Toronto District School Board

Title: **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
Adopted: November 5, 2013
Revised:
Reviewed:
Authorization: Administrative Council

1. **RESPONSIBILITY**

   Associate Director

2. **OBJECTIVE**

   The purpose of this operational procedure is to guide staff in implementing Policy P078, Community Engagement, which articulates the Board's commitment to open and inclusive processes that value stakeholder input and encourage stakeholder participation.

3. **SCOPE**

   3.1 This procedure comprises three levels of community engagement, based on the Community Engagement Continuum: i) information sharing, ii) consultation and iii) co-construction (see **5.2 Definitions**, below).

   3.2 The tools, techniques and resources outlined in this document are not intended as an exhaustive catalogue of community engagement options. Within the context of the guiding principles below, staff are encouraged to be creative in identifying engagement opportunities and designing appropriate engagement processes for their stakeholders.

4. **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

   4.1 Communities expect the Board to provide appropriate opportunities for involvement around issues, policies, initiatives and/or procedures affecting them. However, communities do not expect to be engaged extensively on every issue, and doing so would paralyze policy-making as well as quickly exhaust participants.

   a) The Community Engagement Continuum will be consulted to determine whether, when, and to what degree to engage community stakeholders regarding a specific issue or decision.

   - The choice and complexity of a community engagement process will vary depending on its objective, as well as the scope of the issue (e.g., school-based, local, Board-wide), and composition of the affected stakeholder community (i.e., size, diversity, number of unique viewpoints, etc.).

   - In general, the greater the existence of such factors as conflicting stakeholder views, values or identities, as well as the need to make difficult choices or

trade-offs with significant impacts on students or the Board, the higher the level of community engagement should be.

- As appropriate, reports presented to the Board for approval will identify, with reference to the Community Engagement Continuum, the associated level of community engagement, if any, that has occurred and/or is planned with respect to the issue, policy, decision or procedure that is the subject of that report.

4.2 Organization:

a) All community engagement processes will be designed to be fair, equitable and inclusive, and strive to incorporate a diversity of voices from across the affected stakeholder groups, and tailored to the needs of diverse communities.

b) All engagement processes will be organized and convened to meet the needs of participants, including:

- appropriate notification and scheduling of meetings, adequate and flexible timeframes, and accessible meeting spaces;
- scheduling that respects holy days, significant cultural dates and religious observances of participants; and
- availability of supports including, but not limited to, transportation, child minding, interpretation, translation and sign language, as needed.

c) All engagement processes will be transparent and open, including, but not limited to the following:

- The purpose, objective and anticipated outcomes of the engagement process will be clearly defined;
- The process, including objective, role of stakeholders, their expected level of participation, and how the results will be used, will be clearly communicated to stakeholders;
- Timelines for reporting back to stakeholders will be established; and
- An evaluation of input received from participants will be shared, along with the rationale for decisions reached.

4.3 Communication:

a) Throughout the community engagement process, all relevant data will be shared to support informed participation by the full range of affected stakeholders.

b) All communication materials will be developed with the goal of reaching the maximum number of affected community stakeholders, keeping in mind the needs and preferences of various stakeholders. This will include:

- making information available through multiple channels and mediums (e.g., print, web, email, social media, etc.);
- translating information and/or providing interpreters, as needed; and
- writing to a grade 8 level of readability, in clear, plain language, free of jargon, and in a tone that is personal and friendly.

4.4　Timelines:

　a)　Where timelines permit, processes for information sharing will be developed to provide affected stakeholders with adequate notice regarding upcoming initiatives, particularly in cases where a stakeholder response or action may be required, along with a plan to address any questions or concerns which might be expected to arise.

　b)　Where feasible, consultation and/or co-construction processes will occur within a minimum of fifteen (15) days of each other and not occur concurrently.

　c)　Where feasible, stakeholders will be provided with thirty (30) days (excluding Saturday and Sunday) notification for any consultation or co-construction process.

4.5　Resources:

　a)　All resources required for effective implementation of community engagement initiatives will be defined as part of the planning process, and sufficient funding allocated within appropriate departmental budgets.

5　DEFINITIONS

5.1　Community engagement:　In this document, *community engagement* refers to processes initiated to promote awareness, involvement and/or participation among internal and/or external stakeholders regarding an issue, initiative or policy decision that affects them.

5.2　Community engagement continuum:　The community engagement continuum refers to processes at three levels of escalating public involvement, i) information sharing, ii) consultation and iii) co-construction, as described below, and comprises a variety of communication, outreach and interaction activities.

