

## Scheduling Family Group Meetings

Typically each Family Group meets at a different time, one that is convenient for the Facilitator and the Ambassadors, though some schools find there's a common time in the master schedule during which such meetings can be conveniently scheduled.

### **What matters most is that the meeting time WORKS for the Family Group members!**

Suggested steps to schedule your Family Group meetings are outlined below. We suggest you begin to work through these steps BEFORE the initial training so you have a rough idea of your plan, even if it's not finalized until after the training.

#### *i) Assess your options for meeting times*

Our experience clearly shows that in the strongest and most successful SSA programs the Family Groups meet during the school day, during a class period or even as a class (like student leadership), or during an activity or homeroom period. This sends the message that the school values the program and is committed to supporting the work of the Ambassadors.

Where this is not possible, some SSA programs will have meetings during lunch, while others find it helpful to have Family Group meetings occur at different times of the day (e.g. some before school for those who can get there early, some afterward for those not involved in after-school activities, and some during lunch periods.

The list below covers the range of options available to most schools. Choose the meeting time option(s) that best fit your situation.

- 1) as a class during the school day - like student leadership or conflict mediation.  
Within that time period, each family group can meet separately with its Facilitator, and every month or so the entire SSA group can meet together as a whole for further training and/or celebration.
- 2) part-day substitute – a sub hired for the first four periods every Tuesday (for example) can free up the four Family Group Facilitators to meet with their groups.  
The group meetings:
  - can be constant (for example: Mr. Smith's group *always* meets first period, Ms. Montoya's *always* meets second, etc.) or
  - can rotate (in the preceding example, in the *second* week, a different group meets first period, Mr. Smith's meets second period, Ms. Montoya's meets third period, etc.)
- 3) single-period substitute – Family Group Facilitators choose the period they'd like to meet (an elective, a study-hall, etc) and someone (an administrator, a colleague, an aide, a paid sub) fills in for them during that period.

- 4) prep period (or other during-school "flexible" time) – Facilitators can choose to use a prep period, or a counselor can block out a regular time, etc.
- 5) before or after school – not recommended - consider how after-school activities will impact Ambassadors' abilities to attend. Also consider transportation issues.
- 6) lunch – this is distinctly the least preferable option, and we do not recommend it for several reasons: students are acculturated to expect that lunch is a time to "hang" with their friends; the eating process itself takes time away from an already-shorter-than-desired meeting, and is a distraction; and, lunch is one of those times when Ambassadors are most needed to be present with their peers to influence their behavior.

**If your program absolutely cannot avoid lunch meetings, see the Family Group Facilitator's Guide Section 1.3 for tips on how to make this meeting time work reasonably well.**

If Facilitators are uncomfortable "volunteering" prep or other "personal" time for Family Group meetings, some schools find funding (internally or from a sponsor in the community) to offer Facilitators a small stipend to acknowledge their commitment of personal time. Other schools adjust teaching schedules and/or provide "duty credit."

ii) Determine which FG Facilitators can meet at which times.

The *Family Group Scheduling Worksheet* might help you gather and organize information about the availability of FG Facilitators.

Ideas for using the Worksheet:

- make one copy of the worksheet for each FG Facilitator. Ask them to mark in the time blocks the conditions under which they could meet. For example, a teacher might be willing to have a sub every other week for a 2nd period Honors English but not for a 4th period Remedial English (or vice versa), or during certain elective periods.
- make a copy of the form and use it to compile information about the individual schedules of your FG Facilitators, by writing the names of the FG Facilitators into the blocks of time they are available to meet. With that picture, you can determine when FG meetings could occur.

NOTE: you may need to have a different copy of the form for different "conditions" or levels of support that could be provided. For example, you might want to attempt making up a FG meeting schedule without the use of any subs. Then, on a different worksheet, you might want to attempt to make up a schedule assuming that administrators could substitute for staff (Option 3 above).