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Frequently Asked Questions

Project Title: Equal Educational Opportunity

What is this project? This project is a student research project to see if urban students are receiving sufficient opportunities. We plan to compare results of school visits and focus groups from a cross section of high schools in Boston and its neighboring communities.

What do you want from a participating school?

1. We need to identify 16 students to participate in two different (8 students each) Focus Group interviews. Criteria for selecting participants is provided in the Focus Group section of this packet.
2. We need the headmaster or his designated staff person to complete a school profile survey.
3. We need to administer a written survey to at least 100 students (preferably four different classes) from different parts of the school.
4. We need to make a site visit to the school to walk through and conduct a few personal interviews with members of the school community.

When will this take place?

The basic research will be conducted during the months of February to March. School site visits will be made on one of the following dates:

- March 5 (Friday)
- March 9 (Tuesday)
- March 24 (Wednesday)

What are you going to do with the research?

The results of the Focus Group interviews and the surveys will be analyzed and prepared as a report to be brought to the attention of the superintendent of Boston Public Schools. The results will also be presented in a Press Conference to be held in May.

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How did you choose different schools?

Schools were chosen to participate based upon our desire to get a cross section of schools from within the Boston Public School system and other schools that are comparable to BPS but in other communities in the metropolitan area. We also chose schools where a member of our research team had some contact in order to facilitate the relations between our team and the schools.

How long does it take for a site visit?

A school site visit consists of the walk through with a few personal interviews and the two Focus Groups. Each Focus Groups takes less than two hours to complete. Students who participate in the Focus Groups will need to be excused from class for the duration of the time each group meets.

Do participating schools need to provide any special equipment or meeting space?

The research team will come prepared to videotape each Focus Group and the walk through. Electrical connections and a quiet room to meet will be required.

How will you conduct the written survey?

The written survey consists of approximately 50 questions. A bubble sheet will be provided for answers so that the questionnaire will be easily scored. There will be a few open-ended questions as well. The written survey will not necessarily be conducted on the day of the site visit, but we plan to assist you in administering the survey.

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Sample Schedule

Time	
9:30 a.m.	Student Research Team arrives at your school
10:00-11:30 a.m.	Student Focus Group #1
11:30-12:00 p.m.	Lunch Break
12:00-1:30 p.m.	Student Focus Group #2
1:30-2:30 p.m.	Student Researchers interview two adults about school
2:30-3:30 p.m.	Student Researchers tour the school building and campus with a student from a focus group

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Student Survey Guidelines

We would like to have around 100 students at your school complete the survey. The survey should be administered in at least four classes.

In order to standardize the administration of our survey, please schedule the administration of the survey in the following classes:

- 11th Grade: AP or Honors Course
- 11th Grade: Regular Level Course
- 12th Grade: AP or Honors Course
- 12th Grade: Regular Level Course

If possible, we would love it if you could administer the survey in additional classes and indicate the level of the course on the sheet.

The survey should take students approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

We would like to schedule a date to come to your school to help administer the survey. We will contact you soon to schedule a time that is convenient for you.

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Focus Group Guidelines

A focus group is a small group of people having a “focused” discussion around a particular topic, question, or concern. In order to investigate our question and gain a better understanding of the issue, we not only need to conduct research, surveys, and interviews, but also, we must have some focus groups. The focus groups will enable us to grasp the concept of this really complicated issue and hear the different perspectives that people in your community have. Our project will greatly benefit from the wide variety of opinions and ideas from the individuals in your school.

Each school site visit will consist of two different Focus Groups:

1. One student focus group comprised of four 11th and four 12th grade students---8 students total.
2. A second student focus group comprised of four 9th and four 10th grade students---8 students total.

Tour of school site:

We would like to have two 11th or 12 grade students from the focus group give us a tour of the school building and grounds.

Please note:

We would like the racial make-up of the focus group to represent the racial make-up of the student body. For example, if 10% of the students at your school are Latino, it would help our research if 10% of the students in the focus group were Latino. It is important that when creating this focus group you include both students who express themselves openly and those who are not as vocal. Keep in mind that we are looking for a variety of opinions and ideas from these students, so we encourage you to pick carefully.

