



Effective Public Engagement Tools- Facilitator

Facilitator Notes: This activity can be done with the entire group or small groups. To begin, help participants to narrow their focus to one particular issue that relates to their actual work as a board.

Instructions to participants: Select one (or more) of the tools/approaches listed below (from Module 9) for the purpose of this activity. With a particular issue in mind that relates to your board's current work in your district, draft a "mini-plan" for improving public engagement.

- Which of these tools would you use? Why would you use this particular tool?
 - What challenges might you face? How could you overcome them?
 - Who would you need to enlist in your plan?
 - What steps would you take and in what order?
 - How would you measure success?
- **Communications and public engagement audits.** Use these analyses and reports to list and assess what has already been done on all fronts, and where the gaps are in processes or relationships. One component of the audit is a review and analysis of all written materials prepared by the jurisdiction for consumption by the schools' many audiences.
- **Strategic planning sessions, town hall meetings or community conversations.** Open dialogues foster trust and collaboration, shared goals, and strategies.
- **Collaboration between schools, service-providers, businesses, etc.** Shared resources and collaboration enhance learning, strengthen connection, and produce mutually beneficial results for students, schools and the community.
- **Public information-sharing on student achievement.** Communities must be informed of and understand student achievement data in order to understand and support school and board strategies for improvement.
- **E-mail.** E-mail is a powerful, low-cost tool that can be used to connect with families, community members, businesspeople and others. E-mail responses on issues cannot be considered a representative sample of opinions but they are a convenient way to communicate with diverse audiences.

- **Study circles.** Study circles are a semi-structured, multi-step method that convenes policy-makers and the public over extended periods in small-group discussions. Policymakers say study circles give them the opportunity to understand a variety of perspectives about key issues and to receive a reality check on their policy direction.
- **Community participation in school board meetings.** School boards need input from the community to inform and support decisions. Inviting the community to participate in board meeting discussions is one way of doing that. One way is to include public Q & A sessions at meetings and to have guidelines for delegations.
- **Communication with elected officials and policymakers.** Take advantage of opportunities to inform and solicit the input of other elected officials and policy makers at various levels of government.