



Every Voice Matters:

Leading for Equity and Personalization Through Equitable Community Engagement

August 27, 2019
LEAP InnovatED Summit

Today's resources: greatschoolspartnership.org/LEAP

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

-President Barack Obama

TODAY'S PRESENTERS

From the Great Schools Partnership

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Today's resources: greatschoolspartnership.org/LEAP

Outcomes

Understand the connection between equity and community engagement.

Develop a deeper understanding and rationale for why community engagement needs to be centered in the life of a school-community.

Unpack and take action on key elements of community engagement.

Today's resources: greatschoolspartnership.org/LEAP

Agenda

Welcome + Overview

What is Equitable Community Engagement?

Why Equitable Community Engagement?

How to Create Equitable Community Engagement

Commitment and Next Steps

Debrief + Close



GREAT
SCHOOLS
PARTNERSHIP

is a nonprofit school-support organization working to redesign public education and improve learning for all students.



@GreatSchoolsP

We believe in equitable, personalized, rigorous learning for all students leading to readiness for college, careers, and citizenship.



We believe educational equity means ensuring just outcomes for each student, raising marginalized voices, and challenging the imbalance of power and privilege.



WELCOME

**Raise your hand
if you are a...**

Other

What is Your Experience with Community Engagement?

Personal Reflection...



How was your family
connected or not connected
to your school and
educational experience?

How might these past experiences, positive or negative, shape your beliefs about community engagement

What is
Equitable Community
Engagement?

Equitable Community Engagement

an ongoing and **intentional** process of building **trusting relationships, sharing power,** and working **collaboratively** with all stakeholders toward educational equity

TURN + TALK



How does your experience connect with our definition?

Where is there dissonance and why?

Why Community Engagement?

Why Community Engagement?

1. Equitable Outcomes
2. Lasting Impact
3. Innovative Solutions
4. Community Support

Common Barriers

BARRIER 1

Failure to recognize the structural inequities and unfairness in educational systems

BARRIER 2

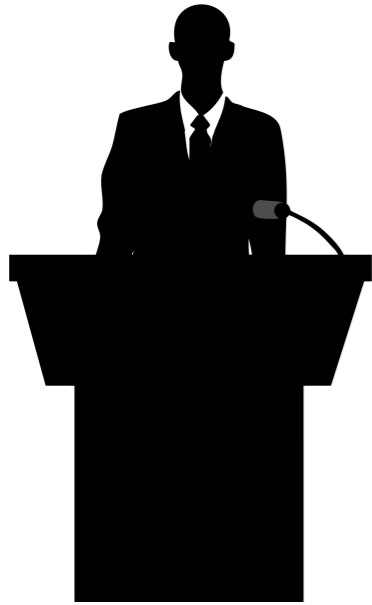
An unwillingness to change the traditional hierarchies of power and privilege in school systems and classrooms

BARRIER 3

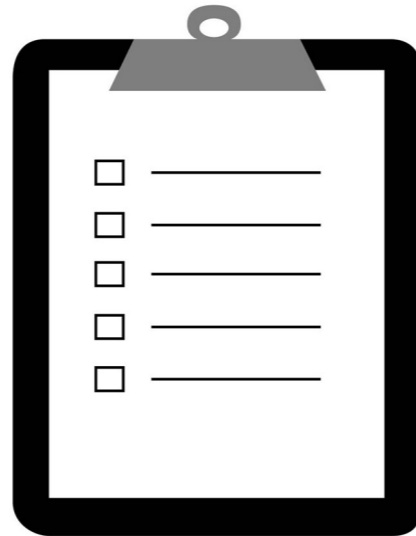
An inability to change the deeply entrenched patterns of negative, unproductive thinking and relating in school communities, especially among groups from different socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds

Moving Toward
Equitable
Community
Engagement

Engagement Spectrum



Providing
Information



Encouraging
Involvement



Sharing
Power



More school
directed

Less community
involvement

Less school
directed

More community
involvement

Moving Toward Equity



Providing Information

Teachers and school administrators provide basic and expected information to students, families and other community members at regular intervals.

Encouraging Involvement

In addition, educators actively seek feedback and input from students, families, and other community members.

