

## **GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PARENT NETWORK MEETING**

Parent Networks build adult connections that offer support and help create a strong, unified adult voice to guide Brookline's pre-teen and teen communities. These meetings can be casual open-ended gatherings discussing a wide range of topics suggested on the spot or can focus on a pre-determined issue of general interest. Regardless, here are a few guidelines to keep your meeting productive.

### **General Guidelines**

- **Confidentiality** – stress that what is said in the group stays in the group.
- Help ensure that everyone feels they have the **opportunity to talk without interruption**.
- Focus on **sharing ideas that work**, rather than complaining. Try to help generate positive solutions and strategies for parenting.
- **Respect differences** in parenting styles and cultural traditions -- suggestions of alternative approaches are preferable to criticisms of others' parenting strategies.
- **Stay focused** on the topic(s) at hand – avoid unproductive complaining.
- **Avoid side conversations**, instead leaving time at the end for unstructured mingling.
- **Try to start and end on time**, encouraging everyone to stay for the full meeting.

### **Ideas for Meeting Structure:**

- **Check in** – introduce yourselves, ID your children, perhaps say what issue is currently most on your mind
- Pass around a **sign-in sheet** with email/phone contact info for ease of communication
- Read meeting **guidelines** (above)
- Introduce chosen **topic** (if that has been decided) or open the floor for general concerns
- Choose **topic (s) for next time**, if appropriate
- Choose **next meeting date/place**, if not pre-determined

For more information on B-PEN or for additional help on starting and maintaining a Parent Network, visit [www.B-PEN.org](http://www.B-PEN.org) or contact coordinators June Harris ([jharris@brooklinema.gov](mailto:jharris@brooklinema.gov)) or Karen Campbell ([kcampbell@brooklinema.gov](mailto:kcampbell@brooklinema.gov)).