

**Policy KC: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Status: DRAFT

Original Adopted Date: 07/01/2007

**EXPLANATION**

Senate Bill 681 (2022) requires the board to adopt a community engagement policy after receiving input from the community. MSBA has created a community engagement policy that generally describes the purpose of community engagement, assorted ways to engage the community, and other aspects of a successful community engagement process. Most of the information came from the Illinois Association of School Boards publication "Connecting with the Community."

However, because this sample policy was not created with input from your district's community, MSBA has created a form, KC-AF1, also included in this update, that will allow the district to collaborate with the community to create an engagement plan. The district must seek community input and complete the plan prior to July 1, 2023.

Pursuant to law, community engagement must be used to create "a process allowing any resident of the school district to have an item placed on the agenda for a school board meeting." The law lists components that must be included in the agenda process. MSBA has modified policy BDDH, Public Participation in Board Meetings, to include those required components. However, the board must also receive input from the community regarding the process for getting an item on the agenda.

The MSBA website has detailed information about community engagement, including information about the purpose of community groups, the various types of engagement and how to implement community engagement.

The board recognizes the importance of ongoing community engagement in supporting the district's mission and is committed to engaging the community in meaningful and intentional ways.

**Definitions**

*Community* - The district's community includes district parents/guardians; residents; students; taxpayers; representatives from business, social services and local government; civic organizations; advocacy groups; religious leaders; employers; and others who have a stake in the district's success. The composition of community members participating in any particular engagement activity will vary depending on the purpose and type of the activity.

*Community Engagement* - The process by which school boards actively involve diverse citizens in dialogue, deliberation and collaborative thinking around common interests for their public schools. Community engagement focuses on long-term, significant issues involving the district's values, beliefs, mission, vision and goals. The board and district administration make operational decisions.

*Engagement Activities* - Include, but are not limited to, community forums, focus groups, study groups, listening circles, training and education on education-related topics, dialogue, visioning, polling/surveys, media strategies, webinars, wikis and shared workspaces.

**Written Communication**

It is crucial that district residents have the opportunity to communicate directly with the board, including outside of board meetings, where time is limited and where the district must conduct business. Community members may provide written comments to the board on a school-related topic by submitting the comments, electronically or otherwise, to the board secretary or the board president. Any communications directed to the board will be provided to all board members. When appropriate, the board president will respond on behalf of the board.

The district may post on the district's website an email address or other electronic tool for the public to use to submit comments to individual board members or the board as a whole.

**Board Meetings**

The board encourages the public to attend open school board meetings. As required by law and provided in policy

BDDH, the board allows district residents to request that an agenda item be added to regularly scheduled board meetings. The board provides other opportunities for the public to speak at board meetings as well. The board will, with community input, review the process that allows community members to place items on a meeting agenda.

## Community Engagement Plan

The board will, with input from the community, create a plan for ongoing community engagement that is consistent with this policy and outlines additional engagement activities the board and district will use the following year. The board will coordinate the community engagement plan with the district- and building-level parent and family engagement plans required by law to maximize engagement opportunities and prevent unnecessary duplication. The board will annually review and adopt the community engagement plan in collaboration with the community.

The community engagement plan will clearly articulate a purpose for each engagement activity. Engagement activities will include at least three of the following four levels of community engagement:

1. Informing – Providing the community with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the problem and the alternatives or solution.
2. Consulting – Obtaining community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
3. Involving – Working directly with the community to ensure that community issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.
4. Collaborating – Involving the community in each aspect of a decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Generally, activity participants will reflect the demographics of the community. If participants are selected based on specialized skills, knowledge or other characteristics, the participants should reflect community demographics to the extent possible. The district will actively seek involvement from community members who reflect the district's demographics and have diverse viewpoints.

The district will conduct engagement activities using a variety of methods, including virtual, written and in-person methods. The district will schedule engagement activities at locations and times convenient to community participants. The district will hold in-person activities in accessible locations, when possible, and may provide childcare, language interpretation and other services to increase participation and understanding.

The board will evaluate all engagement activities in collaboration with activity participants to determine the activity's effectiveness. Depending on the type of activity, the evaluation may be ongoing over the course of the activity, conducted after the activity ends, or both.

Patrons of the district are encouraged to express ideas, concerns and comments about school programs through written correspondence, service on citizen advisory committees and responses to surveys authorized by the board, in accordance with board policies and procedures for receiving public complaints and public participation at board meetings, and as otherwise authorized or required for district participation in state and federal programs.

The board is mindful that it is accountable to the patrons of the district and shall give substantial weight to the advice it receives from individuals and community groups interested in the district's schools. The district is also mindful that it must take into account its responsibility for the welfare of the entire district in arriving at decisions.

The board recognizes that many residents of the district may be specially qualified to assist and advise the district because of their training, experience or personal characteristics, and the board encourages them to take an active part in school affairs.

The board also recognizes that community involvement is not only important at the district level but is often most effective at the school level. Each school in the district will advise patrons about any avenues for providing input unique to that school and will encourage them to take advantage of those opportunities.

---

**Policy Reference Disclaimer:** These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

**State References**

162.058, 167.700

**Description**

State Statute -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/slashVClYWU73Tdpv4JZYxrPDw==>

**Cross References**

AD

SCHOOL DISTRICT MISSION -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/NV6YsdzX62wTAGPtYxxJA==>

BCE

BOARD COMMITTEES/ADVISORY COMMITTEES TO THE BOARD -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/oJ6nnTsflaXrSmYxyVKnvw==>

BDDH-1

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/z1KCfBY9DF7zkWkT3cslshIMw==>

BF

SCHOOL BOARD POLICY PROCESS -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/l69SazpluspduqhuxCTySPwtw==>

IGBC

PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/iNj4d4ecYq7nxShprYqaZA==>

IGBC-AF(1)

PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/D66PjipgrY5iZYBKx1TjxA==>

IGBC-AF(2)

PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT -  
<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SU/rOoZepIusrKF8slshwWWDfaXSxAw==>