

# Designing & Planning: Needs and Assets Assessments

## Listening Campaigns: An Approach to Needs and Assets Assessment

Listening Campaigns can be a powerful approach to conducting needs and assets mapping, deepening relationships across race, culture, language, class, and roles, and establishing strong diverse shared decision-making teams. Listening campaigns can directly address issues of power differences across school communities. When school community members engage in deep listening with one another, they have an opportunity to build the mutual understanding, respect, and trust necessary for shifts in culture and practice. Additionally, structured listening campaigns incorporate leadership engagement, development, and team building. These are critical building blocks to establishing shared decision-making teams grounded in the values and practice of active and ongoing listening, engaging all members of the community, and reflection, assessment and planning based on data analysis and findings.



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## Garfield Elementary Listening Campaign

[Garfield Elementary School, Oakland, CA](#) and [East Bay Asian Youth Center \(EBAYC\)](#)

### Background

Garfield Elementary is a community school in the Oakland Unified School District that conducted a listening campaign during the 2011-12 school year. The listening campaign was co-led by a partner agency, the East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC), who provided a part-time community organizer dedicated to supporting the campaign. A Core Team consisting of Garfield and EBAYC staff and parent leaders met on a weekly basis for the entire 2011-12 school year to plan and conduct the listening campaign, and to propose and implement changes based on the findings.

### Structure

In October of 2011, a Core Team of 15 people was formed to conduct a listening campaign with Garfield families, under the leadership of Principal Nima Tahai and EBAYC Director Jamie Lopez. The Core Team consisted of parents, EBAYC staff, classified staff, the principal, and Liz Sullivan, a community organizer contracted by EBAYC through a LISC grant. Some of the Core Team members also served on the School Site Council and English Language Advisory Committees, although the Core Team was an ad hoc group working

independently of traditional school structures. It was decided to integrate the Listening Campaign process with the OUSD School Quality Review (SQR) self-study as much as possible, in order to avoid duplicative, parallel efforts. The Goal of the Listening Campaign was to create a unifying vision and values statement to guide dramatic improvement in achievement for Garfield students.



### Listening Process

In October and November, 277 Garfield parents and 182 4th and 5th grade students completed written surveys. In January, the Core Team conducted 134 face-to-face meetings with parents. The parents who participated in the survey and in the “one to one” visits represented the diversity of Garfield school: Latino, Vietnamese, African American, Chinese, Khmer, Filipino, Pacific Islander, Portuguese, Mien, Native American, and others. In addition, Liz Sullivan conducted 1-1 visits with 23 teachers and classified staff.

### Findings

From the surveys and one to one meetings, the Core Team learned that families think highly of teachers and the principal. They like the after-school programs run by EBAYC and Oakland Parks and Recreation. Parents appreciate the programs and services that are offered through the parent center and the preschool programs such as Lotus Bloom. They also like the programs and services available for disabled children. When parents were asked to “dream big” for their children, they consistently expressed that they want their children to be caring people who graduate from college and get good jobs.

Families expressed concerns about the academic level of the school. Many would like to see more challenging curriculum and homework. Parents would like to see stronger relationships and better communication between the school and the home. They also mentioned the need for more supervision on the yard, especially before school. Most teachers felt the school was starting to move in the right direction, but they expressed concern about the uneven level of instruction from classroom to classroom, and dissatisfaction with the quality of collaboration among teachers.

### Achievement Data Analysis by Subgroup

In February, the Core Team looked at achievement data for the entire school, and for racial subgroups, and discovered that there is a 200 point gap between Asian students and African American students, and a 100 point gap between Asian students and Latino students. This brought up



difficult feelings and the Core Team took the month of February to create a values framework that would help guide conversations with parents about unequal outcomes between subgroups. The Core Team felt a sense of urgency to accelerate learning for African American students and English Language Learners, and agreed that the rapid 2-3 year achievement gains associated with a “turn-around” strategy were preferable to the slower incremental approach of “school improvement,” which yields gains in a 5-7 year timeframe.

### **Vision and Values Statement**

In order to undertake school turnaround, the school needed a powerful, unifying vision, and a common set of values to guide the work. After studying the themes that emerged in the parent surveys and the one to one visits, the Core Team distilled a vision, and four values. The Core Team then collaborated with teachers to refine the statement. The final version follows:

**ALL Garfield students will grow into caring and creative adults prepared to graduate from college and succeed in life.**

### **Garfield School Values:**

- **Hard work, perseverance and education**
- **Teachers, Students, and Families as Partners**
- **Healthy Families, School, and Community**
- **Diversity as our strength**

### **Grade Level Meetings**

In March, the Core Team organized grade level meetings for parents to discuss Garfield’s achievement data, including the performance level of racial subgroups, and to get feedback on the proposed vision and values statement from families. A total of 180 parents participated in the grade level meetings in March. Families expressed overwhelming support for the values and the vision, and signed commitment cards to get involved to improve achievement at Garfield.

