

School Board Community Engagement Plan

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is:

- A process of involving stakeholders in decisions affecting them.
- A commitment to build relationships and to create a shared sense of responsibility for an issue or problem.
- An ongoing effort to identify stakeholders' perspectives and questions about key educational issues.

School Boards and Community Engagement

Community engagement will help the School Board to align with the district's Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision, specifically by:

- **Raising student achievement** – By involving parents, business owners and other stakeholders in identifying academic goals, standards, resources and measures of progress, community engagement can be a powerful tool for raising student achievement.
- **Strengthening the whole student** – Raising academic achievement is a primary goal, therefore the community (key stakeholders) may need to pay greater attention to the social and health conditions that are barriers to learning.
- **Strengthening communities and schools** – When school systems engage the community on education issues, the School Board can lead people to think about and take action on other ways to improve community life.
- **Strengthening representative and participatory government** – School Boards that engage their stakeholders are involving the public in making decisions and re-engaging citizens with their representative voice in education governance.

School Board Community Engagement Plan

Bloomington School Board Community Engagement Purpose Statement

The Bloomington Board of Education has a responsibility to understand the needs and desires of the community, and its willingness and ability to actively support children – their *Pathways to Graduation* – and the school system. The School Board believes that such understanding is best gained by direct personal interaction, not just between the board and community residents, but also among community members themselves.

The purpose of the board's community engagement plan is to:

1. Encourage collaboration and dialogue with stakeholders (e.g. parents, community residents, staff, etc.) to build greater understanding, guidance, active support and trust for our schools and school district;
2. Bring community perspectives to the table for board consideration;
3. Help stakeholders better understand the tough choices confronting school board members and district leaders so they can provide input into those decisions early on;
4. Examine how stakeholders' values are supported, or not supported, by the policies and programs of the district;
5. Provide information to help guide the board in maintaining the proper balance when stakeholders' values are in conflict or insufficient resources exist to fully satisfy all values.

Community Engagement Plan Beliefs

By adopting the community engagement plan, the School Board collectively believes:

- Each school board member agrees that engaging the community is an essential part of the board's role.
- Community engagement is a way of coming to public judgment through deliberation.
- Engaging stakeholders relies on dialogue, not debate or lecture.
- The issues discussed rise to a policy-level concern and are framed in public terms.
- Community engagement requires sustained opportunities for discussion.
- Community engagement requires meaningful, shared communication that builds relationships.
- Community engagement engenders a shared responsibility for big concerns, but is not used to solicit support for a predetermined or one-time decision.

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Principles for Community Engagement

When preparing to engage stakeholders – individually or in groups – it is important for each school board member to reflect on the process. We believe all community engagement should be based on the following principles:

1. Inform and educate

It is essential when engaging stakeholders that they have sufficient information to enable participation. This may include specific information about an issue, program, initiative or a Board priority. Providing this type of information will help stakeholders to understand the reasons the Board makes certain decisions regarding current or future issues.

2. Consult before decision making

For much of the work the Board does it is important to talk to stakeholders before decisions are made. This helps to build an understanding of issues faced by the Board and Administration.

3. Practice transparency

Be clear about intentions, constraints and the decision making process. Sharing this information demonstrates transparency and encourages involvement in future issues. A transparent process allows the decision to stand up to scrutiny from stakeholders.

4. Ongoing communication

Communicate regularly to keep stakeholders informed. Explain the process and decision or outcomes, and why and how it was decided. Exercise caution so as to not create unrealistic expectations or over-promise.

5. We are not always the experts

While Board members have a wealth of knowledge and experience, so do stakeholders. Respect their experience, views and opinions, and engage stakeholders in the Board's processes.

6. Provide feedback

Reporting back to stakeholders on how its input will be used – or not – is critical to success. People have given of their time and knowledge, so it is important to recognize this by providing periodic updates or outcomes. Inadequate feedback loops leave the public uninformed about critical next steps or the reasoning behind a decision.

7. Evaluate

Evaluation allows the Board to see what it did well and/or areas to improve for future engagement. Evaluation also provides insights into planning and implementation processes.

8. Be representative

Bloomington has a diverse population, including families from non-English speaking backgrounds. Any engagement efforts should be representative of the total community (unless targeting a specific group, age, gender, etc.), including special provisions to ensure all voices are heard and understand why the Board seeks their feedback (e.g. translations, translators, etc).

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Types of Engagement

Community engagement processes fall under one or more of the following categories:

Inform: Let stakeholders or general community know what is happening with a project, process or issue.

Consultation: Stakeholders provide comment and input on specific issues, priorities, long-range concepts, etc.

Involvement: Engage stakeholders to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

Collaboration: The Board forms a partnership with the community and other constituent groups to build goodwill.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
	Seek to inform and educate to develop understanding; implementation stage	Obtain feedback on specific issues, priorities, long-range concepts	Engage to ensure concerns, aspirations are understood and considered	Partner as a Board to build goodwill and recognition
Schools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person conversations ● School liaison 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School liaison ● School visits and events (e.g. carnival, concerts, etc.) ● Senior Achievement Recognition
District	Advisory Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board Study Sessions ● Advisory Committees ● Friends of BPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BPSAC ● Insurance Committee <i>(formerly Labor Management)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Volunteer in schools ● Graduations ~ JHS/KHS ~ Metro South ABE ~ BTC
Stakeholders (Individuals or small groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person conversations ● Senior citizen centers ● Faith community ● City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent advisory groups ● Legislators ● In-person conversations ● Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent advisory groups ● Legislators ● In-person conversations ● Board meeting public comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board honors & recognition ● Youth Advisory
Community (Large groups or public events/settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board Regular Meetings ● Online forums ● Media Op-Ed pieces ● <i>School Pages</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WBW Mtg (annual) ● Public forums ● Community Surveys ● Online forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Joint City Council/Board ● PAC Summit ● Referendum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heritage Days Parade ● District-wide Food Drive ● Diversity Day ● National Night Out

School Board Community Engagement Plan

School Board Roles	Traditional	Advisory & Advocacy Committees	Situational (Role TBD)
Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New ● Revised 	Public Forums (as needed)		
Strategic Plan	Community Team (develop/update plan)		Success Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual Review ● Adopt Revised Metrics/Measurements
K-12 Program		PAC (formerly DCAC, PER)	
Student Services		SECAC	
Community Services		CEAC	
Resource Plans			
Facilities Plan			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opening/Closing Schools ● Boundaries
HR Plan		Labor Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labor Relations
Financial Plan		CFAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual Levy & Budget Adoption ● Reductions/Enhancements ● Referendum
Superintendent			Hiring
Communications			
	School Board Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Televised ● Recognitions ● Friends ● Public Comment 	Legislative Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage legislators ● Legislative Platform 	Emergency/Crisis
	School Ambassadors	PTSA Council	
	Publications	BPSAC	
	Research/Surveys		Special Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community/Parent Attitudes