

Notes

Part I: Routine Engagement

It is important for the Board to engage the community on a routine and ongoing basis. What ideas do you have for how, when, and where the Board can meaningfully engage with the community on a routine and ongoing basis?

Group 1

Facilitator Notes:

- Parents shared that they are here to make things work and help our schools thrive
- Concerned about enrollment, concerned that no one is sharing the story of the good things happening at our schools. Wanted to hear what others are thinking and share from their communities.
- Former alumni shared that they want our schools to be successful. Concerned about the negative perceptions of public schools and wants to make sure students are served well.
- Parents want to see changes in the school district. Remembers when the transition from exit exams took place in 12th grade. Feels there has been a decline in academics.
- Parents echoed the need for a grassroots communication effort, as many parents were not on ParentSquare or School Messenger and may not have language challenges.
- Someone from the community should be the deliverer of district messages and share information
- Creating a liaison situation where language and cultural barriers may be overcome.
- The school board meeting format can be inaccessible to the community. However, these small local meetings are more effective. Not all board members need to attend the meetings, but one or two may.
- The school board seems divorced from the city in which it operates.
- The school site summit is a great opportunity for various school members to engage with one another.
- One member shared that at her school, parents often don't know their teacher's name. They are also not aware of their school's org chart or who provides services to their children. The schools could benefit from a school communication plan that facilitates information sharing.
- The district has family engagement plans that schools could use to provide basic information about their school community.
- Building blocks of relationships take place at the school level rather than the board of education level
- The parent shared that their PTA holds their principal accountable for holding coffee chats once a month.
- Parents need to know information about their school and the district, as it happens, i.e., potential shrinking of kindergarten classes because of lower enrollment.
- One parent prefers not to receive information through their children. Prefers to receive information through the school information channels. They are having two different experiences as two different schools regarding communication, where one is active in providing information and the other communicates through her children.
- There was a question if the Board has a newsletter. If not, they suggested this would be helpful.
- Board of Education meetings do not feel like the best place to engage with the board; the meetings feel like a fishbowl.

- The board member synthesized a need to communicate with school communities before issues are raised at the board meeting. Good engagement means not engaging the board.
- There was a recommendation for board members to visit school communities throughout the year.
- There is a sense that the central office is making decisions without transparency.
- Principals should have regular monthly touch points with the school community.

Additional Facilitator Notes:

- Parent Square vs parent vue
- Grass root level involvement
- BOE partner with Someone from the community to share and hear from (have a liaison)
- BOE is inaccessible at BOE meetings. Meetings like this feel more accessible, they can rotate communities. If it's more specific, opportunity for more information
- 11 districts, school district seems so disconnected from the city. Choose a school in 1 of the district and host meetings there. Feels like we are fighting instead of building each other up.
- Parents aren't aware that the board exist. If you have a problem at your school who do you go to (org chart)
- Principal coffee chats- monthly opportunity to meet with the principal to get information
- Shouldn't hear information from Mission Local.
- If you over communicate people are able to receive bring people along for the ride and there won't be surprises
- To not have to ask my child what happened or what's going on, when the principal shares with families what the morning announcements are.
- BOE meeting are not the space, it feels so tense, like it's a fishbowl and we can't get in
- Coming to different school communities to highlight schools

Group 2

Facilitator Notes:

- Even this meeting format feels much more accessible. Participants would like to see more meetings that echo this one—smaller groups, less formal settings, and fewer staff present.
- There should be more opportunities for engagement, including smaller and more frequent meetings.
- Rotating meetings across schools was suggested.
- Roundtable formats were appreciated because they allow everyone to be heard.
- PAC members mentioned that they do a lot of work but rarely hear directly from staff or the Board. Feeling valued was described as important.
- More engagement at school sites was suggested. Many parents cannot attend meetings at this time of day, but they are already at school sites. Morning meetings or “coffee in the morning” could work better for some parents.
- President Kim described the **Shadow Student Day** initiative. This is the first year commissioners have spent a full day in a school. It has happened twice so far. The model is similar to instructional walkthroughs. Parents were invited, and coffee, fruit, and bagels were provided. There are seven Board members and one staff member participating.
- Someone asked why this program is not more widely publicized. The response was that it is posted online but not broadly promoted.
- A question was asked about how schools are selected. Staff choose the schools, coordinating closely with school administrators. Parameters were given to try to reach different neighborhoods.

