

The Raising of America
Community Café Guidebook:

Changing the conversation on how we can work together to support families with young children in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

The Raising of America Community Café – Purpose

“The way we talk changes the way we work”

- Poulain (2015), *The Raising of America Action Toolkit*

Thank you for joining Smart Start of Mecklenburg County and ZFive in helping to foster a larger community conversation around how we can best support families with young children in our community. We are planning to hold more than a dozen Community Cafés at sites strategically located to encourage representation from many different voices in Mecklenburg County. The purpose of *The Raising of America Community Café* is to invite our community to change the conversation around early childhood – to ask questions about why some children thrive while others do not, and also to encourage us to think about the issues differently.

The Raising of America documentary (www.raisingofamerica.org) was screened on November 10, 2015 in Charlotte. We are using that documentary as a springboard for asking the following three questions of our community:

- **Why is it challenging for families with young children in this community?**
- **What would a community that supports families with young children look like?**
- **What can I do to help support families with young children in my community?**

It is our hope that these questions will spark a community-wide and even state-level conversation that will move beyond the disproportionate focus on parents as those with sole responsibility for children’s developmental outcomes. We believe that as a community, we have the collective wisdom to develop solutions to the challenges that face families with young children, and the power to enact those solutions.

The results of our Community Café conversations will be reported back to those who participated in the Cafés as well as to the NC General Assembly’s Bipartisan Caucus on Early Childhood, and the Opportunity Task Force formed by the Foundation for the Carolinas* to address issues of intergenerational economic mobility in Charlotte.

* *We are grateful to the Foundation for the Carolinas for their generous support helping to offset some of the costs for the Raising of America Community Cafés.*

Community Café Roles and Responsibilities

Much of the groundwork has already been laid by *The Raising of America* Community Café Planning Team, which includes members from Smart Start and ZFive. Host Sites have been identified, relationships have been built, and the questions and materials for the Cafés are already prepared. That said, there is still much to be done! There are three key people with distinct roles that are present at each Café. Below is a description of each role and its responsibility:

- **Lead Moderator (LM)**: serves as the main contact with the host site, welcomes the group, describes the process, and manages the flow of the event + “harvest.”
- **Co-Moderator (CM)**: helps with managing logistics on the day of the event (including set-up, take-down, serving of meals, and handling unforeseen circumstances, etc.); The Co-Moderator is also trained Moderator, and will serve as the “understudy” in the event that the main Moderator cannot perform. In addition, the Co-Moderator will help the Lead Moderator open and close the event, manage the PowerPoint presentation, record ideas during the harvest, and fill in as needed.
- **Planning Team Member (PTM)**: helps the Moderator manage the needs of the host site in advance of the event. Although the Moderator will be the main point of contact for the host site, the Planning Team Member will bring to fruition whatever the Moderator and host site wish to see happen with respect to ambience and cultural needs. The Planning Team Member will also be responsible for bringing the “Café in a Box” (see below) to the site on the day of the event, and will serve in whatever capacity necessary during the event. The Planning Team Member will collect the “harvest” information (notes from the Café tables) and will be responsible for transcribing the comments and sharing with the Planning Team. In the event that the Co-Moderator needs to take over for the Moderator, the Planning Team Member will take on the Co-Moderator’s job responsibilities.

Community Café Needs

CAFÉ NEEDS	RESPONSIBILITY OF...
LCD projector	<u>Lead Moderator</u> will work with host site to determine if we need to bring our own.
Soothing/welcoming music	<u>Lead Moderator</u> will work with host site to determine what would be most appropriate.
Food	<u>Lead Moderator</u> will work with host site to coordinate.
Childcare	<u>Lead Moderator</u> will work with host site; Ideally, host site will provide professionals, and we will pay \$25 each to 2 providers per site (approximately 2 hours of work).
Table hosts (up to 6, depending on size of Café)	<u>Lead Moderator</u> works with host sites to identify appropriate table hosts in advance of Café.
Café in a Box: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Name tags ✓ Color-coded and laminated question cards ✓ Café etiquette cards to put on tables ✓ ROACC handouts with map & stats ✓ “fidgets” ✓ markers ✓ butcher paper and tablecloths ✓ centerpieces (fire-safe “candles”) ✓ flash drive loaded with Café PowerPoint (including 11-minute ROA preview) ✓ evaluation forms ✓ depending on lighting at sites, we may need to soften it with small lamps – we’ll take this on as needed. 	Will be arranged and brought to site by <u>Planning Team Member</u>

Moderator's Toolkit: Detailed Café Agenda + PowerPoint Slides

Keep in mind that although the flow of Café will be similar across sites, you are encouraged to work with the host site to customize the “feel” of the Café (e.g., the way in which you open and close the Café, the choice of background music, the food) to the culture of the site. In a similar vein, the words below should be received as suggestions – moderators are encouraged to inject their own “flair.” The main role of the moderator is to serve as a welcoming, warm presence. You should feel free to do that in your own unique way.

(Slide 1: Frederick Douglass quote; You can leave this up while people are entering the space. After folks have had a chance to eat and children are taken to the “fun room” – i.e., childcare – the program will begin.)

1) Welcome + Gratitude - Slide 2: Welcome

Thank you for joining us for today's Community Café. (Express gratitude to the host site, table hosts, childcare providers, and the participants for being there.)

