

POLICY BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: ABA-RA, ABA-EA, ABC, ACA, BFA, BFA-RA, BMA, IOD, IOD-RA, KBA

Responsible Offices: Office of the Chief of Staff; Chief of Strategic Initiatives; Chief of School Support and Well-being

Community Engagement

A. PURPOSE

To affirm the Board’s commitment to the development and promotion of inclusive, culturally responsive, and antiracist engagement guidelines, structures, and practices to be implemented to engage the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) community in Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) decisions that impact children

To affirm the Board’s strongly held belief that equitable educational outcomes, success, and well-being for all students require the engagement of the students, families, staff, and other interested members of the Montgomery County community

To establish research-based guidelines for levels of community engagement in Board decision-making practices and processes that strengthen relationships between students, staff, families, schools, and the broader community

To acknowledge that engaging stakeholders who reflect the community’s diversity and experiences requires intentional and culturally responsive engagement practices and structures

B. ISSUE

1. Understanding and valuing the ideas, interests, expectations, and concerns of the diverse students, families, staff, and other stakeholders of Montgomery County is necessary to ensure the district’s goal that all students are prepared for college, career, and community.
2. The Board recognizes the complexity of effective, inclusive, and equitable engagement practices, and the need for guidelines and structures for stakeholders and staff. Clear expectations, guidelines, and resources, are needed so that engagement efforts do not exclude stakeholders who may be most adversely

affected by certain decisions or whose viewpoints have been traditionally marginalized

3. Research-based models of public participation and engagement shall inform the processes below and promote clearly stated objectives for the public's role, appropriate commitment of resources and time to design meaningful and inclusive engagement and public participation activities, and ongoing efforts to create culturally responsive environments where diverse views may be heard and considered in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
4. Certain operational processes may require additional engagement protocols, and this policy is not intended to supercede those processes, including, but not limited to, Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning*, and Regulation FAA-RA, *Educational Facilities Planning*.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. A community engagement *goal* is the purpose for which community members are brought together. For the purposes of this policy, the goals shall be clearly communicated as follows:
 - a) *Inform* means to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions; or
 - b) *Consult* means to obtain public feedback on analyses, alternatives, and/or decisions; or
 - c) *Involve* means to work directly with the public throughout a process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered; or
 - d) *Collaborate* means to partner with the public for advice and innovation in formulating recommended solutions and incorporate their recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
2. *Community members* refers to the constituents with a vested interest in a high-quality public school system for the education of all Montgomery County students. These will include, as appropriate, MCPS students, parents/guardians, and staff as well as those who advocate on behalf of students, parents/guardians, and staff, including, but are not limited to, Montgomery County residents; community-based organizations; or groups who advocate on behalf of students on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, national origin, nationality, religion, immigration status,

sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family structure/parental status, marital status, age, ability (cognitive, social/emotional, and physical), poverty and socioeconomic status, language, or other legally or constitutionally protected attributes or affiliations; business, civic, and nongovernment organizations; local pre-kindergarten and postsecondary educational institutions; and local, state, and federal agencies.

3. *Engagement* means to provide experiences that strengthen trusting relationships between students, families, staff, schools, and the Board, and between the Board and the broader community.

D. POSITION

The Board seeks engagement of community members representative of the breadth of experiences, interests, and values of stakeholders who seek a high-quality education for all MCPS students.

1. In alignment with Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, the Board affirms the importance of applying an equity lens and culturally responsive and antiracist approaches that address the impact on all students of any program, practice, decision, or action, with a strategic focus on marginalized student groups.
2. The Board may seek community engagement to inform its decision-making processes and provide opportunities to hear and consider community concerns, comments, and recommendations regarding the development of Board policies, as set forth in Board Policy BFA, *Policysetting*, and other decisions, using the best interest of students as a guiding principle. Although the Board will consider carefully community input gathered through community engagement strategies, the final responsibility for Board-designated decisions rests with the Board.
 - a) This policy aligns with Board Policy ABC, *Parent and Family Involvement*, Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, and Board Policy KBA, *Policy on Public Information*, which promotes accessibility of public information to the broadest community possible and provides interpretation and translation services.
 - b) As a substantial portion of Board decisions affect students directly, public engagement activities set forth in this policy shall intentionally include students who reflect the diversity of the student body as much as possible.
3. The Board encourages community-initiated engagement to inform its decision-making processes and welcomes multiple and varied opportunities for the

community to raise its aspirations, concerns, and analyses of issues facing MCPS.

4. The Board, central office, and school-based staff will show evidence of using culturally responsive engagement planning and implementation guides and resources in the initial planning, implementation, and evaluation of all community engagement. Engagement goals (e.g., to inform, involve, consult, or collaborate) shall be clearly stated and appropriate to the task, and engagement practitioners shall be mindful of the guiding questions below when designing engagement activities:
 - a) Participants (Who will be most impacted by this decision? Who needs to be involved to make the most effective decision?)
 - b) Students (How will students who reflect the diversity of MCPS be included in ways that they feel heard?)
 - c) Outreach (What are the best strategies to engage the participants)
 - d) Process (How will the engagement process be organized and facilitated to ensure that the participants can participate effectively?)
 - e) Evaluation (How do we know that our efforts were effective?)
5. The Board, central office, and school-based staff will implement and evaluate all community engagement with guiding questions such as the following:
 - a) Whom does this practice or decision serve or neglect?
 - b) Whose voices are dominating or lacking from the conversation?
 - c) What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this decision?
 - d) What steps are in place for ongoing data collection and reflection of the outcomes?
 - e) Are diverse identities and perspectives represented and informing the implementation of the practice/decision?
6. Participation techniques may include any method(s) appropriate to the participation goals, such as, but not limited to the following:
 - a) Community-initiated methods of engagement, including public testimony

- at Board meetings, correspondence with Board members, or invitations to Board members or MCPS administrators to attend meetings of community organizations.
- b) Broad public outreach through surveys, public comment data capture, community events, door-to-door contact, or other methods of receiving and analyzing public input on a large scale.
 - c) Dialogue in facilitated small-group discussions, in person, or in virtual space, where members of the public may introduce topics of interest, raise questions, or discuss content or questions prepared by presenters, including—
 - (1) public meetings where participants are provided the opportunity to engage in facilitated small-group discussions;
 - (2) study circles, which provide training to both leaders and participants to engage in challenging topics and seek common ground;
 - (3) focus groups of participants, typically selected on the basis of some common interest or experience; or
 - (4) task forces or charettes, typically composed of participants selected on the basis of their technical expertise to analyze technical issues.
 - d) Presentations or large-group meetings where participants receive information in a public forum, provide testimony or ask questions, or may be provided opportunities for facilitated small-group discussions.
6. The Board is committed to providing appropriate time, financial support, professional learning, and MCPS staff to design, facilitate, and conduct community engagement activities.
7. Prior to its action on decisions about which the Board has requested community engagement, the following information shall be included in materials provided for the Board’s deliberation:
- a) A summary of community engagement activities conducted, which should include a description of the participants, the participation goals, the participation results, and the techniques used to reach community members;
 - b) A summary of how students were engaged or an explanation as to why students were not engaged; and

- c) A summary of focus areas and/or preferences identified, even if consensus recommendations are not obtained.
8. Regarding Board decisions about issues specific to local school communities, the Board will make every effort to ascertain and respect the preferences of students, families, and staff of that school.
- a) The Board affirms the primacy of engagement through local schools communicating directly with their own communities.
 - b) The superintendent of schools/designee is responsible for providing support and technical assistance as needed to local administrators to design and implement robust participation goals and activities consistent with this policy.

E. DESIRED OUTCOME

There will be an actively engaged community that is reflective of all residents. Students will benefit from the diverse community's contribution of skills, knowledge, ideas, experiences, and time to support the equitable education success and well-being of all students, in partnership with MCPS. Community stakeholders will be well-informed and will understand the issues, opportunities, alternatives, and potential solutions that shape Board decisions; and community stakeholders will have multiple and varied opportunities for their aspirations, concerns, and analyses to be heard.

F. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. The superintendent of schools will–
 - a) create and maintain a cross-office committee responsible for supporting culturally responsive community engagement, and developing and updating implementation guides and/or resources, and
 - b) provide training and support for staff at all levels on how to implement inclusive, culturally responsive, and antiracist strategies for community engagement.
2. The Board will seek community input, involvement, consultation, or collaboration, as appropriate, on Board decisions related to policies, including curriculum, facilities, and funding issues, from a broad spectrum of our culturally and linguistically diverse community.

3. Further, the Board will seek appropriate strategies to inform engagement participants of how community input was considered and/or used in decisions resulting from their engagement.

G. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board policy review process.

Policy History:

Adopted by Resolution No. 287-74, May 28, 1974; amended by Resolution No. 268-76, May 11, 1976; amended by Resolution No. 346-06, July 18, 2006; amended by Resolution No. 327-13, June 13, 2013; amended by Resolution No. 47-23, February 7, 2023.