- The first visit involved about ten participants.
- The second visit included both an elementary and a middle school to observe progress across grade levels.
- When they get to Goal 3, they hope to include high schools.
- They did not want the visits to become a photo opportunity or media event.
- A participant responded to Kim by saying that seven Board members should be able to cover roughly 1.4 schools per month. It would be helpful to have engagement opportunities both in the morning and evening so different schedules can be accommodated.
- Kim responded that the decision was to prioritize **depth over breadth**. The choice was between spending a full day in a school versus only part of a day.
- Regular engagements could instead be shorter visits of a couple of hours at a school site. These would be more manageable and realistic. Even if not every school is reached, flexibility could allow Board members to attend other community meetings.
- The primary goal of the Shadow Student Day is not parent engagement; it is for the Board to observe and understand what happens in schools.
- A question was raised: if the purpose were parent-facing engagement, how would that format be different?
- Participants emphasized that **being present in schools is very important**.
- Some parents are not present at school at all due to transportation or other barriers. SSC meetings were mentioned as an example where the loudest voices often dominate. Several participants at the table agreed with this observation.
- Going to school sites allows engagement with people who typically do not attend meetings.
- Participants suggested letting families guide how they want to be reached.
- “Coffee with the principal/admin” events already attract parents, so similar formats could work for Board engagement.
- Participants said that historically there has been little access to the Board except through public comment.
- Consistent communication could gradually open doors, though it may feel overwhelming initially.
- A question was raised about how to be strategic in choosing which schools to visit and how to think about sample size across the district.
- Another comment noted that many issues surface at Board meetings because that is the only place people feel heard. Flexibility and doing the best possible engagement with available resources is important.
- It was also noted that there are real costs to doing engagement. Recording meetings through the city can be expensive.
- However, meaningful engagement with communities does not always require high-cost formats

Facilitator Summary:

- Participants emphasized that **engagement should happen in more accessible, community-centered formats rather than primarily through formal Board meetings or public comment**.
- A key theme was the value of **smaller, less formal gatherings** similar to the structure of this meeting. Participants felt roundtable discussions allow more voices to be heard and make participation easier.
- Many participants supported **meeting the community where they already are**, particularly at **school sites**. Schools were seen as natural gathering places where parents are already present. Suggestions included holding meetings at schools, offering morning options such as coffee meetings, and rotating meetings across different schools and neighborhoods.

- Participants also emphasized that **consistent and ongoing engagement builds trust over time**. More regular communication and presence from Board members could help open doors for community participation.
- There was discussion about the **Shadow Student Day** initiative, where Board members spend time in schools observing classrooms and meeting with parents. While participants appreciated the value of Board members being in schools, it was noted that the program currently focuses on observation rather than community engagement. Participants suggested that shorter visits or more flexible formats could allow Board members to engage with more schools and families.
- Participants also noted that **some parents are not involved in existing school-based meetings** and that traditional spaces like SSC meetings may amplify only the most vocal participants. Being present at schools and community spaces could help reach people who do not typically attend formal meetings.
- Participants acknowledged that engagement efforts have **costs and logistical challenges**, but also suggested that meaningful engagement does not always require expensive or highly formal meeting structures.
- Overall, the discussion emphasized **more accessible, flexible, and community-based engagement opportunities** with Board members.

Group 3

Facilitator Notes:

- Looking for clarity on getting information and how to be more inclusive and accessible in our engagement efforts.
- Commissioners don't respond to emails - this is problematic
- Locations: Sundays streets, Kaya 24,
- Questions: How are you reaching people who don't show up?
 - Go to where they are
 - After being in the District for 14 years, for the most part do not see commissioners in the community
- Hosting Data nights
 - Gallery walks with data that was disaggregated by grade, focal population
 - Helpful space to be in dialogue with staff, families, and leadership
- There is so much happening at schools that we don't tap into
 - How can we engage families at school events*
 - Don't feel like we see Commissioners at schools
 - Could commissioners adopt a subset of a small number of schools
 - Bringing back what is heard in these spaces back to the board
 - If Commissioners were to go to a school
 - What would the purpose be? Commissioners to go with an agenda, or a more organic process
- Some communities feel burned by SFUSD and don't want to put more energy into showing up.
 - This is why we are not seeing families show up.
- What would it take to rebuild trust with families?
 - The model of engagement from Commissioners - Kevin Boggess
 - Called out when the District did not follow through
 - Would not focus on families
 - As a jaded parent, can't comment

