Community Engagement Self-Assessment and Reflection Tool

Before setting goals for authentic community engagement, it's helpful to identify the baseline engagement level in a district or school. While district and school leaders may initially focus on foundational efforts *(marked with an asterisk)*, such as re-building relationships with stakeholders, communicating effectively, and inviting feedback, it is also important to ultimately work toward shared decision-making with families and community members.

Data sources for this self-assessment may include: conversations with district leaders, community leaders, families, students, principals, teachers, and school-based staff, school walk- throughs, existing family perception data, artifacts from previous engagement efforts, the district's strategic plan, school improvement plans, artifacts from the district's website, and communications with families.

The creation of this tool was informed by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, developed by the International Association for Public Participation.

Behavior	Look-fors	Red Flags	Key Strategic Questions
Beliefs and Mindsets: Honoring the role families, students, and community members play in change efforts	• District and school staff have positive things to say about students and families* • District and school staff are aware of the potential for racial/class bias in engagement efforts and act accordingly* • District and school staff know the history of the community and its demographics, assets, and challenges* • More than 80 percent of families and students agree that district and school staff see themselves as critical partners* • Families and community organizations have the resources and data they need to support student learning outside of the classroom*	• Evidence of racial/class bias • Derogatory comments about students and families, deficit-based thinking, and/or a patronizing approach to engagement • District/school leaders pay attention to the voices of some stakeholders (i.e., wealthier families, small group of go-to parents), but ignore others • Engagement efforts are under-resourced; engagement is seen as the job of a single department or one staff person • Ignoring or glossing over historical dynamics affecting relationships between the community and the school system • Reluctance to share data with families or data trends with community organizations	• How can we continually lift the value of authentic engagement, model inclusive engagement, and challenge bias? • How can we learn best practices for authentic engagement from other districts and schools? (e.g., learning calls, shared resources) • How can we deepen our understanding of the unique strengths and challenges of a given community? (e.g., landscape analyses) • How can we create opportunities to connect informally with students, families, and community members? (e.g., shadowing students, one-on-one meetings with community leaders, neighborhood walks, home visits)

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Informing: Communicating important information in a transparent manner	• Information is shared multiple times through multiple communication channels (e.g., emails, robo-calls, texts, flyers in parent folders)* • Information is shared in a timely manner* • Translation provided as needed for written communication and in-person meetings* • Opportunities exist for students, family members, and community members to engage in dialogue with district/school staff*	• Lack of regular, direct communication channels to stakeholders • Stakeholders often hear important information indirectly (i.e., through word-of-mouth or media coverage) • Stakeholders fail to receive a response to questions within 48 hours • Trusted messengers (i.e., principals, teachers, community leaders) are not well- prepared to field questions	• How can we prioritize direct and transparent communication? • Do we need to create new communications channels? (e.g., parent representative program, email newsletters, robo-calls, text-message initiatives, in-person events) • How can we make sure that adequate translation services are available?
Consulting: Gathering feedback from families and students when making important decisions	• A plan exists to gather feedback from stakeholders through multiple channels over a reasonable timeline* • Feedback gathering efforts are monitored to ensure a high response rate as well as proportional representation* • Stakeholder feedback is analyzed and delivered to all decision makers* • Stakeholder feedback is used to make final decisions*	• Feedback gathering efforts are limited to a one-time survey or web form • Stakeholders weigh in on a limited set of program options that might not reflect their true preferences • Feedback gathering process is perfunctory; major design decisions have already been made • Stakeholders never receive updates after providing their feedback	• How can we make sure every stakeholder has a chance to participate? (e.g., focus groups, text message surveys, having conversations with families at open houses, welcome-back nights, lunch periods, or community meetings) • How can we ensure that stakeholder feedback is valued and used to inform decision-making? • Do opportunities exist to partner with community organizations? (e.g., providing stipends for hosting focus • groups or supporting outreach)

Behavior	Look-fors	Red Flags	Key Strategic Questions
Involving: Working with stakeholders to ensure their aspirations and concerns are considered at every stage of decision-making	• District/school staff continually seek out the perspective of students, families, and community members* • Students, families, and community members are viewed as partners as opposed to antagonists* • Stakeholders participate in a variety of advisory bodies • Stakeholder feedback frequently leads to significant shifts in planning efforts • New policies/programs frequently stem from the priorities of stakeholders	• District/school staff seek to "manage" • stakeholder feedback • Advisory bodies meet irregularly and consist mostly of updates • Stakeholders seldom set guiding principles/goals for new policies/programs • Apart from feedback-gathering, stakeholders are not included in design efforts	• How can we include stakeholder perspectives at every stage of decision-making? (e.g., setting priorities, developing guiding principles, designing engagement plans, developing models, making decisions, managing implementation) • How can we continually make engagement efforts more inclusive, especially of stakeholders most frequently marginalized? • How can we draw on existing best practices for involving stakeholders in design efforts? (e.g., TNTP's protocol for community-centered design)
Collaborating: Partnering with students, families, and community members early and often	• All stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to shape the student experience* • Stakeholders participate in every aspect of program design (i.e., identifying guiding values, designing stakeholder engagement plans, determining timelines, etc.) • Stakeholders have opportunities to develop their leadership capacity and grow their knowledge on a given topic • The decision-making process and implementation/accountability plans are transparent	• Stakeholders perceive that change efforts • are being "done to" them • Some stakeholders are excluded based on race, class, education level, or work commitments (intentionally or unintentionally) • Stakeholders are excluded from one or more phases of planning or decision-making	• Do new structures need to be created to collaborate with stakeholders (e.g., advisory councils, task forces), or are there opportunities to strengthen their participation in existing structures? • How will we ensure proportional representation and proactively manage potential bias? • How can we provide stakeholders with opportunities to become even more effective advocates and leaders? (e.g., leadership trainings, data walk-throughs)

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Increasing Agency: Giving stakeholders more and more decision-making authority	• Stakeholders are included in all stages of decision-making (e.g., setting priorities for the year, determining timelines for design and implementation, deciding on budgets, voting on decisions)	• Stakeholders do not have any formal role in the governance of a district/school • Stakeholders may help make decisions about new programs and initiatives, but do not help set the priorities or future direction of a district/school	• How can we create low-stakes opportunities to include more voices in decision-making? (e.g., participatory budgeting) • How can we advocate for the importance of proportional representation in governance efforts?

Reflection Questions

- What significant themes surfaced as the team discussed the self-assessment and guiding questions? Was there any discovery?
- Were there any areas where your team had differing opinions or perspectives?
- Where are there bright spots? Areas for improvement?
- What needs to be true for the district to take its next step forward in improving how students and families are your system/district?
- From your perspective, what are your most urgent needs related to family and community engagement? Your most important?

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