

Suggested Agenda for the CTA Listening/Learning Meetings With Talking Points

1. Purpose of the Meeting

“We all know that there are hundreds of schools throughout the state where kids are not receiving the education they deserve. These schools may have good teachers, caring parents, and bright students. But for whatever reason, some schools aren’t doing a good job for kids.

“For the most part, these schools are in the areas with the greatest poverty and the fewest resources. They have the largest percentage of non-credentialed teachers and the most overcrowding.

“We also know that the media and the public use these schools to judge all public schools. More importantly, everyone wants to turn these schools into excellent schools. If we don’t, a generation of children may be lost.

“We suspect that the answers as to how to turn them into excellent schools are varied and complicated— some are systemic, some are particular to an individual school. But we believe that together we can find those answers.

“The CTA Board in October voted to initiate a process of Listening/Learning meetings throughout CTA and outside CTA to come up with a suggested CTA strategy to improve high need schools.

*“Dozens of meetings like this one have been held, or will be held, between now and March 1. In each meeting we ask the same question: **“What should be the CTA strategy for high need schools?”** The data from all these meetings will be collected and considered by the Organizing Team, which will produce a proposed strategy to go before the CTA Board on April 4, 2002. _____ will keep notes on our meeting.*

“We thank you all for coming and look forward to hearing your ideas on this important topic.

2. Ground Rules

“Our ground rules are simple: We started our meeting on time. We will end it on time at _____. We ask each of you to share your ideas, to ask each other questions, to engage each other in a discussion. Remember, there are no right and wrong answers; we aren’t competing for the best idea; no one gets a star. Before we leave, I want each of you to make sure that you place your name on the sign-in sheet so that you can be notified about the results of this process. I also

want you to indicate whether you are willing to hold one of these sessions yourself.”

3. Introductions

“Why don’t we introduce ourselves? Please give your name, your position in CTA or school, and a sentence or two about why you wanted to be part of tonight’s discussion. I’ll start. [E.g., I am _____. I am a CTA Board member. I’m here because I think that all public schools are judged by the example of our worst schools. Support for public schools is going to be difficult to maintain if we don’t do something about the high need schools.]”

4. Discussion

Part One – Driving and Restraining Forces – 30 minutes

“Let’s get started. Tonight’s recorder will be _____. He/she will help by writing down your answers and helping me report our ideas.

“Before we ask what our strategy should be, I want you to help me make two lists. Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. On one side, I want you to make a list of the forces or that make CTA want to do something to help the improve the schools of highest need. On the other side, I want you to list the forces that will hold us back from doing something about this problem.”

Use two sheets of newsprint to record the responses. At the top of one write “driving forces.” At the top of the other, write “restraining forces.” After the participants have completed their lists, record them on newsprint by asking each person to list one driving force and one restraining force from their lists in turn. Continue until everyone has verbalized everything on his or her list.

“I would like you to look at this list right now. What are your reactions?”

Allow participants to discuss the lists for about ten minutes, and then move to a discussion of CTA’s strategy.

Part Two – CTA Strategy – 45 minutes

“Now I want to change gears a little bit. I would like you make another list for me. On a sheet of paper, I would like you to list at least three things that CTA should do as part of its strategy to improve/help these schools. In making your list, keep in mind the driving and restraining forces. We get the most leverage from removing restraints. Also, your list can contain things that are working right now.”

Give participants about 10 minutes to make their list. Again, list the responses on newsprint.

“Looking at this list, what are your reactions? Is there anything here that you think is particularly important? Is there anything that is missing? Is there anything that could be modified or improved?”

Let participants discuss the list for as long as time allows. The next part of the process calls for participants to mark their three top priorities from the list. Have each participant mark the list using stick on dots, colored markers, or another method that you create.

“Please choose your top priorities from the list. Put a mark by each. Each person can mark up to three items.”

Let participants mark their priorities.

5. Next Steps

“The input from tonight’s meeting has been recorded by _____. He/she and I will review it and send a report tomorrow to the Organizing Committee. The first phase of these meetings was completed. The second stage began after the New Year and will end March 1. Should you want to submit any comments in writing, please do so to the address on your agenda.

“We want to maximize the input into this strategy. We encourage any of you to hold your own meeting, or multiple meetings, inviting anyone who you think might have something to contribute to our strategy. Particularly in the second stage, we would like to significantly deepen and widen our inputs.

“On the sign-up sheet, you will see a box to check if you are interested in holding a meeting. There is a space there to list whom you would like to invite, not necessarily by name, but by group. E.g. Alum Rock High School teachers.

“You do not need to be approved to hold the meeting. The only requirement is that you submit a report to the Organizing Team in a timely manner. I have extra report forms with me tonight.”

6. Data Collection

“Before you leave, please make sure that you have signed in on the sign-in sheet. If we have the correct information, you will be notified about our progress.

“Thank you again for your participation with us tonight. We all have made an important contribution to the future of California’s schools.”

7. Adjourn

Schools of Greatest Need Organizing Team

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David Hernandez

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