- If we want to hear from people who are not showing up, Commissioners need to go into the school
- What has it looked like when engaged in a way that has built trust, and made families feel heard?
 - Ongoing communication with families
 - Follow-up in these settings is key
 - Providing progress updates (or lack thereof)
 - Explaining why something has not happened
 - Consistent calendaring of public engagement
 - Creating welcoming spaces where families feel welcomed and recognized
 - Culturally appropriate events and opportunities
 - Bringing accessibility to the community
 - *I will say that Jantsan's point about building trust within communities is a good point. With my limited interactions over the past five months with Christina Wong (who has multiple jobs within the district), she is a phenomenal example of district staff outreaching to communities and actually following up with people. She is also very open to critique and reaches out to people for more information.*
 - *Example: Parent does not attend meetings because he does not feel welcome - he does not attend because he feels that the district snobs (that is the least profane way) the public. As someone who grew up in a country with a dictator in a developing country, he continues to be shocked and saddened about public education in San Francisco.*
- Commission has reached out to community in their language
- At December DELAC meeting, it was a welcome addition
 - Community felt that a decision maker was present
- As a staff there are some opportunities to engage board, but this is more challenging for families
- Question to ask ourselves
 - Why are parents choosing to not participate
- *"When my oldest was in elementary school, I knew absolutely nothing about the school board, but I attended every PTA meeting and school event!"*

Part II: Major Decisions

The Board will need to make difficult decisions this year that affect a significant portion of the community. These could include decisions like the fiscal stabilization plan, school reorganization, or the enrollment policy. What are the ways you would like the Board to engage with you in the process of making these major decisions?

Group 1

Facilitator Notes:

- When a survey is conducted, the community should receive the results in a timely manner.
- Send a text for the survey questions, send a text with the results.
- Articulate what is done with the data by the district and the school community.
- The language used is challenging to understand; the district should explain information in plain and concise language about the options they are considering during decision-making. Provide more transparency. It will help guide parents around the possibilities.
- The district's announcement of the enrollment fair date does not provide enough time for parents to research schools and make decisions.
- The lessons learned from the previous school portfolio consolidation process need to be applied the next time.
- There was a call to share challenges in a timely manner so that parents can provide feedback and recommendations. Additionally, parents can make decisions that are best for their families with enough time before the district makes final decisions.
- Sometimes it's too late when parents hear from the district regarding potential issues.
- One parent shared that they were not surprised when the prior school consolidation list was released. They had gone to several community information meetings. Concerned that sometimes families do not pay attention to ongoing issues until their names show up on a list.
- What engagement looks like needs to change fundamentally and be meaningfully different.
- The group discussed the closing of Macattee High School, its impact on the community, and how the information was communicated to students and families.
- During the last mass school closure many years ago, a list was created in a back room and then announced at a board meeting. The board is trying to do it differently this time around.
- The fiscal stabilization plan, the parent said, she feels we are in better hands with the current fiscal leadership.
- If decisions are being announced without community feedback, then you did not have engagement, full stop.
- There needs to be more brains and hearts at the table in conversations about enrollment policy and school reorganization.
- Once the district knows a decision, it should be communicated. If decisions have not been made, then the district should get feedback, and school communities are aware, principals can communicate to the communities.
- No more leaks to Mission Local.
- The trust needs to be repaired before school reorganization conversations can begin.

