

Welcome

Dear Organization Leader,

Research shows, and as you know working with children and families each day, the development of social, emotional, cognitive, and academic skills are deeply intertwined, like the strands of a rope, and come together to form successful adults. Schools and community programs like yours have always taught skills like respect, getting along well with others and problem-solving. But there is now greater awareness and acceptance of the need to integrate the social and emotional, cognitive and academic aspects of learning.

Parents refer to social, emotional, cognitive, and academic skills as “life skills,” and play an integral role in their child’s development of these behaviors. Parents also understand that there are many reasons why life skills are beneficial, such as helping their child learn, being a good community member, preparing them for the workforce and countering the effects of peer pressure and bullying. Parents expect a dialogue with schools and communities about these skills, if framed as helping their child succeed academically and in the larger world.

The Developing Life Skills: Parent Perspectives Workshop was designed to help you facilitate an honest and productive conversation with parents, guardians and educators, eliciting their ideas and feedback on which life skills they see as most important and what it looks like to support children’s development of these skills in your local community.

By bringing parents’ voices to the table and validating their important role, you can best work together with families to support student success in and out of school.

Thank you for all you do.



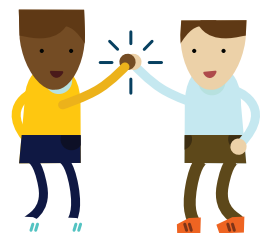
Research Background

The Developing Life Skills: Parent Perspectives Workshop was informed by a 2017 national study, *Developing Life Skills in Children: A Road Map for Communicating with Parents*. The study was conducted by Learning Heroes, a nonprofit organization that serves to inform and equip parents to be advocates for their children and partners in their education.

To help educators and community leaders understand how parents talk and feel about their child's life skills development, and the role they see for schools and after-school settings, Learning Heroes led a series of 10 focus groups and a nationwide survey of more than 2,000 parents who have children in K-8 public schools.

Learning Heroes found that when parents think about the skills and traits that are most important for their child to develop, more than nine in ten expect both home and school to play a role. There is opportunity for educators and community leaders to engage parents' contributions about these teaching strategies and a range of research-based instructional practices that may seem new and different from those parents experienced growing up or that their children have been exposed to. However, there is also risk for parents to become confused, frustrated and to feel that these new approaches push the limits of what is appropriate for schools.

Developing Life Skills in Children: A Road Map for Communicating with Parents is meant to share insights with practitioners that can inform communications with families about these issues. The accompanying *Developing Life Skills: Parent Perspectives Workshop Facilitator's Guide* is designed to help foster local conversations and acknowledge the important role of local context, community, and culture.



Tips for an Effective Workshop with Parents

The workshop is intended to be used and adapted to support a range of program settings including: after-school / out of school time programs, school-based parent outreach, community- and faith-based organizations, etc.

The full workshop takes 75-90 minutes. You may run the entire workshop in one setting or do the short activities separately, imbedding them into your existing programs or outreach with parents over several occasions.

There are three main activities followed by questions to prompt a discussion, however, you can modify, add or omit questions depending on how much time you have and to best fit your local community and program context.

Remember that parents are the experts of their child and have important insight to offer related to their own child's social, emotional, and academic skills development. This isn't meant to be a 'parenting class' but rather a workshop for parents to learn and share ideas. Provide positive reinforcement as parents share their ideas and encourage them to ask questions.



Advance Planning:

- ★ Workshop activities and discussions will be most productive with 10-20 participants.
- ★ Consider the time, day, and location that is most convenient for the parents in your community.
- ★ If access to transportation is an issue, consider offering transportation or holding the workshop in a location that is within walking distance or accessible by public transportation.
- ★ Depending on the time of day, serve refreshments and consider offering childcare at the workshop for parents with young children.
- ★ Designate a facilitator and someone to take notes that you can reference later for any follow up with parents.
- ★ Ask parents to sign in and complete the pre-survey upon arrival. Complete the post-survey after the workshop finishes. To help, you can read the questions aloud.

Day-of Prep:

Workshop Materials

- Copies of Activity (See appendix)
- Parent sign-in sheet
- Pre and post survey copies

Supplies

- Tape to stick on the wall for Activity 1
- Notebook and large poster paper for notetaker
- Large poster paper on the wall labeled “Questions and Ideas” to jot down any comments that can be followed-up on at a later time
- Pens for participants

Set-up

- Set up tables and chairs in a circle to foster dialogue and a sense of community
- Light music playing as parents arrive (optional)
- Equipment to play the ‘How Learning Happens’ video (optional)



Workshop Framework: Introductions

Introductions (5-10 MINUTES)

- *Introduce yourself, the notetaker and your respective roles for the workshop.*
- *Model the self-introduction first, and then invite participants to introduce themselves around the circle.*

Please share your name; how many children you have (ages / grades); and name one emotion you feel about being here today – happy, curious, nervous, excited, stressed, etc.

Opening Discussion (10 MINUTES)

- We're here today to talk about a topic that you may or may not have heard much about called developing life skills. Life skills are relevant to your child, your role as a parent and to [insert name of your school / organization here], because they impact how children learn. You are the expert on your child and know what motivates them as a learner, so we want your ideas and feedback about supporting their development of these life skills. To help guide the conversation, I have some questions and short activities to get your feedback about which life skills you think are important for your child.
1. When you think about life skills, which ones are the most important for your child to develop?
 2. Why is it important that your child develops life skills?
 3. How does your child develop life skills? Can life skills be taught?
 4. When and how did you develop life skills?