Sharing Power

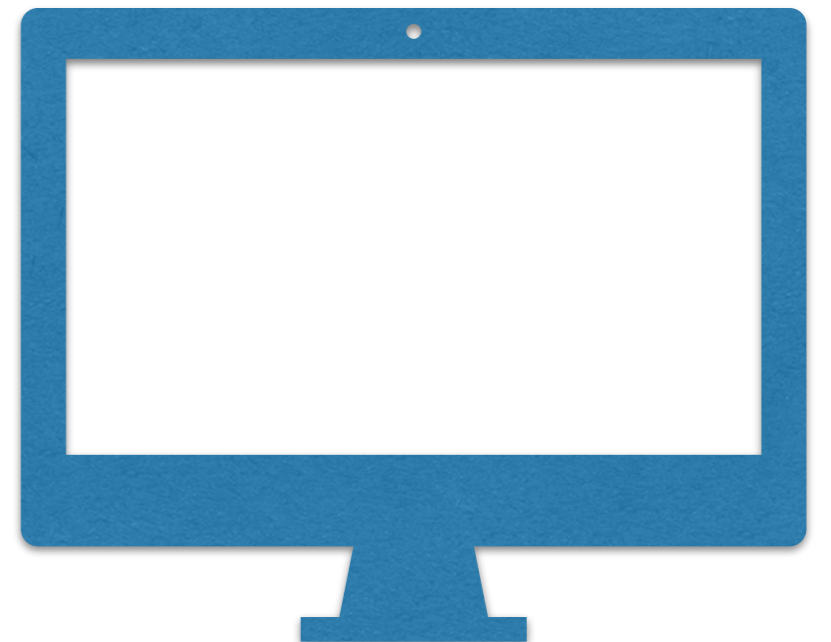
In addition, use resources to engage equitably with all members of the community when making decisions that affect the community.

Example: Budget

Providing Information

Participation is minimized and contained

- Budget priorities are determined solely by district staff.
- The district posts the approved budget on its website.



Encouraging Involvement

Participation is supported within established channels

- The superintendent encourages community members to attend public school board meetings about the budget.
- The district provides information about how and where to vote on the budget.



Sharing Power

Resources are dedicated to maximize participation and share ownership

- The school board sets aside funds for participatory budgeting.
- The district provides data about its students, staff, programs and finances to help inform the participatory budgeting process.



You try it...

- ▶ Select an activity of interest.
- ▶ Think of the 3 domains.
- ▶ What would that activity look like in each domain?

You try it...

1. Open House, Curriculum Night, Back to School Night
2. Parent Conferences
3. Budgeting Process
4. Current Topics Night (e.g. bullying, vaping, social media)

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Brief Sharing

Reflection and Next Steps

Reflection and Commitment

Look back at your 'personal experience with CE.' What insights have you gained today regarding equitable community engagement?

What might you do differently, or more often when you return to your community?

Resources



Shifting Mindsets and Increasing Family Engagement

in New Bedford Public Schools



The Foundations of Equitable Community Engagement

Equitable community engagement—an ongoing, two-way process of building relationships, working collaboratively with all students, and sharing power—is an achievable goal for all school communities. Our Community Engagement resources can help make it happen.

To make use of our tools, it's helpful to be aware of the principles they are built upon:

1. Schools and other public institutions in the U.S. often perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of oppression.
2. Individuals, communities, and institutions are able to grow and change.
3. Community engagement can lead to transformative benefits for schools and communities.
4. Equitable community engagement requires that school leaders share power with students, families, community members, and school staff at all levels.
5. All members of a community have valuable insights, experiences, and ideas to contribute.
6. Relationship-building is a worthwhile investment that requires willingness to listen, reflect, and build empathy.
7. Discussing issues of race, power, and privilege is essential in order to dismantle inequitable systems and structures.
8. Those who have been historically marginalized must be intentionally provided opportunities to participate in engagement work.

Research

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation's literature review — *How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Support Student Achievement and Influence School Reform* — provides a summary of studies that demonstrate a direct link between family or community partnership and improvements in student or school outcomes.

Foundational Reading

Equitable community engagement requires a comprehensive understanding of social, cultural, and economic barriers that marginalized communities face. It also requires those in power to examine the institutions and organizational structures that perpetuate inequity in and beyond our school systems. The reading below offers a place to start this journey of self-reflection and learning:

- *"White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."* Peggy McIntosh, 1989.
- *"White Fragility and the Rules of Engagement."* Robin DiAngelo, 2016.
- *"Defining Racism: Can We Talk?"* Beverly Daniel Tatum, chapter from *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race*, 2003.
- *"Race, Wealth, and Equality."* Thomas Shapiro and Melvin Oliver, chapter from *Black Wealth/White Wealth: Perspectives on Racial Inequality*, 1995.
- *"Equity Literacy for Educators: Definition and Abilities."* Paul Gorski, 2007.
- *"Changing the Discourse in Schools."* Eugene Eubanks, Ralph Parish, and Dianne Smith, chapter from *Race, Ethnicity, and Multiculturalism Policy and Practice*, 1997.
- *"Racism and inequity are products of design. They can be redesigned."* EquityXdesign, medium.com, 2018.
- *"Four Versions of Family-School Partnerships."* Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Granger, excerpt from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-Schools Partnerships*, 2007.
- *"The Groundwater Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism."* Bayar Love and Hayes-Greene, 2018.
- *"Five Stereotypes about Poor Families and Education."* Paul Gorski, excerpt from *Reaching and Teaching: Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap*, 2013.

