Community Conversations Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to provide practical guidance to community groups, school leadership teams, or other groups who are planning community conversations. These conversations are intended to allow school leaders to hear the voices of community members (including students, family members, and others) in discussions of recent events, important issues, school policy questions, or other topics.

Equitable community engagement requires an investment in building trusting relationships beyond formal meeting times. The following checklist represents key logistical steps meeting organizers and facilitators should follow for successful meetings and follow-up. This is not an exhaustive list of all of the moving components necessary for equitably engaging communities.

One Month Before the Community Conversation

- ☑ The conversation should be planned by a group that includes community representatives, students, and school or district staff. This group should determine:

  - ☑ How will we ensure that the voices of those who have been historically excluded will be represented?

  - ☑ Who will reach out to invitees?

  - ☑ What will be the topic(s) and outcome(s) of the community conversation?

  - ☑ Where will it be held? Who will be responsible for reserving space?

  - ☑ Who will facilitate?

  - ☑ What activities, presentations, or discussions will be included in the agenda?

  - ☑ Who will be responsible for arranging a childcare provider to be present? (Some districts create partnerships with other organizations, such as the YMCA or YWCA, to provide childcare, while others provide community service hours or a stipend to high school students.)

  - ☑ Who will arrange for translators to be present (if needed)?

  - ☑ Who will order the refreshments?

- ☑ Determine how the community conversation will be publicized.

- ☑ Determine how people from all across the community will be invited. Members of the planning committee should commit to specific actions that they will take, or specific people they will bring.

Additional Considerations for Virtual Meetings:

- ☑ As the host, ensure you have an account for a virtual meeting platform such as Zoom or Google Meet.

- ☑ Collect the email addresses of confirmed participants in order to send them a secure link in advance of the meeting.

- ☑ When setting up the virtual meeting, add secure features such as a waiting room or a meeting password.

- ☑ Identify someone who can serve as the designated technical support provider.

☑ While there are many technology tools that can be added to enhance a virtual meeting, before incorporating them, be aware of and consider the access and skills such additional tools will require of participants.

At Least Two Weeks Before the Community Conversation:

☑ Send the agenda and all supporting materials (such as an article or an end-of-meeting reflection prompt or survey) to be translated into all other languages spoken by the community.

☑ Collect all necessary materials, such as chart paper, markers, name tags, etc.

☑ Use social media and other avenues of communication to get the word out about the community conversation. Make sure that publicity is going out in all languages spoken by the community.

☑ If slides are necessary, check in with whoever is making them to be sure that they are on track.

☑ Make sure that the meeting space is reserved.

☑ Make sure that refreshments are ordered.

☑ Make sure that you have a projector, a screen (if there will be slides), and speakers if needed.

☑ Make sure that childcare providers are planning to be there.

☑ Consider ways to help families get to the event; taxi and bus vouchers, arranged carpools, a school bus, or even a "walking school bus" can help ensure that everyone who wants to attend can do so, regardless of where they live or whether they have access to their own ride.

☑ Check in with the facilitator or facilitators to be sure they are ready. Have your facilitator(s) review our opening prompts and ice breakers as well as our strategies for facilitators.

☑ If you are expecting a large turnout or feel the topics of conversation deserve wider attention, you may want to send a press release to invite local press.

☑ Check in with school and district leadership to see if any actions have been taken based on feedback from the last community conversation. If so, this should be shared publicly. It is important for people to know that their voices are being heard at these events, and actual changes are happening.

☑ Design and translate a feedback form that can be used to gather participant feedback. This guide to evaluating community engagement from Everyday Democracy can help you design your form.

Additional Considerations for Virtual Meetings:

☑ In addition to facilitators and technical support providers, assign other key roles to ensure smooth transitions. Do you need a chat moderator? Do you need additional note-takers?

The Day of the Community Conversation

☑ Arrive early to the venue. Set up outdoor signs or balloons so that people know where to go.

☑ Set up all chart paper, markers, handouts, etc.

☑ Make sure that the translated handouts are easily accessible to those who need them. If there are going to be tables designated for conversations in languages other than English, be sure to make this visible or show people where to go.

☑ Assign a person to direct people to the sign-in sheet so that you can record who was there.

☑ Set up all microphones, projectors, or other equipment and make sure they work.

☑ Check in with childcare providers to make sure they have everything they need. Get them set up with a sign-in sheet, clipboard, and pen so that parents can sign their kids in and out.

☑ If you are going to have attendees split into small groups for discussions, circulate to make sure that all groups are recording their conversations on chart paper (if applicable).

☑ At the end of the evening, be sure to save some time to distribute and collect feedback forms.

☑ Collect all chart papers or other notes so you can type them later.

☑ Do any clean up necessary to leave the venue as it was.

Additional Considerations for Virtual Meetings:

☑ Set up a check-in meeting for facilitators and technical support, preferably right before the community conversation starts. Use this time to check in about slides, sound, and breakout groups; you can also use this time to review last-minute changes to the agenda, or to answer any lingering questions.

☑ If possible, set up a group text to check in during the meeting.

☑ Consider playing music to kick off the meeting to allow enough time for participants to join.

After the Community Conversation

☑ Type up the names of people who signed in, and add their email addresses to the email list.

☑ The group that planned the conversation should review and analyze the feedback in the feedback forms, and discuss whether anything should be done differently next time.

☑ Type up the notes and share them with participants. This can be done via email as well as by posting key themes on a dedicated webpage hosted by the school district.

☑ Type up the notes and share them with school and district personnel so that the community suggestions can be acted upon.

☑ The coordinators and facilitators of the meeting can use the Community Conversations Debrief Protocol to discuss what went well and what could be better next time. Student facilitators can use this same protocol.