Facilitator Note:

- *Consider writing the discussion questions on large poster paper so participants can both read and hear the questions as a way to support different types of learners.*
- *If participants need help getting the conversation started, consider showing several examples of life skills using the Gallery Walk words.*
- *The notetaker may write participants' responses on large poster paper for reference during Activity 1.*

Workshop Framework: Activity 1

Gallery Walk of Life Skills (10 MINUTES)

- We're going to get up and move now! Around the room, you will see words or phrases that have been used to describe the life skills or qualities we're talking about today.
- As you walk around the room:
Put a plus sign (+) on the words that are most important to you.
Put a minus sign (–) on the words that sound negative or not important to you.
Put a question mark (?) on the words that sound confusing.
- *To get parents started, it may be helpful for the facilitator to walk around the room reading the words and phrases aloud before asking them to begin the Gallery Walk.*

Facilitator Note: Activity 1 Alternatives

- *Instead of having participants write directly on the word sheets, participants each receive a small set of sticky notes. Participants write a plus, minus or question mark on an individual sticky note, sticking it on the word sheets as they walk around the room.*
- *Hand out the Activity 1 worksheet (see appendix). Give participants 8-10 minutes to complete it independently before starting the discussion.*
- *Hand out the Activity 1 worksheet (see appendix). Slowly read the words and phrases aloud. Participants write a plus, minus or question mark next to the words as you read them aloud.*
- *If the families you're working with have low-literacy levels, you can read the words aloud. Participants can identify whether the skill is important to them by raising their hand. (For confidentiality, you may ask participants to close their eyes).*

Discussion (20 MINUTES)

1. Think of the skills you marked with a plus (+) as most important. How do they compare to the skills that you listed as most important during our initial discussion? Are any missing?
2. Did any of the life skills words prompt a negative feeling or cause confusion or concern?
3. We've been talking about a range of life skills for children. Whose job is it to teach life skills to your child? Who is primarily responsible? Who else is responsible?
4. What is your role as a parent when it comes to teaching life skills to your child?
5. What do you expect from the school, teachers, community leaders or programs when it comes to teaching life skills to your child?
6. How do you know if your child is progressing or needs help developing life skills? What are ways you can tell?
7. In a perfect world, what would happen in your child's day to develop these skills? What would happen at home... at school... during the rest of their day?
8. How do you think these skills are related to your child's success in school and life?

Following the discussion, share with participants:

- Thank you for that discussion about these important skills. Research shows, and as you know supporting your child each day, the development of social, emotional, cognitive, and academic skills are deeply intertwined, like the strands of a rope, and come together to form successful adults.

Workshop Framework: Activity 2

Learning Scenarios: A look at what's happening across the country (5–10 MINUTES)

- I have a few examples of what some schools around the country are doing to develop life skills in students. They are not being done in our district / city. I'd like to get your reaction to what these schools and communities are doing.
- *Hand out the Activity 2 worksheet (see appendix).*
- Read through the examples for developing social and emotional skills. In the box, put a checkmark (✓) next to the examples you would like for your child. Put an X next to the examples that you would not like for your child. Star the one that you would be most excited about for your child.

Facilitator Note: Alternative Activity

- I have a video example of how learning happens that shows what students need to be confident and ready to learn and grow in school and life. Let's watch and then talk about some of the ideas in this video. *Show 'How Learning Happens' video.*

Link: <https://youtu.be/ONZkhNS2swo>

Discussion (10 MINUTES)

1. Based on these examples, how are you feeling now about how children develop life skills?
2. Are these the kind of support you want for your child? Why or why not?
3. What are you less interested in? What would you like to see more of?
4. Is there anything you have concerns about?
5. In your own words, what is the point of this type of learning?

Workshop Framework: Activity 3

Developing Life Skills: A look at your child and our community (10 MINUTES)

- Next, we're going to have a conversation about what developing life skills looks like for your child and in our community.
- Take a moment to think about the behaviors you expect from a child who is developing life skills.
- What behaviors do you expect from your child?
- To help spark ideas, I'm passing around a list of behaviors. Put a star next to the ones you think are most important for your child. There is also space for you to add other behaviors that are important to you.
- *Hand out the Activity 3 worksheet (see appendix).*

Discussion (10 MINUTES)

1. What behaviors did you mark as important? Why?
2. What additional behaviors did you add?
3. Do you expect different behaviors depending on whether a child is in school, at home or in the community?
4. What are some of the challenges in developing these life skills?
5. How do you know when these behaviors are being supported or reinforced in school or community programs? What does it look like? (For example, how can you tell when a child has been introduced to strategies to help work through conflicts with others?)
6. What ideas do you have on how these behaviors can be supported and reinforced at home and in our school / community? How can community settings and organizations provide support to parents?

Workshop Framework: Closing, Evaluation and Follow-up

Discussion (5 MINUTES)

1. After everything we've discussed today, on a scale of high, medium or low, what would you say is your level of interest in life skills development efforts at your child's school or in our community? Why?
2. What do you think is the most important reason to include life skills development in a school or community setting? What is your biggest concern about including it?
3. What other ideas or questions do you have about how to support life skills?

Following the discussion, share with participants:

- Thank you for that discussion. Please take a moment to complete an evaluation of today's session.

Facilitator Note: Optional

- Here is how we'll use the feedback you've given today. *Share any information about follow-up, etc.*
- Here are some additional resources in our community. *Share information about available programs or resources.*
- *Show the 'How Learning Happens' video as families depart.*

Thank you for your time and support of your child's development at home!