

Letters Home

Activities for Discussion, Reflection, Evaluation

ICEBREAKERS AND TEAM BUILDERS TO BUILD COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES

- To reinforce an asset-based climate
- To support family engagement

MATERIALS

- Download **LETTERS HOME HANDOUT** from **BUILDING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES.COM** and make one copy per participant.
- Notebook paper
- Stationery
- Index cards
- Pens
- Envelopes

SETUP

- None

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Ask** participants:
2. **How do you think it makes your parents and family members feel to hear good things about you?**
3. **What would they know about you if they got to observe you at school?**
4. Explain to participants that in this activity, participants will each **select one person in the group to observe** over the next few sessions and will eventually **write a letter** about their chosen person, describing positive, supportive choices this person made. Explain that these letters will be **distributed** to the family members of these participants so that they can get a glimpse of

who they are when they are not at home. (*NOTE: You can choose when and how to distribute these letters to family members, either at a parent-instructor event, or mailed to participants' homes.*)

5. Have participants **write their names** on one side of an index card and the **name(s) of two family members** they think would enjoy reading a letter about them. *For example, participants may list their mother (COLLEEN JONES) and their grandmother (SOPHIA HARVEY).*
6. **Collect** these cards.
7. **Shuffle** these cards and **randomly distribute** them to each participant.

CONTINUED



Letters Home continued

8. **Distribute** the **LETTERS HOME HANDOUT** to participants.
9. **Explain** to participants that over the next few sessions, each person should **carefully observe the person they selected** as well as **interview friends** about this person to understand their positive qualities. They will track their findings in the **LETTERS HOME HANDOUT**.
10. Ask participants to keep the person they are writing a letter about a **secret**.
11. Over the **next few sessions**, give participants opportunities to **work together, interact, and fill out** their **LETTERS HOME HANDOUT**.
12. Once participants have had an opportunity to collect enough information, **distribute notebook paper** to participants and invite them to **write a draft letter**, using the names of the relatives listed on the index card of the participant. (*NOTE: You can use this opportunity to teach participants how to*

write a formal letter.)

13. Have participants **imagine the types of things their own family members would like to read** about them and to invest care and attention in the letter they write to **create a positive experience** for the reader(s).
14. **Collect** the first drafts of the letters and **read** them. **Offer feedback or comments** as needed.
15. **Redistribute** the draft letters with your comments and have participants **make a clean copy using pretty stationery**.
16. Have participants place their letters in an **envelope** and **address** them to: THE FAMILY OF _____ (and write the name of the participant they observed).
17. **Distribute** these letters to participants' families. If possible, **collect** the responses of family members to **share** back with participants.

DEBRIEF

- How did it feel to write a letter to the families of our group members?
- What were some of the feelings you hope they will have as they read this letter?
- How does sharing our positive actions with our families help create a connected, caring community?