5.3　Information sharing: Information sharing is a one-way communication processes falling at the low end of the community engagement continuum, with objective, factual information flowing from the Board to stakeholders, for the purpose of educating and creating awareness regarding an issue that may affect them.

　a)　The information sharing process will be used to engage all relevant stakeholders when an issue is relatively simple or straightforward, and when the goal is to disseminate objective, factual information:

- about the outcome of a process or a decision that has already been made;
- when stakeholders will have no opportunity to influence a final outcome;
- to relieve stakeholder concerns; or
- to prepare stakeholders for further involvement at a higher level of engagement.

5.4　Consultation: Consultation is a two-way communication process between the Board and stakeholders, falling in the middle of the community engagement continuum. Its objective is to gather public input regarding options, alternatives and/or directions to help inform decision-making. The Board provides factual, objective information to

stakeholders, and stakeholders respond by sharing opinions, concerns and suggestions with Board staff.

a) The consultation process will be used to engage all key/relevant stakeholders in situations where:

- "raw" stakeholder input is desired regarding an issue;

- the possibility exists for stakeholders to influence the final outcome and their input may be used to help shape decision making.

- specific stakeholders (individuals/groups) have an interest in the issue and/or will likely be affected by the outcome;

- different stakeholders (individuals/groups) have sharply contrasting perspectives on an issue and further discussions are required

b) In order to manage stakeholder expectations, all participants in a consultation process will be advised at the outset that, while input from diverse stakeholders supports balanced, equitable decision-making, the Board makes no firm commitment to rely exclusively on this input in shaping policy directions and/or program delivery

c) As part of the consultation process, stakeholders will be given feedback regarding their input and its impact on decision-making.

5.5 <u>Co-Construction</u>: The co-construction process falls at the high end of the community engagement continuum, and is a multi-directional process of partnering with stakeholders in each aspect of decision making. It involves information flow between the Board and stakeholders, as well as among different stakeholder groups, in the development of options and recommendations to shape policies and procedures.

a) Activities at the co-construction end of the community engagement continuum will be used to engage all key/relevant stakeholders when:

- multi-directional information exchange is important;

- stakeholders need to talk directly with each other regarding complex concerns/issues;

- there is a benefit for stakeholders to shape policies and decisions that affect them; and

- there is a capacity for shared agenda-setting, timeframes and discussion.

b) Options generated together will be mutually respected and carried through in a democratic manner.

- The co-construction process will involve some degree of dialogue and deliberation (usually in a group setting), in order to help transform raw opinions into informed judgements.

- Stakeholder advice and recommendations will be incorporated in collaborative decision-making and reflected in final decisions to the maximum extent possible
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5. PROCEDURE—PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Planning a purpose-driven and effective community engagement process will include the following steps:

6.1 Define the objective of the proposed community engagement initiative:
- list specific aims and desired outcomes;
- identify all stakeholders, internal and external; and
- identify the impact on each stakeholder group.

6.2 Identify additional factors which may impact the community engagement process, including:
- nature, complexity and reach of the issue, initiative or policy involved;
- stakeholder concerns and expectations;
- anticipated role of various stakeholder groups;
- levels of general public interest, media attention, and/or government support;
- controversies and issues which may arise;
- timelines and resource requirements: financial, human resources, external expertise, etc.;
- levels of Trustee, Senior Team and system support;
- previous experience implementing similar processes and techniques.

6.3 Consult the community engagement continuum to determine the appropriate level of community engagement: information sharing, consultation, and co-construction, based on the defined objective and the additional factors identified.

a) The *Community Engagement Continuum Chart* (Appendix A) provides suggestions for activities and communication methods that may be incorporated at each level of the planned engagement process.

6.4 Prepare an outline defining each phase of the planned process, and establish a **realistic** timetable for the associated activities, ensuring adequate time for each phase, including:
- development of information materials;
- notification and/or dissemination of information to stakeholders;
- evaluation of stakeholder feedback/input, as required; and
- reporting back to stakeholders regarding decisions, outcomes and/or next steps, as required.

6. PROCEDURE – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Provisions for student engagement will take into consideration youth culture, means of communication and access to communication technology, scheduling, accessible meeting spaces, and the multi-lingual, faith, race, class, ability, sexual orientation and identities of students.

7.2　　Schools incorporating grades 4–12 will develop thoughtful and intentional student engagement opportunities appropriate to their school community, across all areas of the continuum.

7.3　　Community and student engagement activities will be integrated and reinforced within subject areas across the curriculum.

7.4　　School Student Councils and the TDSB Student Super Council will be core vehicles for carrying out activities across the community engagement continuum.

