

CBE –Engagement Study

COSC DISCUSSION NOTES

1. Based on your own personal experiences as a parent and school council member, what have been the most effective ways the CBE has asked for ideas, opinions and/or feedback from parents and the public on system or school-specific initiatives and topics? Why was that effective? Think about who was involved, how ideas and information was gathered, what happened, timing of events etc.
 - Trustee coming to school council meeting – it brought out a lot of people and we have valuable conversations
 - COSC meetings
 - Principals sharing information and asking for feedback at school council meetings
 - Online survey with feedback
 - Electronic communication methods
 - D2L, IRIS, teacher blogs, home logic, textbooks, email, school app
 - Administration report by principal to school council at monthly meetings
 - Approachability to the admin and staff – a welcoming atmosphere
 - Be open to constructive criticism and evaluation
 - Survey offered to parents
 - Do you want CBE homeschooling programs to be focused on thematic or subject drive?
Parents responded and the CBE adapted appropriately
 - AP and principal engaged – asking questions and responding to them
 - Panabaker – helpful, offering school books, assisting, listening, explaining funding and transportation
 - Tell Them From Me and Pillar Surveys
 - Asking the right questions and providing ongoing dialogue
 - New communication system works really well
 - Monthly updates – blog, Facebook
 - The principal
 - Relaying information and asking for feedback
 - Break down the information
 - Great principals make a big difference
 - COSC meetings
 - Faster, more direct
 - More honest communication
 - Before media releases the stories
 - Human interaction beyond being directed to the website
 - Timely addressing of issues
 - Survey monkey – easy, anonymous, online, customizable
 - Relevant – needs to matter to parents
 - Involve students with administration – student advisory group, leadership, student voice
 - Language translation – make info accessible to all

- Parent workshops
- Trustee came to school council meeting
- Good communication from principal – newsletters, blogs, emails
- Timely communication
- Use many modes of communication
 - Email
 - Phone/text
 - Letters home
 - News letter
 - News release
- Give opportunities to provide feedback
- Validate that feedback is heard
- Emails
- RSS Feed
- COSC meetings
 - Effective back and forth communication
 - Parents understand the diversity, scope and complexity of the CBE
 - CBE can respond to specific concerns
- School council
- Surveys that aren't flawed
- RSS feed
- School websites
- COSC
- Emails
 - Effective for push notifications
 - Communications
- COSC – one-on-one, feedback forms, etc.
- Trustee visiting schools
- Short, concise questions
- Administration is present at the schools (sometimes)
- When admin or trustees come to meetings the attendance increases substantially
- Principal coming to meetings – great opportunity to engage with them
- Weekly school updates from principal – can include information from the CBE, surveys, etc.
- Online surveys

2. What could be improved?

- Discuss as a table. Identify 5 – 7 improvements.
- Smaller, more frequent engagement sessions
- Trustees coming to more council meetings
- More specific surveys
- More frequent updates from CBE
- More social media communication
- More frequent information sharing during planning stage instead of at the end
 - Proactive communication
- CBE sharing what they've used from public input sessions
- See the results of feedback that was requested
 - E.g., filling out year-end surveys and never closing the loop
- Timing of requests of information is important – it needs to be convenient
- Schools could be used as more of a community hub to increase participation and comfort levels of parents
- Staff and admin training in communication skills as part of their professional development
- Train staff and admin on strategies for effective communication
- Provide an outline of the ways that school council can engage and communicate with the CBE
- CBE app that each parent can subscribe to
- Transparency
- Inclusion
- CBE staff should be able to speak their opinion, not just the position taken by the CBE
- Apply to GATE program in the south – population challenges not solved. Parents and stakeholders felt that they weren't listened to and a decision was just made
- Better communication through the culture shift
 - Feels as though we are being offered justification for decisions already made, rather than true engagement.
 - Stop controlling the information so tightly
 - Be honest and upfront
- At COSC meetings
 - Answer the question asked, don't redirect in order to push your agenda
 - Parents need time to speak and give feedback
 - Part of CBE curriculum is teaching children to receive feedback, the CBE needs to lead by example
 - Would be useful to have trustees sit at a table with their schools in their wards
 - School councils may not be CBE's most effective way of communicating and engaging the community
- Lack of lead time on meetings, decisions, etc.
- Lack of transparency – perceived or real
- Website is not simple or accessible
- Use social media – Facebook
- Provide in multiple languages
- Ward-wide communication and common strategy – that is communicated to parents
- Show the results of the engagement
- Have a trustee come to school council meetings
- Remove the word “council” – some cultures view councils as males only
 - Council = work, negative