School Participation Form

School Name: _____

Headmaster/Principal: _____

School Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Contact email: _____

Student Contact Name: _____

Select a date for the school site visit:

- March 5 (Friday)
- March 9 (Tuesday)
- March 24 (Wednesday)

I would like to have the school mentioned above participate in the student led research project entitled "Equal Educational Opportunity." Our school will cooperate to the best of our ability to ensure that the research team from Brighton High School is able to meet their objectives.

Signed: _____
(Headmaster Signature)

Signed: _____
(Contact Person)

Signed: _____
(Student Contact)

Passive Consent Cover Letter for Survey Research
Brighton High School Student Research Project

Dear [Participant],

You are invited to participate in research being conducted by high school students in Student Advocacy Class at Brighton High School. The purpose of the research is to compare educational opportunities at different high schools. The Gates Foundation funds the research project.

The survey questionnaire has been designed to collect information on your school. You are one of 1,000 people selected to participate in this survey. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will be confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. No one other than research staff will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

If you agree to participate in this project, please complete the questionnaire by following the instructions on the inside of the front cover. This should take about 20 minutes. Please return the questionnaire to the administrator at your school when you have completed it. We will send your school a summary of the research results.

If your questionnaire is completed to our satisfaction, your name will be entered into a drawing for a free 19" color TV. The odds of winning are not better than 1 in 1000. Winners will be notified by mail no later than May 30, 2004.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Bernice Fedestin, at Brighton High School by phone (617) 635-9873. You are welcome to call this number collect. Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Bernice Fedestin
Project Student Coordinator

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Parent Consent Form Requesting Student Participation in a Youth Survey

Dear Parent:

We are asking permission for your son or daughter to participate in a survey that will be administered in February, March or April of 2004. Students in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades throughout Massachusetts are being invited to participate.

The purpose of the research is to compare educational opportunities at different high schools. What Kids Can Do and The Gates Foundation fund the research project.

The survey is entirely anonymous. Students will not put their names or any other identifying information on the survey booklet. All results from the study will be presented only in group summary form, like many opinion polls. A copy of the questionnaire is available upon request.

Your child's participation in the survey is completely voluntary. There are no costs or risks to your child in completing the questionnaire. Each child will be given the option of leaving blank any question that he or she prefers not to answer. You may decline to have your child participate, if you wish. If you do decline, your son or daughter will be allowed to read or participate in an alternative activity while the survey is being administered.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Thomas Haferd, Faculty Advisor, at Brighton High School by phone (617) 635-9873. You are welcome to call this number collect. Thank you for your assistance in this important

Please check the box below if you **DO NOT** want your son or daughter to participate in the study and send the letter back to the school.

I **DO NOT** want my child to participate in the study.

Parent's Name

Child's Name

____/____/____ Date

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ACTIVITY CONSENT Photo, Videotape, Images and Audio Release Form **Brighton High School Student Research Project**

Student's Name _____

Birthdate ____/____/____

Age _____ Year _____

Students at Brighton High School are conducting focus groups and student interviews as part of a research project funded by the Gates Foundation. We would like to include the above-mentioned student in the research project.

I hereby give my consent for the above-named student to participate in the research project "Equal Educational Opportunity".

I understand that my child may be photographed, videotaped, or audio taped by school staff, parents, volunteers, yearbook coordinators, or public media personnel during any school activity, on or off the school campus. I give my permission to release any photographs, video images, or audiotapes of my child, taken during school activities, for use in school related publications, as well as possible public media use.

I give consent for my child to videotaped and written work collected during this study:

please initial: ____Yes ____No

This consent and authorization is to continue for the summer of 2004 and/or the 2004-2005 school year, unless sooner revoked in writing and delivered to the school office of Brighton High School.

Print Name

Signature of Father/Guardian Signature of Mother/Guardian

Please have your child return this form to Mr. Haferd, project faculty advisor. If this form is not returned, your child will not be videotaped and written work will not be used in research. If you would like more information about this research, please feel free to contact the Project Director, Bernice Fedestin, at 617-635-9873.

Thank you.