2) Overview of Purpose of Community Café – Light a Spark... (5 mins) – Slide 3: CC Purpose

- *A Community Café is a way to have meaningful conversations around what is important to us and to our community.*
- *(Introducing self and Co-Moderator) We are here as part of that community. This effort got started through a screening of a documentary called The Raising of America, a film about the challenges faced by families with young children in this country.*
- *Smart Start and ZFive – the groups we work with – were inspired by this film and teamed up to start a community conversation around this topic. We believe that we can use our collective wisdom to come up with new ways of thinking about solutions to the everyday challenges and stresses that families face.*
- *This Café tonight is part of a larger effort – there are more than a dozen that will be taking place in Mecklenburg County over the next few weeks centered on this same topic – what it's like to raise young children in Charlotte. (Direct them to look at the map handout on the table to see when and where these are happening.)*
- *If you turn that map over, you'll see some of the things we know about raising young children in Mecklenburg County:*
 - *We have more than 83,000 children under age 5 in Mecklenburg County, and roughly 1 out of every 5 children lives in poverty.*
 - *The average wage of childcare workers in NC is less than \$10/hour.*
 - *The cost of full-time childcare is more than \$10,000 per year, and 42% of children eligible for childcare subsidy are on a waiting list.*
 - *Charlotte was ranked the 22nd most stressful city in the U.S. (out of 100).*

- *We were also ranked worst in the nation with respect to upward economic mobility – this translates to our kids having just a 4% chance of moving from the bottom of the income ladder to the top – a chance that’s worse than in any developed country.*
- *You don’t have to currently have young children (or even have children at all!) to be saddened by these numbers or to participate in this conversation.*
- *Our hope is that by making space for many different voices in many different parts of our community, we will be able to learn from each other and work together to change the conversation by thinking of new ways to address these issues in our community.*

3) Describe Café Process (5 mins)

- *We’ll be answering 3 questions together tonight.*
- *There is a table host at each table that will guide you through the question, and take notes on your ideas/thoughts.*
- *As you discuss your ideas, you can also scribble, doodle or write ideas on the paper on your table.*
- *Everyone is encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas and to listen intently when others are speaking. We want everyone to feel safe and valued, so please respect each other’s opinions and personal sharing.*
- *After we discuss each question, everyone at your table except for one person (your table host), will mix up and go to other tables before the next question is presented.*
- *When we are done with all of the questions, we will collect the “harvest.”*
- *Please be listening for themes and ideas that emerged from the conversations that you were in.*

(Slide 4: Café Etiquette – display, but don’t read the whole thing; there will be printouts on the table describing the etiquette.)

4) View ROA Trailer (11 minutes) - Slide 5

- *Before we get to the questions, though, we’re going to share an experience together to get us thinking. It’s a short video excerpt from “The Raising of America,” the documentary I mentioned earlier that was designed to change the conversation around how we as a community think about the needs of families with young children. It invites us to think about why some children thrive while others don’t. It also asks us to think about who is responsible for helping ensure children have a strong start in life.*
- (After film, acknowledge there was a lot to think about there. Invite them to use those thoughts to fuel their answers to the questions that their table hosts will now pose.)

5) Question 1 (15 minutes) - Slide 6: Peaceful scenery

- (After 10 minutes, ring a soft bell to signify end of question; send participants to the

next table.)

(Allow 5 minutes to switch tables.)

6) Question 2 (15 minutes – same as above)

(Allow 5 minutes to switch tables.)

7) Question 3 (15 minutes)

8) Harvest (15 mins) – Slide 7: Community Café questions

- (Connect the discussion to the purpose of the meeting.)
 - *Tonight we gathered to talk about why parents struggle to provide a loving, nurturing environment for their babies, what a community that supported its families with young children would look like, and what I can do to support families with young children in my community.*
- Taking each question separately, ask: *What were the insights, common themes, or patterns that emerged?* Table hosts can shout out their responses to each question; moderator writes down on large paper, whiteboard, or screen.
- Ask: *What were the things that you heard that maybe you hadn't heard before?*
- Ask: *Were there things, ideas, etc. that we should think more about?*
- Ask: *Is there any action we should take?*

9) Closure (5 mins)

- *We'll be summarizing this information along with everything else that folks think up at other Community Café sites and sharing it back with your group.*
- *We'll also be sharing your thoughts with the Foundation for the Carolinas's Opportunity Task Force, which has been charged with looking into the barriers to economic mobility in our community.*
- *And we'll be sharing with the NC Bipartisan Caucus on Early Childhood, spearheaded by Senator Jeff Jackson, a Democrat from Charlotte, and Senator Jeff Tarte, a Republican from Mooresville.*
- *Finally, we hope you will continue the conversation, share your thoughts with each other, and with others in your circles so we can start changing the conversation around how we can best support families with young children in our community.*
- If there is time, this is a nice way to end and bring closure to the event: *Before we go, I'd like to invite you to think for a moment about this question:*
 - *What one word describes you in this moment? (Ask folks to call out their words.)*
- *Thank you for joining us today and for adding your voice to the conversation!*

10) Evaluation form – Toward the end, have the Co-Moderator or Planning Team Member pass out evaluation forms (sample attached) so we can gather a quick reading on how the event felt for the participants.

Raising of America Community Café – Please share your thoughts...

Thank you for joining us in changing the conversation around what it means to be the parent of a young child in our community.

On a scale of 1 (lowest rating) to 5 (highest rating), please tell us what you thought about today's event:

	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
This event was well organized.					
The table hosts led the conversations well.					
This event helped me better understand the challenges facing the parents of young children.					
This event will make it easier to talk about the community's role in supporting families with young children.					
I am now more likely to push (advocate) for better support for families with young children.					
I would like to be more involved in efforts to support families with young children.					

Please share any other thoughts/comments: