

## Facilitating with the Template

### “Supporting Your Children in School: Six Steps for Asking Better Questions”

The “Supporting Your Children in School: Six Steps for Asking Better Questions” template provides a step-by-step process that helps families produce, improve and strategize on how to use their own questions. The process will help them have a voice in decisions that affect their children in schools. This guide helps you, the facilitator, lead an individual family member or a group of family members through the process.

#### **There are two roles in this process:**

1. Facilitator: the person who just leads the process that allows people to ask their own questions.
2. Participant: the person you are leading through the process. Their role at each stage is to do ALL the thinking work.

#### **How will you know you are facilitating the process well?**

The process is designed to be very simple, but may require some changes in the way you may be used to helping people by giving explanations. The process will also likely feel different for participants, who will be doing a lot of the thinking on their own.

You have one role: to give instructions for each step. *If you are just giving the instructions and not explaining or suggesting ideas or questions, you are facilitating the process correctly.*

This might be difficult for you and it may be difficult for the participants as well. They may want you to explain what you want them to ask or say. You may want to be helpful by giving examples or commenting on their questions. The process is designed so that the participants do the thinking for themselves and not depend on you for suggestions or approval. Even if participants struggle at first, they should be doing all the thinking, asking the questions and talking, except for when you are giving instructions.

#### **Introducing the process:**

Let the participant know you will be sharing a simple process for questions to help support their children in school. You can share that the process of asking their own questions can help them make their voice heard on behalf of their child and get more of the information they need.

<p><b>Step 1:</b> Participant names one thing about their child or child's education that they want to ask questions about</p>	<p>Ask the participant to name one issue about their child or child's education that they want to ask questions about. They can choose from the list of issues on the template, or come up with their own.</p> <p>You can also decide on a topic in advance that you want to discuss with participants.</p>
<p><b>Step 2:</b> Participant asks as many questions as they can about the topic they chose</p>	<p>Say to your participant, "here are the rules to follow to come up with questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask as many questions as you can about the topic</li> <li>2. Do not stop to judge or try to answer the questions</li> <li>3. Write down the question exactly as it is stated or comes to mind</li> <li>4. Make sure you are only asking questions."</li> </ol> <p>Restate the topic, and ask the participant to begin asking questions. The participant can write the questions or you can write the questions down for them.</p> <p>Make sure NOT to give examples of questions. Allow time for the participant to generate as many questions as possible. Don't worry if people are not coming up with a lot of questions. This may be the first time that they are doing this kind of thinking.</p> <p>Your role in this step is just to make sure that the participant is following the four rules.</p>
<p><b>Step 3:</b> Participant finds two kinds of questions on their list: open and closed</p>	<p>Now you will facilitate some work with closed and open-ended questions.</p> <p>Provide definitions for two types of questions: closed and open-ended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Closed-ended questions</i> - can be answered with "yes" or "no" or with one word. It may be helpful to explain that closed-ended questions often begin with "is", "does", "can", and "are".</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Open-ended questions</i> - require an explanation. It may be helpful to explain that open-ended questions often begin with "why", "how", and "what".</li> </ul> <p>Ask the participant to categorize the questions as closed or open-ended by marking them with a "C" or an "O".</p> <p>You can explain that they can change the questions from closed to open or vice versa to get different information.</p>
<p><b>Step 4:</b> Participant finds their priority questions</p>	<p>Ask the participant to review the list and choose the three most important questions to them--their three priority questions--while keeping in mind the topic they chose. They will mark those questions with an "X."</p> <p>Sometimes you will want to change your prioritization instructions. For example, you may want to ask them to think about what questions they need answers to first, or what questions they want to ask of a particular person.</p>
<p><b>Step 5:</b> Participant reviews their priority questions</p>	<p>Ask your participant to look over their three priority questions. Ask if they would like to change any of them to get different information. If so, they should write the changes beside or below the question they want to change.</p> <p>For example, a participant could change a question from closed to open, or vice versa.</p>
<p><b>Step 6:</b> Participant reflects on the work that they did</p>	<p>Ask your participant to think about what they learned and how they can use it. This step is VERY important. When participants <i>name for themselves</i> what they have learned it deepens their understanding of all the thinking they've done.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you learn?</li> <li>• How can you use what you learned?</li> </ul> <p>You can also ask: How can you use these questions to get more information about what you are most concerned about?</p>

<p><b>Optional step:</b> an action plan</p> <p>[Not included on the template]</p>	<p>Discuss with your participant what they want to do next and how they will use their questions. What information would they like to get? How will they go about getting it?</p>
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**Some tips for when you're working with groups:**

You can work with an individual participant using this template, or you can work with a group or multiple groups of participants.

If you're working with a group, ask one person to be the "scribe" to write down all the questions. For rule #3, the scribe should not edit the questions that people contribute.

When working with groups, at the end of the process, you can ask each group to share out:

- Their three priority questions and the reasons they chose those questions
- Their action plan, if included in the process

**Facilitation timeframes:**

When you use the template with one person, you can walk a participant through the steps in 7-15 minutes. When you use the QFT with groups of people, you can go through the whole process in about 30 minutes.