7. **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: *Community Engagement Continuum Chart*

Appendix B: *Additional Resources*

8. **REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

Policy P078, Community Engagement

Procedure PR583, Communicating with Trustees: Staff Reports, Briefing Notes, and Memoranda

Level 1: Information Sharing

Objective	Commitment to stakeholders	Role of public /stakeholders	Appropriate situations for use	Methods of information sharing
To provide factual, objective information to create awareness and educate.	We will keep you informed.	Primarily to listen and gather information.	When an issue is relatively simple and straightforward. When the public needs to be informed about a policy, program, process or initiative. When the public needs to be informed about the outcome of a process. When a decision has already been made and stakeholders will have no opportunity to influence a final outcome. When stakeholders require information in preparation for further involvement at a higher level. When an emergency or crisis requires immediate communication to relieve stakeholder concerns.	▪ Print and electronic: ▪ fact sheets, Q&As, TDSB website features ▪ community mailouts ▪ backpack parent letters or notices ▪ posters, newsletters ▪ list serves/ e-lists ▪ web forums and on-line bulletin boards ▪ opinion-leader blogs and websites ▪ social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) ▪ pre-recorded 1-800 numbers (for policy/project information) Events ▪ information kits ▪ workshops ▪ open houses ▪ site visits ▪ information fairs/exhibits/kiosks at central and training locations ▪ community meetings Media ▪ media releases ▪ media events; press conferences ▪ advertisements and/or inserts (e.g. newspapers, multi-ethnic media, community publications) ▪ public service announcements (radio)

Level 2: Consultation

Objective	Commitment to stakeholders	Role of public /stakeholders	Appropriate situations for use	Methods of consultation
To gather public input, advice and feedback on alternatives and/or directions in order to inform decision-making. Stakeholders will be provided feedback on how their input has influenced decisions.	We will listen to your views and perspectives, and will consider these in making a decision. Although we do not commit to reflecting these (whole or in-part) within final decisions, we will provide feedback on whether and how they have influenced the outcome.	To consider the information provided by the Board, and to respond by providing feedback and advice.	When "raw" stakeholder input is desired regarding an issue; When specific stakeholders (individuals/groups) have an interest in the issue and/or will likely be affected by the outcome; When different stakeholders (individuals/groups) have sharply contrasting perspectives on an issue and further discussions are required; When the possibility exists for stakeholders to influence the final outcome and their input **may** be used to help shape decision making.	Existing TDSB system opportunities ▪ Community Advisory Committees and/or Community Liaison Groups ▪ Board and Trustee committees (delegations) ▪ Trustee Ward Forums ▪ Student Councils/Student Super Council ▪ School Parent Councils ▪ staff meetings Direct outreach ▪ special purpose community meetings ▪ web forums and on-line discussion groups ▪ focus groups ▪ interviews with key stakeholders as appropriate ▪ standardized survey questionnaires (telephone/on-line) ▪ interactive e-conferencing and teleconferencing Environmental scans ▪ web-based pop-up surveys and response polls (e.g., Survey Monkey)

				▪ social media (e.g., Facebook, Google Groups, Twitter)

Level 3: Co-construction

Objective	Commitment to stakeholders	Role of public/ stakeholders	Appropriate situations for use	Methods of co-construction
To partner with stake-holders in each aspect of decision-making on is-sues that af-fect them.	Your advice and recommendations will be embedded into decisions to the maximum ex-tent feasible.	To participate in discussion and deliberation re-garding complex, value-laden is-sues, and in generating op-tions and rec-ommendations to shape policies and decisions that affect them	When multi-directional infor-mation exchange is important When stakeholders need to talk directly with each other regarding complex issues When there is a willingness and capacity to, and benefit for, stakeholders to shape policies and decisions that affect them When there is an opportunity for shared agenda setting, timeframes and discussions.	Direct outreach ▪ Issue-specific stakeholder panels and taskforces estab-lished to learn about, discuss and make recommendations on an issue/policy/program (membership may be deter-mined by random selection of diverse stakeholders, or through identification by stakeholder community) ▪ Deliberative polling (e.g. reaching priority communities) ▪ Study/conversation circles (local community conversation among small stakeholder groups) ▪ Focus Groups

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Public participation continuum, Calgary Health Region, 2005

Effective community engagement options. Bob Gardner, Wellesley Institute, 2006

Primer on public involvement, FP Gauvin, J Abelson, MP MacKinnon, J Watling, Health Council of Canada, 2006

Health Canada policy toolkit for public involvement in decision making, Health Canada, 2000

Public participation toolbox, International Association of Public Participation, 2006

Core values of public participation, International Association of Public Participation, 2007

The spectrum of public participation, International Association of Public Participation, 2007

Code of ethics for public participation practitioners, International Association of Public Participation

A learning guide to public involvement in Canada. MP MacKinnon, S Pitre, J Watling, Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2007

Core principles for public engagement, National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, 2009

Handbook on citizen engagement: Beyond consultation, A Sheedy, MP MacKinnon, S Pitre, J Watling, Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2008

Community engagement framework, Vancouver Coastal Health, 2009