The Garfield Listening Campaign included the following steps:

## Steps to Conducting a School Listening Campaign

### 1. Identify the purpose of the campaign.

- Who do you want to listen to and why?
- Is the listening campaign about building relationships as well as gathering information?
- What happens to the information once you have listened?
- Is there an invitation or next step for the people you listen to?

### 2. Identify who will do the listening.

- Will the team consist solely of staff, solely of parents or will it be a cross-stakeholder group?

### 3. Train your team.

- Develop a written outline for 1-1 to visits or small group meetings, with just a few questions—try to keep it simple. See below for a sample outline.
- Have all team members role play with each other in order to get comfortable.
- Encourage team members to jot down notes after conversations so they don't forget.

### 4. Set goals.

- How many people do you need to listen to in order to get the pulse of the school community?
- What sub-groups do you need to include whose experience may be different?
- Ask individuals to set their own personal goals, as well as establish an overall goal.

### 5. Set a time frame.

- Usually one to two months.
- Time can be adjusted as necessary, depending on your progress toward the overall goal.

### 6. Let the community know in advance about the listening campaign.

- Letter from the principal
- Announcements in meetings
- Posters in the hall

### 7. Check-in with each other regularly to provide support and encouragement.

- Decide how frequently the team will meet to share what they are hearing (more frequent meetings are better to build momentum and keep people accountable to each other—once a week is best).
- Decide if you want to add members to the team and train new people as you go, or keep the group closed.

### 8. Consider conducting a survey in addition to face-to-face conversations in order to reach more people.

- The survey should complement, but not replace face-to-face conversations.

### 9. Report your findings back to the community in written format, and also in a community meeting.

- Be clear about how the information will guide decisions and actions moving forward.
- Recognize and celebrate the work of the team.
- Thank everyone who participated.

The following pages are tools adapted from Garfield Elementary’s Listening Campaign coordinated by Liz Sullivan:

## Listening Campaign One-on-One Training Agenda

### Outcomes:

1. Each participant will practice their one-on-ones for the listening campaign.
2. Each participant will set their goal for the number of people they will reach during the listening campaign.

**Total Time:** 2 hours

### Agenda

#### 3. Welcome and Introductions (20 minutes)

- a. Facilitators introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community, and role in listening campaign.
- b. All participants introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community, and why they joined the listening campaign.

#### 4. Outcomes for the Meeting (5 minute)

- a. At this meeting:
  - i. Everyone to practice their one-on-ones for the listening campaign.
  - ii. Everyone will set their goal for the number of people they will reach during the listening campaign.
- b. Overview the agenda for today.

#### 5. Overview the Purpose of the One-on-One (10 minutes)

- a. What is a One-on-One? (1 minute)
  - i. One-on-ones are about building relationships. There is an organizing principle that states: *“Power is a product of relationships.”* If the relationships among staff and parents at our school are strong and there is trust, then we will have power to improve the school.
- b. Pair Reflection (4 minutes)
  - i. Turn to the person next to you and talk about a powerful relationship with another person that has helped you in your life.
- c. Large Group Share Out (5 minutes)
  - i. Pairs report back to the whole group.

#### 6. Overview the Script for One-on-Ones (20 minutes)

***script is the tool on the next page\****

- a. Silent Reading (10 minutes)
  - i. Everyone take a few minutes to read over the script to yourself and make note of the following are you’re reading:

1. Anything we need to edit, such as if something doesn't sound natural.
  2. Anything that's missing that we should add in the script.
- b. Group Share Out (10 minutes)
- i. Does anyone want to share what we should edit or add in the script?

## 7. Practicing One-on-Ones (30 minutes)

- a. Role Play (5 minutes)
- i. So right now 2 of us will volunteer to role-play the one-on-one in front of the whole group. One of us will be the interviewer, and the other person will be a parent being interviewed.
- b. Role Play Debrief (5 minutes)
- i. What did folks notice about our role play?
- c. Pair Practice of One-on-Ones (10 minutes)
- i. Now let's break out into pairs and practice our one-on-one's using the script.
  - ii. You will have 2 rounds of 5 minutes.
  - iii. Assign each other the role of interviewer and then interviewee.
  - iv. Make sure to switch so that each person gets to try on both roles.
- d. Practice Debrief (10 min)
- i. Okay now I want you to debrief with each other:
    1. How did that go for you?
    2. What went well?
    3. What do you still need to work on?

