

*How to Help Your Child with Homework*

*Conflict Resolution through Theater*

*Family Journals*

*Family Photographs and Bilingual Poetry*

*Armature Making and Math*

*Art Therapy-Our Children*

*Interpretations of Poetry through Dance*

*Yoga and Mood*

*Everyday Learning Opportunities*

*Home Libraries*

*Reading without Text*

*Telenovelas and Puppets*



**Attachment #2:**  
**Coalition for Hispanic Family Services' Family Art Night Parent Evaluation**

**Coalition for Hispanic Family Services**  
**Arts & Literacy Program**

Parent Workshop Evaluation  
January 2005

**Please answer the following:**

1. Did today's special workshop entitled "Capoeira Literacy" give you a better understanding of how music can be used to teach Literacy?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very                      \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat                      \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

2. Do you feel that a child could learn through this activity?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very                      \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat                      \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

3. Would you be interested in attending other workshops or groups regarding today's topic?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very                      \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat                      \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

4. Was the information given in today's workshop easy to understand?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

5. Do you think that you could further explore the idea of doing Capoeira with your child?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Coalición de Servicios para la Familia Hispana**  
**El Programa de las Artes**

Evaluación del Taller para los Padres  
Enero 2005

**Favor de opinar sobre lo siguiente:**

1. ¿Siente que el taller de hoy, titulado "Capoeira y Literatura", te dio un mejor entendimiento en como música puede ayudar aprender mas la literatura?

\_\_\_\_\_Sí, mucho                      \_\_\_\_\_Mas o menos                      \_\_\_\_\_No

2. ¿Usted siente que un niño/niña puede aprender usando esta actividad?

\_\_\_\_\_Sí, mucho                      \_\_\_\_\_Mas o menos                      \_\_\_\_\_No

3. ¿Le gustaría asistir en otros talleres o grupos sobre este tópico?

\_\_\_\_\_Sí, mucho                      \_\_\_\_\_Mas o menos                      \_\_\_\_\_No

4. ¿La información dado en el taller de hoy, fue fácil para entender?

\_\_\_\_\_Sí                                      \_\_\_\_\_No

5. ¿Siente usted que podría explorar las ideas del taller de hoy con su hijo/hija en su casa?

\_\_\_\_\_Sí                                      \_\_\_\_\_No

**Attachment #3:**

*Robert Bowne Foundation Networking Meeting  
October 12, 2011*

Strategies for Improving Family Involvement  
**Strategic Planning for Family Involvement**

Meeting of stakeholders (when and who):

Preparation for event, activity, product (who, when, what):

Event/activity/product (what, when, where):

Feedback from stakeholders (when and how):

Meeting of stakeholders (when and who):

Preparation for event, activity, product (who, when, what):

Event/activity/product (what, when, where):

Feedback from stakeholders (when and how):

October 12, 2011

October 12, 2012

**Excerpt from Debrief discussion between facilitators and presenters following the October 12, 2011 Networking Meeting session:**

Anne Lawrence and Suzanne Marten meet with the presenter(s) for a debriefing meeting following each Networking Meeting. The follow excerpt illustrates this process, which leads to adjusting plans based on feedback and experience.

Anne Lawrence (RBF): *There aren't as many "Excellents" as there sometimes are.*

Suzanne Marten (CEO): *But we do have a lot in the 4s and 5s. Do you think what we asked people to do today ... it was a little different from what we usually ask. Do you think it was more challenging and people felt a little pushed?*

Lawrence: *Yes, we did ask them to participate more. ...*

Marten: *This is a nice [comment on an evaluation form]. "This is the first time I've looked at and evaluated what we do about parent involvement. Thank you."*

Lawrence: *There is pretty much consensus on a follow-up in six months. ...*

Laura Paris (CHFS): *I really appreciate being able to look at the evaluations right away. So many times I never get to see the evaluations when I do a workshop.*

Lawrence: *Your idea of doing a strategic plan was a very good one. Many times they aren't focused enough on talking to each other or bringing things back to their programs. I keep saying these are not workshops, but I do like people to have things to bring back.*

Marten: *I noticed that people took the handout Laura gave and were writing away when you described the events. That made me think this was OK, that the menu was a good place to begin -- with their own stuff -- but that the case study was important. It gave them new ideas. I loved the way you shared where you started out, where it is now, and what made it shift. That set people up well to think about their own programs. What do you think, Laura, about how it went?*

Paris: *I was struck by how much people are already doing, and how different that is from the past. It is exciting that the field has moved on.*

Lawrence: *A lot of these were new people too.*

...

Paris: *I thought the process of developing this was really great. ... We began with such an ambitious idea and it was amazing to see how you took these ephemeral ideas and made them into such concrete documents, and incorporated the ideas from the previous session.*

Lawrence: *Only [one person] was here [when we did our last Networking Meeting on Family Engagement]. She was on the panel from the earlier session.*

Paris: *Yes, I was there too. That's the group that was in such a different place. I thought that compared to other networking meetings there was less general discussion. I know that was the plan, we had so much that we wanted to do, we had to keep things focused. It worked, but since people weren't coming in expecting to do a strategic plan, it may have thrown them a bit.*

*... Maybe 50 percent of the people have never done a strategic plan before and didn't know where to begin.*

*Lawrence: I would say that a good number are not involved in planning at their sites. That's what their coordinator does and strategic planning is not part of their thinking. The ones who didn't hand one in, it scared them, the idea of a strategic plan. That's why I made the comment at the end that you need to think of it in small steps, that your plan might be totally off and that you can go re-think it.*

*Paris: It seemed like a lot of people did do it.*

*Lawrence: Yes, a lot of people turned them in, complaining all the while that it was messy and you couldn't read this.*

*Marten: Some of it is cryptic, but looking at it gives us an idea of what they are trying to do.*

*Lawrence: Especially if we're thinking of the March one as the follow up, they should be able to try things and revise what they're trying.*

*Marten: I am struck by what you're saying, Laura. That they didn't come in expecting to do a strategic plan. I'm not sure we could have done anything more to prepare people. ...*

*Lawrence: We were clear, we said there would be strategic planning.*

*Paris: No one said they didn't like it.*

*Marten: No, but it challenges people. Maybe we could do some kind of ice breaker at the beginning that focuses on brainstorming before asking them to begin writing.*

*Lawrence: Maybe a word cluster focused on "parent involvement." Getting out all of people's ideas about what does that mean.*

*Paris: Or even, just asking have you ever done a strategic plan? Overall, I think it went well. I just noticed that people were unusually focused.*

*Lawrence: This time I will get the notes out early so they can look at them while planning. I do two versions. The people who were here get the contact information. I will give them the invitation to attend your parent meetings, Laura. You probably already have the list of sites and dates.*

*...*

*[Marten and Paris look through the turned-in papers] They really did the strategic plan.*