- There were issues with the scoring data during the previous school-closure conversations. There should be a conversation about the flaws in the previous data used to develop the list of schools to close and consolidate
- The feeder school system impacts where you go to school for Middle School and High School
- One parent shared some historical context of a previous school consolidation 20+ years ago
- When it is time to discuss the enrollment policy, the community needs to understand the impacts of those decisions

Additional Facilitator Notes:

- When surveys are given participants should get the results from the survey.
- Don't sugar coat things, no jargon, explain what it means by descriptions and details not just two word. Explain what school reorganization means
- August will be too late to start talking about it.
- Less engagement has happened
- Be heard and seen- don't feel that when decisions are made and you are not apart of it.
- When you know about the challenge you should share it and create a timeline to involve families. Parents
- Don't wait until the district tells you share when you h
- Parent felt
- If you are telling people the discussion then it's too late the should be part of creating the proposals. The recommendations should come from their feedback.
- Once you know let everyone know
- No more leaks to Mission Local
- 2 examples
 - Targeted arbitrary schools- some schools are small for a reason
 - Data was not accurate
- Share how decisions will be made
- How will the enrollment process will impact the school reorganization
- Enroll
 - Predictable
 - Diverse
 - ...
 Are not achievable

Group 2

Facilitator Notes:

- Participants said that for major decisions such as enrollment policy, there have already been significant public comments, but the concern is that the **community is not involved early enough in shaping the decisions themselves.**
- Engaging the community only after major decisions have been largely developed feels like engagement around the wrong issue and can feel like a waste of time.
- Participants want collaboration **before and during** the decision-making process.
- They expressed concern about a lack of transparency. Even if the process cannot be fully collaborative, the community should still be meaningfully included.
- Participants said the community should be involved in defining the problem, not only responding to proposed solutions.

- One comment noted that the same mistakes seem to be repeating. People show up with data, information, and talking points, but there is little follow-up after they speak.
- Participants asked whether there is a system for tracking who said what and whether there is follow-up with those individuals.
- Some participants noted that there are enough staff members who could follow up with community members when issues are raised.
- In the past, relationships were built by allowing staff to follow up after meetings.
- One suggestion was for the Board to direct the Superintendent to assign someone to engage with community members.
- Another suggestion was to modify the public comment “yellow card” to include a checkbox indicating that the speaker would like follow-up.
- Participants asked whether there is a way to call the district to request a meeting.
- Several participants emphasized that the community should be part of the **entire process**, from defining the issue through implementation and follow-through.
- Participants said the process should bring people along gradually rather than presenting decisions late in the process.
- If the district and Board want a truly collaborative process, the process itself needs to be collaborative.
- One participant said the Board often asks the wrong questions.
- Another said the Board often speaks **at** the community rather than **with** the community. Meetings can feel like data presentations rather than collaborative discussions.
- Participants emphasized the importance of **early and honest engagement**.
- One participant described a “magic wand” scenario: if enrollment policy were being discussed, the Board could start by announcing that the conversation is beginning and inviting anyone interested to participate.
- That process could include early meetings to discuss the issue and draft ideas together, followed by later meetings to review and refine next steps.
- Participants also emphasized the need to actively seek input from people who are not present in the room.
- Meeting the community where they already are and leveraging existing networks was suggested.
- Accessibility remains a major barrier.
- Email engagement was mentioned as an example where people submitted comments but were told they had to go through public comment instead, and their emails were never read.
- CAC members have experienced situations where people were not called on.
- Participants noted that at the state level, public comments become part of the official record.
- Questions were raised about whether emails sent to the Board are part of the public record for Board documents.
- Participants asked for clearer transparency about what feedback the Board can act on and what it cannot.
- One comment concluded that right now there is little real choice in how community members can engage

Facilitator Summary:

- Participants emphasized that community engagement should occur **earlier and throughout the decision-making process**, rather than after proposals are already developed.
- A major concern raised was that community members are often asked to respond to decisions that appear largely predetermined. Participants felt this creates frustration and makes engagement feel unproductive.