## 8. One-on-Ones Goal Setting (15 minutes)

- a. Collective Goal (5 minutes)
- i. So now that we understand how to do the one-on-one's, we're going to finish today's training by setting our own individual one-on-one goals and hype each other up!
  - ii. Remember our collective goal is [insert total number and what population demographics your teams wants to meet].
- b. Individual Goal Setting (5 minutes)
- i. Now I want everyone to take out a piece of paper and write down your personal number goal.
- c. Share Out (5 minutes)
- i. Okay, so now we're going to have everyone go around and say their number goal. After each person says their number we're going to cheer to hype them up!

## 9. Closing and Next Steps (20 minutes)

- a. That is the end of our training! Any questions before we close?
- b. Our next meeting to check in on our listening campaign progress is [insert date].
- c. Now let's go around and have everyone describe how they're feeling with one word to close out.

## Listening Campaign One-on-One Script

Introduce yourself and state the purpose of the meeting:

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ School. Thank you for making time to talk with me.

I am working with [Staff Name] on the [School Name] Listening Campaign. The goal of the [School Name] Listening Campaign is to provide everyone an opportunity to “**dream big**” and help envision the excellent school that we want [School Name] to become. By the end of the listening campaign, [School Name] will have a clear mandate from our community about the school that families need, students deserve, and staff will strive to create.

Our school will have an inspiring vision and clearly defined values by which we will operate. We will have described the school that we will work together to create in the next [insert number] years.

1. Please tell me a little about yourself:

- How many children do you have at [School Name] and what are their grades and ages?
- How long have you been a [School Name] family?
- Why did you choose this school?

2. What are your hopes and dreams for your children?

3. Do you see college in their future? (Why or why not?)

4. What do you like about [School Name] school? (What works well?)

5. What do you think needs to change so that **every** student succeeds?

6. There will be a parent meeting at (give the date and time) to help create a unifying vision for [School Name]. Can we count on you to participate?

7. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

8. Do you know any other people that I should talk to?

Thank you again for your time! If you have any questions later, you can give me a call [share your contact information].

### Scripts for Other Stakeholders

**Students & School Staff** - [Empathy Interview](#) from [Californians for Justice](#)

# Listening Campaign Check-in Agenda

## Outcomes:

- The team will check in on progress of one-on-ones
- The team will reflect on common themes we heard in our one-on-ones
- The team will determine the goal of stakeholder participation in the large school community report back meeting

## Total Time:

### 1. Introductions and Overview of Meeting (20 minutes)

#### a. Introductions (15 min)

- i. Facilitators introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community
- ii. All participants introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community and answer check-in question of your choice

#### b. Overview of Meeting (5 min)

- i. At this meeting we will:
  1. Check in on progress of one-on-ones
  2. Reflect on common themes we heard in our one-on-ones
  3. Determine the goal of stakeholder participation in the large school community report back meeting

### 2. Listening Campaign Progress Report Back (30 minutes)

#### a. Large Group One-on-One Report Back (15 minutes)

- i. Each person come up and fill out a post-it to answer the following questions on the chart paper:

## CHART PAPER

How many one-on-one's have you done?	
What were the demographics (race/ethnicity, language, role, etc.) of the person(s) you met?	
What did you hear for each of these questions: The most commonly shared BIG DREAM was... What did they like about the school... What did they think needs to be changed...	



b. Themes We Heard: Whole Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- i. Do these themes reflect the most common dreams, likes, and concerns that we have heard so far from students, families, staff, and community?
- ii. Are there any surprises?

**3. Preparing for the Large School Community Meeting: Sharing our Data** (20 minutes)

- a. Large Group One-on-One Report Back (15 minutes)
- b. How many parents/caregivers, students, classified staff, teachers, and community partners do we want to attend?
- c. What will all attendees know, feel and do when they leave the meeting?

**4. Appreciations and Close** (20 minutes)

- a. Our next meeting is [insert date].
- b. To close us out, let's go around and have everyone say an appreciation to the person next to them.

# Listening Campaign Check-in Agenda

[School Name] Core Team  
 Summary of One-To-One Reports  
 [Date]

## Who did you talk with?

Conversations were had with [insert number] parents/caregivers, students, classified staff, teachers, and community partners:

Demographics				Number of Conversations
Race/Ethnicity	If a student or parent/caregiver		Role (parents/caregivers, students, classified staff, teachers, and community partners)	
	Student or Parent of Student with Disabilities	Foster Youth or Caregiver of Foster Youth		

## What did you hear?

Prompt	Theme	Who did you hear this from? (Demographics)
The most commonly shared BIG DREAM was...		
What did they like about the school...		
What did they think needs to be changed...		