

Montgomery County Public Schools Roundtable Discussion Group Process

Community Involvement Process

Purpose of the Process

The purpose of a roundtable discussion group process (roundtable) is to solicit community input for the superintendent of schools to consider prior to making a recommendation to the Board of Education concerning school facility and/or program issues. The roundtable input also is considered by the Board of Education as they review the superintendent's recommendation and prior to making a decision. The process is guided by the Board of Education *Long-range Educational Facilities Policy Planning (FAA)* and Regulation FAA-RA.

Roundtable Representation

Parents, staff, and students are the primary stakeholders in roundtables. Cluster coordinators work with their Parent Teacher Association (PTA) leaders to identify representatives to serve on a roundtable. In addition, high school student representatives may serve on a roundtable that addresses high school facility issues. Student representatives are identified by principals. There is a degree of flexibility in terms of the roundtable size and the number of representatives per school. The composition of the group is determined in consultation with PTA cluster coordinators and staff in the Division of Long-range Planning (DLRP), Department of Facilities Management. Additionally, MCPS employees, municipalities, local government agencies, and countywide organizations may contribute to the process, as appropriate.

Roundtable Representative Responsibilities

The role of the roundtable is to advise the superintendent of schools on stakeholder issues and viewpoints regarding approaches to facility and/or program issues. Representatives on the roundtable are responsible for participating in roundtable discussions, sharing roundtable activities with the communities they represent, fairly representing the views of their communities during the process, and transmitting a report on the roundtable's work at the end of the process to the superintendent of schools and the Board of Education. PTAs also may attach position papers to the roundtable report.

DLRP Staff Responsibilities

DLRP staff conducts public information meetings at the beginning and at the end of the process. DLRP staff facilitates meetings, responds to requests for information, prepares approaches, and assists the roundtable in compiling its report to the superintendent of schools.

Public Information Meetings

DLRP staff conducts two public information meetings for the community. The first meeting occurs before the first roundtable meeting and is intended to provide information on why a roundtable process is needed, how it will be conducted, and what the timeline for the process will be. The second meeting occurs near the end of the roundtable process to advise the broader community of the approaches to facility and/or program issues that have been discussed and to gather community feedback on approaches.

Roundtable Discussion Meetings

The roundtable process is conducted over the course of four or more structured meetings. Meetings are scheduled to allow time for roundtable representatives to meet with their stakeholders at PTA meetings and special community meetings. A description of the activities for each roundtable meeting follows.

Meeting #1

At the first meeting, ground rules are established, representative roles and staff member roles are clearly defined, and an explanation of the process and timeline for meetings is discussed. Data on enrollment trends and facility utilization may be provided, if pertinent. DLRP staff facilitate a discussion of the criteria that are important to roundtable representatives in addressing facility and/or program issues. After the criteria are established, a brainstorming session is facilitated wherein representatives may raise a variety of approaches to resolve facility issues. DLRP staff also can provide a range of approaches.

Meeting #2

DLRP staff present the approaches that were identified at the first meeting along with staff-developed approaches to address facility and/or program issues. In addition, staff answers questions and helps to refine the approaches as necessary for clarification. Roundtable representatives are expected to share the approaches with their communities between the second and third meetings.

Meeting #3

Representatives share feedback gathered from their representative stakeholder group and discuss pluses and minuses of each approach. The roundtable representatives then determine whether additional approaches need to be developed. If so, another brainstorming session is facilitated to develop a second round of approaches to facility and/or program issues, or staff develops additional approaches based on the feedback provided by the roundtable representatives.

Meeting #4, if needed

If a second round of approaches is developed, then those approaches are summarized and presented to the roundtable at this meeting. Questions are answered and staff helps to refine the approaches as necessary for clarification. Roundtable representatives share the approaches with their communities between the fourth and fifth meetings.

Meeting #5, if needed

Roundtable representatives share feedback gathered from their representative stakeholder group and discuss pluses and minuses for the second round of approaches. Usually, no more than 10 approaches are developed. Roundtable representatives are directed to fill out evaluation forms, using the criteria as the basis for comparing approaches. MCPS staff develops a draft report and circulates it in advance of the final meeting.

Final Meeting

At this meeting, the roundtable report is finalized and representative evaluation forms for all approaches are collected. In addition to evaluation of approaches, school PTAs may submit position papers for inclusion in the report.

Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education Process

Most roundtable discussions meet in the spring. After reviewing the approaches and roundtable input with staff, the superintendent of schools prepares a recommendation to the Board of Education for inclusion in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) that is released the following October. The Board of Education conducts a work session in early November during which Board of Education members review the superintendent's recommendation and may request alternative approaches be developed for their review and for public comment. The Board of Education work session is followed in mid-November by a public hearing on the superintendent's recommendation and any Board of Education requested alternatives. After the public hearing, the Board of Education takes action on facility recommendations in late November. The timeline for implementation of an approach to address facility issues would depend on the nature of the issue and the approach to resolve it.