

Family Leadership, Governance and Site Planning: Things to Keep in Mind

Including the perspectives of students and families is critical to the process of keeping schools on track. Research shows that when school leadership and governance teams **reflect and represent** the whole school community, **work together**, and specifically address **issues of access and equity**, it leads to **better outcomes for students**.

We know it can be difficult to shift systems and school culture, especially those based on long-standing traditions. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you work on making these shifts.

Things to Keep in Mind: Principals & School Staff

- Every interaction with a student's family is an **opportunity to build trust** – or to erode it.
- Supporting **equitable participation** in school leadership and governance relies on **fundamental approaches to family engagement in general**, such as active outreach, two-way communication and effective facilitation.
- Be sure to **make intentional efforts to welcome and include families** who have been marginalized or excluded from leadership and governance.
- Use **inclusive facilitation** every school meeting/event. Make time for activities to build relationships among families and staff, ensure no one dominates the conversation, and provide multiple ways to participate (such as small groups and pair-shares).
- Use **multiple ways for outreach and communication**, including newsletters, school websites, email/texting – as well as personal invitations and encouragement.
- **Make connections** among the school's formal and informal decision-making groups, and **include all families** in conversations about the school.
- Be clear about **specific objectives** for school meetings: is this an opportunity to provide feedback, to work together on a project, or to make a decision together? Be sure to communicate **how people will see the impact** of their participation.
- Building **strong and inclusive leadership teams that work together throughout the year** will support authentic participation in your planning and School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) process.

Things to Keep in Mind: Students & Families

Why it's important to participate in school leadership groups and site planning conversations:

- School planning meetings **help decide the school's priorities** – and how to use the school's resources.
- **You change things by participating.** Youth and families who speak up for every student can help make sure the needs of all the school's students are part of the conversation.
- **Help identify solutions.** When you see things that aren't working, you can offer suggestions for what might work better.
- **Participating is not as hard as it might seem!** You don't have to be an expert in SFUSD policy – you are an expert on your experiences, strengths and needs.
- **Go with a friend** – or a group of friends – if that helps you feel more confident.
- If you can't attend meetings in person, be sure to **participate in school surveys** and other ways to share your ideas.
- Students in PreK, TK and elementary grades can **invite and encourage their families to participate** in school community meetings; **students in middle and high schools** should be included as participants in school community meetings, and **invited to help facilitate** these conversations.

Find Best Practices Tools and Resources to support inclusive facilitation, two-way communication, and building site leadership and governance, at www.sfusd.edu/toolkit