Great Schools Partnership thanks Everyday Democracy for their collaboration in the fieldwork and shared learning that shaped many of these resources.

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The Case For Community Engagement

Research shows that students learn better when their families and local community organizations are engaged in schools. Strong family engagement is linked to increased student achievement, reduced absenteeism, and higher graduation rates. In addition, community engagement can help ensure that students' social, emotional, and physical health needs are addressed, while also providing meaningful, real-world learning opportunities. Schools that engage with their communities are also better able to help students solve local problems, contribute to civic life, and respond to a changing economy.

Equitable community engagement—an ongoing, two-way process of building relationships, working collaboratively to support all students, and sharing power—can also result in transformative benefits for schools and school districts:

Equitable Outcomes

When school leaders hear from a broad range of voices, especially those who have been systematically marginalized, schools' instructional, budgetary, and policy priorities—and the actions and results that flow from them—better reflect the needs and goals of everyone they serve. This results in schools that are more responsive to all stakeholders' needs, regardless of their race, income level, dominant language, or other social markers.

Lasting Impact

Schools and districts that are informed and shaped by the needs and contributions of students, families, and community members are better positioned to work toward their goals. They are able to reflect, learn, and grow together. They are more resilient in the face of inevitable changes and challenges, whether prompted by state policy, the local economy, technological developments, global events, or a social or political crisis. In addition, school improvements that result from equitable community engagement are far more likely to persist beyond the tenure of a visionary superintendent, a dynamic parent leader, or a committed school board member.

Innovative Solutions

Bringing a range of voices and experiences together broadens school leaders' perspectives and generates a wider array of ideas to act on opportunities and challenges. Equitable engagement with students, families, and community members—especially those who have been historically disenfranchised—is a critical way for leaders to develop a multi-faceted, thorough understanding of educational issues and generate strategies that are responsive to stakeholders' needs. In fact, it can prepare a whole new set of people to help problem-solve and lead the school system and community through complex and/or unforeseen circumstances.

Community Support

When students, families, teachers, and other members of the school community collaborate with school leaders to develop goals, plans, and decisions, it builds mutual trust. Intentional inclusivity also provides school leaders an opportunity to hear different perspectives and help find common ground. People are more likely to remain involved in the next phases of the work and to stand with the school in the face of pushback or challenges when they have been part of setting the agenda and working together to achieve it.

What Does It Mean to Share Power?

Sharing power means intentionally using resources to engage equitably with all members of the school community when making decisions that affect the community. Sharing power requires that leaders learn what is preventing people's full participation, systematically remove those barriers, and create meaningful opportunities for all community members to have an impact. Whether in one-on-one conversations, in teams, or as an organization, sharing power can happen in formal and informal ways. At its core, it is about ensuring that those who are most affected by discussions, programs, and decisions are the ones shaping them—even if that means leaders must give up some control.

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Community Engagement Moving Toward Equity

Equitable community engagement is equitable. To achieve equity, those in power, such as teachers or school administrators, must power with all stakeholders in their school community. This tool is designed to help you identify and implement practices that enable more effective and equitable practices.

Moving Toward Equity		
Providing Information	Encouraging Involvement	Sharing Power
Providing information to school administrators and school administrators and school administrators to students, families, and community members at regular intervals.	In addition to providing information, teachers and school administrators actively seek out feedback and input from students, families, and other community members.	In addition to providing information and encouraging involvement, teachers and school administrators also use resources to engage equitably with all members of the school community when making decisions that affect the community.

Community Engagement in Action

Equitable community engagement isn't just providing information, encouraging involvement, or sharing power; it requires power to do all three. What that looks like in practice will depend on the school, community, venue, topic, and more.

	Providing Information	Encouraging Involvement	Sharing Power
Parents	Parents receive data and information about the academic progress of their children.	Teachers share their reflections on each student's progress, allowing for input, reflection, and goal-setting.	Students lead conferences by sharing their work, reflecting on their progress, and setting goals. Families, teachers, and students function as a team.
School	The school sends notices about events that families can attend, such as math nights, the school play, and more.	Families are invited to chaperone field trips, volunteer in classrooms, or co-plan activities, such as a back-to-school barbecue.	Families design and implement activities of their own choosing, such as inviting school staff to neighborhood block parties or living room conversations.
Budget	Budget priorities are determined without input from the community and posted on the district website.	The superintendent encourages community members to attend public school board meeting about the budget and/or to vote.	The school board sets aside funds for participatory budgeting, a process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.
Communication	The school sends newsletters, email updates, robo calls, memos, or other communications about policy changes.	In a presentation, the school shares policy changes and invites feedback in the form of surveys, focus groups, suggestion boxes, or a question and answer period.	After the collection of data and the public exchange of ideas, decisions regarding a new school policy are made in an open forum with input from the school community.

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QUESTIONS





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THANK YOU

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Photo Credit

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