Facilitator Notes: School Connectedness (5 Slides)

Participant 'Take-Away' Element(s):
Be introduced to the strength-base model of School Connectedness

Facilitation Type(s) Involved:
Partner conversations
Chart paper group sharing; *Always make sure you write big enough so that everything can be seen from the entire room.*
Floor Cards

Slide #1:
This is a place holder slide for you to introduce yourselves and give any brief introduction to the topic, if that is appropriate. Move to the next slide.

Slide #2:
Have everyone work in pairs. If there are an odd number of people, it is okay to have one group of three. Read the slide and give them enough time to share with one another. If you are not sure if they have had sufficient time to share, just ask, "does anyone need more time?" When you bring them back together, ask them to share what they talked about focusing on the factors that made them feel connected to their own schooling experiences. Scribe them on a piece of flip chart paper that has been labeled, "Truly Connected."

Slide #3:
Once you have written everything they identify, move them to standing circles. It is always better and more fun to have more than one circle. It is also better to have no more than 10 – 15 people in each circle. Each circle could have three – five people, if you have a smaller group. You will have to announce how many circles there will be and how many individuals in each circle. Everyone who is a participant for these facilitation exercises will have already worked in standing circles, so they will know exactly what to do. However, if this is the very first time you are introducing standing circles to the group, you will have to be very specific about where they can stand (not around a table as often happens the first time) and that they need to have enough floor space. Also, if this IS the first time they are working in circles make sure they understand that the cards should remain on the floor so that everyone can see all of them. In other words, they should not pick them up! Make it clear that they can manipulate them with their hands or their feet to create the two piles. It is very important that initially you just read the slide exactly as it is and do not embellish it.

Give them some time to work on the task without any interference or interjections from you. If you are concerned that they need more information about the task, after you read the slide you can ask, "what are your questions?" Hearing nothing, just back away and let them work. If anyone asks, "how many?" respond by saying, "Oh, you want a clue?" Then let them know that there are exactly five measures of School Connectedness. If no one asks

for a clue, after a few minutes say, “would you like a clue?” Almost never does anyone say, “no!” Even if you get that rare response, you want to let them know that there are five measures of School Connectedness. When everyone has five measures, move to the processing of the task.

All floor card tasks are processed the same way. Begin with one group (this is why each group has different colored cards). Ask them to mention one measure that they are pretty sure is on the list. Once that measure is shared, check in with the other group(s). If everyone agrees *and it is correct*, “that’s correct, you have one!” Move to the next circle group and do the same thing. If there is *not* agreement, say, “we’re not going to tell you at this point if that one is correct; we’ll put it to the side for the time being.” Usually you will get at least three – four of them correct. If on the first round the groups get all give of them correct, you can make a comment like, “you are all the ‘A’ team! If you do not have full agreement, make sure that you mention every card that the groups mentioned (the correct and the incorrect ones that have yet to be confirmed). Usually with two cards being considered, one of them is correct and you can say, “one of the two is correct.” If there are more than two being considered, you should say, “of the three (or four) you have mentioned, one (or two) of them are correct. You can turn them back to their circles to figure out what they think is/are the correct measures. Or you can let the big group talk it out and see what they come up with. If time is consideration, you can just let them know which one(s) is/are correct. Once you get to the group understanding which five measures are correct, move to the next slide.

Slide #4:

You can keep them standing while you go through all the five measures of School Connectedness explaining each of the components and let them know there is no real order; they are all important. Explain that all students should have as many friends as possible and that every student should have that special adult. School should be a happy/joyful place because they go there primarily to see their friends! Students also should feel a strong sense of belonging where they feel they matter and are valued; it doesn’t have to be the whole school, but a team, a project or some other kind of club, etc. Fairness is about equity (meeting individual needs) rather than equality (giving everyone the same thing) and having a voice/being heard is a core aspect of fairness. Finally, being safe in all ways is critical. Then, turn to the chart paper brainstorming and ask the group did we identify the measures without knowing the research? Usually, everything is listed explicitly or implicitly and let them comment on the question briefly. The point of doing so is to anchor the fact that we know this by our own experience. Sometimes someone notices that there is nothing substantive about academics on the list! Move to the final slide.

Slide #5:

This slide is meant to indicate that the learning task is finished, so the group will know that your facilitation is over and we are ready to reflect on it.