- Many participants expressed a desire for the community to be involved **from the beginning of the process**, including helping define the issues and questions that the Board is addressing. Participants suggested that engagement should continue throughout the process, allowing the community to contribute ideas and feedback as decisions evolve.
- Another theme was the importance of **follow-up and accountability**. Participants noted that people often share information, data, or concerns during meetings but do not receive responses or updates afterward. Suggestions included creating mechanisms for follow-up when community members request it.
- Participants also discussed the need for **greater transparency about how feedback is used** and what the Board can realistically act on. Clearer communication about the role of community input in decision-making was seen as important.
- Participants emphasized that engagement should involve **two-way dialogue**, rather than presentations where the Board shares information but does not actively collaborate with the community.
- Some participants suggested beginning major decision processes by **announcing the issue early and inviting interested community members to participate in developing solutions together**. This could involve multiple meetings where ideas are discussed, refined, and revisited over time.
- Accessibility was again identified as a barrier. Participants noted challenges with current engagement methods, including public comment processes and limited ways to communicate directly with the Board.
- Overall, the discussion emphasized the need for **earlier, more collaborative, and more transparent engagement processes when the Board is making major decisions**.

Group 3

Facilitator Notes:

- School Reorganization
 - Lifting up student delegate feedback: Families struggle with filling out surveys.
 - Not opposed to filling them out, but they need help.
 - Student's parents are immigrant
 - What are the lessons learned from the RAI process
 - How do we do this in a way that is more inclusive, and not less
 - Consistency is key
 - The community meetings were not always tied to the equity work and Stanford recommendations
 - Timing is critical
 - Yes, consistency is key.
 - Need time to build understanding for hard, complex, potentially confusing conversations and decisions
 - How do we keep the conversations going over Summer?
 - Continue to engage families throughout the Spring and Fall and recognize Summer may not give families opportunity to engage.
 - We see decisions happening to people and not with

- Providing opportunities for people to state what they need to manage the change and see how the decisions will strengthen school programs
 - Information is power:
 - In prior processes, the data can feel hidden
 - Examining ways in which people can see the synthesis of complex information
 - What are the inputs, in addition to the outputs
 - Having the communication readily available
 - Don't know what happens to the information that is shared
 - How do you present how data is used?
 - Accessibility
 - Data and information must be presented in a way that is universally accessible
 - It feels like the District makes decisions and then gets community input
 - When the District puts something out, someone from another community should be able to
 - When the District says that it has a community process - then it needs to happen before the major decisions are already identified (school reorg and enrollment)
 - "We're not always going to agree - but show me that you heard what I said"
 - When community engagement becomes a checkbox, the engagement is no longer valuable
 - Compliance mandates are not the communities problem
 - Even when we disagree what is the mechanism to show that feedback has not been incorporated
 - What are the ways in which we want the board to engage with our communities?
 - Learn from prior process
 - Owning and acknowledging it
 - Where did the harm occur?
 - Acknowledge what feedback was not considered in the last process
 - How is this process different?
 - Repairing the harm is necessary
 - In what ways do we articulate the upside of school closure?
 - How do we make a family whole
 - What is possible?
 - What are the concrete benefits/plans for reorganization?
 - What are the assurances?
- Recognizing the District's closest connection with families is through the staff (teachers, school leaders) at schools - how do we see this as an opportunity to leverage these relationships?
 - Are these staff feeling heard?
 - Do they have a role as connectors?
 - How can these individuals be empowered in the process?
- Enrollment
 - Recognize that enrollment system is the most stressful process
 - Even the language - lottery, is triggering
 - If we know programs are not equitably distributed across the city - acknowledge that we need to fix this
 - Centering those who are the most harmed by broken systems
 - Strong engagement reaches the folks who are burnt out
- What specifically is not working currently about this system, and what are the changes that are necessary?
 - Those who are closest to the problem, are closest to the solution

- What might this be?
- How do we have these conversations?

Parking Lot

Other comments / questions that were not discussed in Parts I or II.

Group 1

None

Group 2

None

Group 3

- We have a lot of students with transportation support to-and-from school
 - These families may never step foot in the school
 - Traditional methods of engagement (flyers, SSC after drop off, AM circle), these engagement efforts miss these families
 - Can we think about how we provide information to Zoom to give to parents along the route
 - Where are partnerships that help us better engage?
- What are the consistent predictable spaces that are hosted by Commissioners in different neighborhoods?
 - Park playdates
- What are the free things in the City to bring communities together?
- How do we work with CBO partners more effectively?