

Seattle Public Schools Public Engagement Protocol

At Seattle Public Schools, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. Furthermore, we believe that, given the right support, every child can achieve.

In our vision for our schools:

- All students meet or exceed grade-level expectations and graduate from high school prepared for college, career and life.
- Every school is a high quality school.
- District leaders and staff model excellence for our students.
- The entire community is engaged in supporting and strengthening our schools.

We recognize that our likelihood of success in achieving this vision is strengthened by the involvement of our many stakeholders. Seattle Public Schools is committed to improving and increasing the opportunities for students, families, staff, and community members to engage with District leaders, particularly on matters with district-wide impact. As we implement our strategic plan, Excellence for All, we wish to create clear expectations about how the District will inform the community about our progress and when we will involve stakeholders in decision-making.

“Excellence for All” sets clear five-year goals for improving student performance, and outlines five areas of focus that we believe will help us attain our goals.

1. Academics – ensuring excellence in every classroom
2. Human Resources – strengthening leaders system-wide
3. Infrastructure – building an IT, finance and physical infrastructure that works well
4. Performance Management – creating tools, systems and a culture that rewards high performance
5. Stakeholder Engagement – communicating with and engaging key partners at all levels

Project teams working to implement “Excellence for All” in each of these areas will design stakeholder engagement plans that are appropriate for each project. To guide this process, we have developed this public engagement protocol that is based in part on the spectrum of engagement as developed by the International Association for Public Participation.

International Association for Public Participation Engagement Spectrum

Levels of Engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Engagement Goal	Provide timely balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions	Obtain feedback on analysis alternatives and/or decisions	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	Partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	Place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to stakeholders	We will keep people informed and follow through on any commitments made during the course of engagement to deliver additional information	We will keep people informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in alternatives developed and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision	We will look to the public for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what the public decides
Potential Tools¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fact sheets - Web sites - Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public meetings - Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshops - Opinion polling - Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisory committees - Shared Decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ballot measures

¹Detailed examples of tools and techniques associated with each of the levels of engagement can be found below.

Our Protocol for Engagement for All Strategic Plan Projects

For all major projects, Seattle Public Schools commits to informing stakeholders of our approach and progress (as articulated in the “Inform” area of the spectrum above).

Whenever resources allow, we will attempt to offer a higher level of engagement to stakeholders (Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower). For those most important projects affecting our stakeholders, we will go above and beyond our basic commitment to share information as time and resources allow.

The sections below provide more specific **examples of the types of activities** that might be offered as appropriate for each project at the various levels of engagement.

Inform: the activities listed below are examples of potential activities for this level of engagement:

Public Web site postings

- An overview of the project, including goals, milestones, and identification of informational outreach to stakeholders interested in the outcomes of this work
- A fact sheet with answers to frequently asked questions, both anticipated at the outset by staff and those that surface during the course of engagement
- A timeline that clearly shows steps in the decision-making process and opportunities for input relative to deadlines
- A staff contact for questions or comments
- Background information that is updated throughout the process
- Information about quarterly district-wide public meetings
- Information about additional engagement opportunities

Multiple additional methods of communication

- Televised board meetings and posting relevant materials to the web site
- “Kid mail” to promote awareness of quarterly public meetings
- USPS mail for important district-wide communication
- District automated call system to promote engagement
- E-newsletters sent to employees, families and members of the public, each of whom are invited to inform families and other community groups through their newsletters, meetings, and other regular means of written and spoken outreach
 - *School Beat* sent to all SPS staff, families and community members who sign up and archived on the public Web site
 - *Classroom Connection* sent to all teachers and other instructional staff
 - *Principal Communicator* sent to all principals
- News releases of major announcements and public meetings
- High level articles on the SPS News Web page with links to more information
- Use of emerging technologies (texting, wikis, etc.), especially as a means to engage students

Efforts to solicit input

- Dedicated email address (goodnews@seattleschools.org) for general questions or comments
- Project specific email addresses to gather input (such as capacity@seattleschools.org)
- Phone calls or letters to staff contacts identified for major projects

Acknowledgment of receipt and use of feedback

- Quarterly updates to the School Board, including highlights of recent feedback heard and how it was considered. Updates at Board meetings are announced through the Web site and televised on SPS TV. Materials presented are posted to the Web site.

Reducing barriers

- Seattle Public Schools is committed to reducing barriers for students and families with special needs. All public meeting locations will be accessible to persons with disabilities. The District will work with families and staff in advance to make arrangements for needed services known in advance.
- Seattle Public Schools is committed to reducing barriers to engagement for our linguistically diverse families and community members. For all major initiatives, Seattle Public Schools will translate FAQs and any correspondence to families in the top languages of our linguistically diverse communities. Interpretive services and translation of documents will be announced in advance of quarterly meetings.

Outreach

- Project Managers will coordinate with our Bilingual Family & Community Engagement staff as messengers to formal and informal community networks effective in reaching diverse populations represented in our larger school community. *We will strive to share information in a timely manner to support success in these outreach efforts.*

The following components are examples of the type of activities the District may offer as resources allow and projects rise to the level of importance that require us to go beyond information sharing.

Consult: all of the activities listed above are potential activities for this level of engagement, plus:

Public Web site postings

- Documented two-way contact with stakeholder groups and advisory committees

Multi-modal communication

- "kid mail" and direct mail of letters or postcards to promote public meetings and share critical information
- District automated call system to promote engagement

Efforts to solicit input

- Surveys on analysis, alternatives, and decisions with open-ended questions about concerns and aspirations
- Public meetings/presentations/panel discussions/events with a variety of viewpoints represented on an even footing
- Participate in radio and television shows to share information and listen to community members
- Web chats

Acknowledgment of receipt and use of feedback

- Written account of updates made by the Superintendent to the School Board

Involve: all of the activities listed above are potential activities for this level of engagement, plus:

Public Web site postings

- A record of the public input received and the responses as to how input was considered are posted *prior* to decisions being made
- The names, offices, and contact information for members of committees that are making recommendations and/or decisions

Efforts to solicit input

- Drop-in meetings/workshops before decisions are made with the bulk of the time devoted to authentic conversations with decision-makers
- Focus groups with stakeholders

Acknowledgment of receipt and use of feedback

- High-level summaries of feedback received and responses to that input

Collaborate: all of the activities listed above are potential activities for this level of engagement, plus:

Efforts to solicit input

- Including members of the public on committees that are making decisions and recommendations
- Shared responsibility for decisions and implementation between District staff and stakeholder groups
- Events and initiatives co-designed and/or co-sponsored with stakeholders

Acknowledgment of receipt and use of feedback

- Detailed summaries of feedback received and how it will be used in decision-making

Empower: all of the activities listed above are potential activities for this level of engagement, plus:

Public Web site postings

- Full and detailed descriptions of all plans and intentions
- A record of the public input received and the responses to that input *prior* to when decisions are due

Efforts to solicit input and shape proposals together

- Drop-in meetings/workshops *prior* to when decisions are due
- Collaborative efforts to design and co-sponsor outreach events
- Collaborative working groups to design and implement proposals

It is important to note that for certain activities at the “empower” level, such as ballot measures, the District’s activities would have to comply with state requirements for appropriate involvement by public agencies.

We welcome comments on this engagement protocol. Please contact us at goodnews@seattleschools.org or call Bridgett Chandler, Executive Director of Communications, at (206) 252-0198.