<div align="center">**Brainstorming**
CLS Module</div>

About Brainstorming, A Form Of Group Discussion
Brainstorming is a tool used to gather information or generate ideas. In a brainstorming session, participants offer as many ideas about a particular issue as they can think of, as quickly as they can. What distinguishes brainstorming from other group discussions is there is no give and take, that is, ideas are put out and not actually discussed, just listed. Because ideas are not challenged, brainstorming promotes openness and creativity. Because ideas are not discussed, it allows a group to generate a lot of thoughts in a very short time. Facilitators use brainstorming for a number of purposes, including:

    ??To elicit participants' views on a subject about to be dealt with in greater depth, and thus build their interest in the discussion topic, for example: "What are the main problems associated with transition planning?"

    ??To define a problem which is more appropriately defined by participants than by the facilitator, for example: "What does the report suggest about how traditional voc ed-type programs are viewed by the public?"

    ??To stimulate new or creative thinking, for example, "What are some ways to respond to this problem that have never been considered or tried before?"

    ??To get participants to consider an issue from a new point of view, for example, "How would this issue look to you if you were all working in the Governor's office instead of working in the STW system?"

    ??To get participants involved in a topic.

    ??To enable participants to contribute a great deal to the meeting with a very small investment of time.

How To Conduct A Brainstorming Session
The main roles for the facilitator in a brainstorming session are: to get it started, to document ideas, and to enforce the ground rules. Otherwise, there is very little direct involvement of the facilitator during brainstorming.

How To Get Brainstorming Started
Explain the process to participants before you start. To ensure that the brainstorming stays on track, start with a brief explanation of the process, a clear question to be responded to, and a few ground rules, for example:

<div align="center">"Let's set some ground rules for brainstorming: Think of as many ideas as you can.
No debate, discussion or evaluation of ideas.
All ideas have value, however unusual they might seem."</div>

How To Get Diverse Ideas
Encourage participants to toss out ideas spontaneously; ask them not to edit their thoughts. Reassure them that all ideas are welcome, none is too insignificant or too unusual to bring up. Sometimes very substantial or practical ideas emerge from seemingly trivial or unrealistic ideas.

How To Get Many Ideas
Ask for and encourage participants to offer a lot of ideas. When people are free to give their imaginations a wide range, useful ideas eventually result. Quantity often breeds quality. Restate ideas as they come forward and continually encourage many ideas.
Say: "One idea is 'more computer equipment'; o.k., let's get as many ideas as we can on the flip chart."
"So far we have, 'mailings', 'teacher training', and 'joint education/business leadership workshops'; what are some other ideas to change the relationship between schools and businesses?"

How To Get Ideas Fast
Do not allow evaluation, debate, or discussion of any ideas brought up. If people judge, challenge, or even expand on ideas, two things can happen:

(1) participants may become reluctant to speak spontaneously, and

(2) the development of ideas will end and a discussion will begin. All commentary should be ruled out so the process can move quickly and remain true brainstorming.

How To Record Ideas
Write participants' thoughts on a flipchart. It is important not to interpret or change people's ideas; it might cause a meaning to be lost or discourage further participation by inadvertently giving people the impression their ideas are not valued. Review the recorded ideas quickly for the group if brainstorming slows down; this helps to help generate new ideas.

How To Manage The Time For A Brainstorming Session
Set a specific time limit of no more than five minutes or set an approximate time limit, for example, a few minutes. Tell participants when the brainstorming starts and finishes. Stop the group when the time is reached or, if an exact time has not been set, stop when ideas start to come more slowly. If participants aren't finished when the time limit has been reached, extend the brainstorming for one minute at a time as long as ideas continue to come in quick succession. An alternative technique that can be used in brainstorming is the "round robin" technique which is similar to polling the group.