



THE CLEAR PATH

Public Opinion Research

TO: Harbor Freight Tools for Schools (HFTFS)
FROM: EVITARUS
DATE: October 11, 2023
RE: Key Findings—Skilled Trades Careers Focus Groups Among Students & Parents

From August 29—September 8, 2023, EVITARUS conducted four (4) focus groups among Black/African American and Latino high school students and parents to assess attitudes and preferences towards skilled trades as a career and potential skilled trades classes in their Los Angeles County high schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From August 29 to September 8, 2023, EVITARUS conducted four (4) focus groups among Los Angeles-based Black/African American and Latino high school students and parents for the purpose of gaining insight into:

1. Student and parental aspirations for life after high school and perceived opportunities as it relates to careers;
2. General perceptions of skilled trades, pre-existing positive or negative attitudes, and career education;
3. Parental perceptions of the value, and pain points, related to trades education opportunities relative to other careers;
4. Reactions to images and narratives that may hold potential to change perceptions; and
5. Information youth would like to know about these careers.

As a research method, focus groups center the perspectives and attitudes of participants through a series of open-ended questions designed to delve deeply into the mindsets, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of participants.

Focus groups also enable researchers to leverage group dynamics and gauge reactions to ideas, concepts, and issues in ways that are not possible under the time constraints and largely closed ended structure of public opinion surveys. However, the research does not measure the degree to which the opinions of research participants may be generalizable to the broader population.

Focus Group Segmentation

The focus groups were structured to capture a mix of participants segmented by gender, age, background, and region of the County. The following groups were conducted:

- Group #1: Black/African American parents of high school students conducted on August 29, 2023, in partnership with Community Coalition located in South Los Angeles;
- Group #2: Latino high school students conducted on August 30, 2023, in partnership with Los Angeles Harbor Boys & Girls Club located in Los Angeles (Port/Harbor);
- Group #3: Latino parents of high school students conducted on August 30, 2023, in Spanish, in partnership with Los Angeles Harbor Boys & Girls Club) located in Los Angeles (Port/Harbor); and
- Group #4: Black/African American high school students conducted on September 8, 2023, in partnership with Brotherhood Crusade located in South Los Angeles.

Additional Research

The focus group research findings will inform a Los Angeles Countywide survey of parents, high school students, and voters to assess perceptions of skilled trades and attitudes toward the value of expanding opportunities for Los Angeles County high school students to participate in skilled trades career education and training. The survey will measure, in part, the extent to which key findings from the focus group research can be generalized to the broader population of Los Angeles County parents, students, and voters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **Participants**—students and parents—**saw great value in skilled trades education** and were highly supportive of skilled trades classes being offered in Los Angeles County public high schools.
2. **Parents identified the lack of skilled trades education in Los Angeles County high schools**, and the importance of providing a range of career pathway options to high school students, **as the most impactful message theme** in support of expanding skilled trades education.
3. **Students and parents did not necessarily see career pathways in skilled trades and attending college—as mutually exclusive pursuits.**
4. **Exposure** to specific career pathways and post-high school opportunities **informed student career aspirations and post-high school plans.**
5. **Some parents viewed skilled trades careers through the lens of certain traditional perceptions and negative stereotypes—but all saw them as good quality, well-paid jobs.**
6. **Black/African American parents raised concerns around distinctive barriers to entry into skilled trades.**
7. **All parents shared heightened enthusiasm for skilled trades career education, training, and jobs—as a critical pathway to support, rebuild, and strengthen their community.**

- 8. Few parents (or students) felt that high schools in Los Angeles, in general, were doing a good job of preparing students for life after high school.**

- 9. Students and parents reacted very positively to narrative profiles of students pursuing skilled trades careers/training.**

- 10. Importantly, neither parents nor students knew the specific steps necessary to secure the education and training needed to begin a career in skilled trades.**

- 11. Students shared a strong spirit of optimism about the future and future opportunities—nearly all felt the sky is the limit, even when there may be barriers suggesting that opportunities may be more limited.**