- Association = more positive, social
- Show parents how council matters
 - What does council do?
 - How you can make an impact
 - Start in K
- Transparency
- Improve ease of use on the website
- Feeling that my impact has had an impact
- Improving the sense of community within the schools and the CBE
- Provide direct access to trustees – who are you? What do you mean to me?
- Objective communication between the school, CBE, and parents
- Explain why your actions may contradict the feedback
- Keep us up-to-date and involved
- Learning from past engagements – improve the feedback loop
- Transparency
- Explicitly tell us what you are doing with our feedback
- Seeing the results after surveys
- Understanding the benefits of initiatives
- Hands on involvement through consultation
- Accessible
- Convenient
- Transparent
- Trusting
- Timeliness
- Proactive, not reactive, engagement
- Awareness of where to find information
- Explain how it relates to the person involved
- Provide takeaway points at COSC meeting in PowerPoint slides for us to present to our councils
- Can we have a primer on the CBE as new parents? Not just for COSC
- Can we connect CBE schools and councils with others in CBE with similar concerns and issues?
 - Assistance with small councils via councils with greater resources
- Goal-oriented communication from CBE
- Respond effectively to parent input – analyze, rephrase, and review what the input was, then confirm with parents that it's accurate/appropriate
- Provide meeting talking points
- School newsletter: top ten things happening this month; maybe some “did you know” points about the CBE
- All needs to be in plain language
- RSS feed converted to an app?
- The disconnect between the school and the system
- Provide advanced warning and consultation on material changes for COSC
- Surveys shouldn't be designed to obtain a pre-determined outcome
- Use third parties to conduct research
- Measure the results of consultation
- Include parents as partners
- Online transparency
- Asking is only 50% of the task – CBE must respond back and implement what they heard

- Don't often hear survey results
- Share the results of surveys
- Short, concise communications that lead to more information
- COSC meetings – more consistency on dates/times, and release the agenda ahead of time
- Bring back the RSS feed
- Bring back area meetings
- Short communications
- Use different communication outlets to reach more people
- Send an agenda in advance
- Need to follow through after the surveys are completed
- Need to provide greater opportunities for us to provide feedback and opinions
- Engage in 2-way communication, not just asking and never responding.
- Communication between the CBE and principal
- Principals need to personalize messages prior to sending them out to parents to show how particular messaging impacts schools directly
- Standardized communication methods across CBE to bring together the “haves” and the “have nots”
- Agendas for all divisions
- One-way communication is not viewed or defined as being effective engagement
- Follow-up after surveys – what are the results of them? What comes next?
- More opportunities for face-to-face interactions
- Need to close the loop of information
 - Where does the info go?
 - What is the impact?
- Social media use
- Have the CBE “come to me”
- Inform people of how their input impacts decisions
- Currently don't feel as though input is really taken into consideration
 - If you're going to ask, make sure that it impacts decisions
- Don't ask for input and then “twist it” to fit with a pre-determined outcome
- Not discussed, things are just rolled out
- Need to listen to parents
- People don't feel as though their opinions count
- Do surveys before you decide what the outcomes are
- Show the impact of the engagement sessions and surveys
- Provide information earlier in order to take to school council prior to COSC
- More engagement by trustees

3. In developing a new approach to public engagement, there will be opportunities to explore new ways of doing things. What are some ways you think the CBE and its school councils could work more effectively together to engage school communities? Are there tools, resources or information that would be helpful?
- Discuss as a table and identify 3 – 5 opportunities and any associated tools and resources.
 - CBE collecting answers to questions form parents at school council – in this type of format
 - Monthly questions and polls to go out to school councils to collect info for the CBE
 - Sharing results of information collected back to the school – CLOSE THE LOOP
 - Child care is offered at meetings
 - Could offer a flexible meeting time according to your schools parents needs
 - Run a presentation/speaker right before or after a council meeting
 - Opportunities to host education symposiums, talks, workshops, etc. on key education topics.
 - Speakers on trends
 - Increase surveys regarding key issues/town hall meetings
 - Provide feedback based on what you heard
 - Use a variety of communication methods to reach parents
 - Detailed agendas prior to meetings – will make people want to come
 - Personalized / face to face invitations to meetings – build personal relationships
 - Be inclusive
 - Make everyone feel welcomed and valued
 - The principal needs to be well informed – support the principal and make them the master communicator
 - Enable the principal to communicate
 - Distribute minutes and agendas to the entire parent population prior to the meetings
 - Training for SC boards – how to be effective, how to engage people, how to market meetings
 - Regular trustee meeting attendance
 - Standardization of meeting protocol, roles, and responsibilities
 - Understanding their role
 - Monitoring feedback from councils
 - Provide two-way communication with councils and the system
 - Better promotion and education about school councils
 - Better communication with CLD parents
 - Social media and blogs
 - Video stream
 - CBE provides a template for SC to ensure consistency
 - Let them feel like what they do can have an impact
 - Educate on how to engage diverse communities in SC
 - Single website for information regarding the local school and CBE
 - Being in speakers who address the concerns of parents
 - Ask the CBE to help marketing to parents – educate them on why they should participate in SC
 - Meet the Principal – opportunities to ask the principal questions
 - Invite a director for Q and A sessions
 - Principal and school council personalized messaging
 - Open houses and orientation related to grouping together multiple councils within the same area to discuss issues
 - Work around challenges schools have with getting volunteers who may have a high immigrant population

- Facebook page
- Electronic newsletter
- Multi-faceted approach to meetings and communication
- Strict rules can limit access – open things up a little more
- Synervoice
- Workshops that are open to everyone
- Ask for opinions on specific topics
- Have trustees come to us
- Loop back – give the results to people, don't just make them go to the web