

PROMISING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

Meaningful engagement of communities in policy decision-making—by local, state, and federal agencies—is **vitaly important for educational equity and excellence**.

Process and protest are closely, and beneficially, related. Good approaches to stakeholder engagement actively enable and incorporate the voicing of differences of opinion.

These are the **promising practices** that we believe lead to meaningful engagement and promote equity-focused policies centered around student educational excellence and success:



1 REPRESENTATION: REACH THE UNREACHED

Prioritize the needs, participation, and leadership of communities that have historically been marginalized and underserved by political decision-making processes.

How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Take a look at the data about your students and schools, and focus on those struggling the most.
- ✓ Ensure—and show—that your engagement efforts include representatives of underserved students.
- ✓ Make sure that all events and materials are accessible to all stakeholders, and that information is shared in advance of decision-making.
- ✓ Commit to changes over time to become more inclusive.
- ✓ Use multiple methods of engagement to reach more stakeholders.
- ✓ Prioritize the leadership of underrepresented groups in ongoing structures (e.g. advisory committees).

2 TRANSPARENCY: SHOW YOUR WORK

Make your decision-making process transparent: all communities should be able to easily see when and how to participate, as well as how participation is valued and has real impact.

How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Post a regularly-updated timeline of engagement efforts online and in print at local community centers. The timeline should highlight clear points for community engagement.
- ✓ Commit to meaningful communication around the hardest issues facing your community.
- ✓ Share back what you hear, how you include specific input, and what your rationale is for those decisions.
- ✓ Identify and focus on common themes that appear across feedback submitted by differently situated groups.



Find out more about these Promising Practices and how they work for equity at partnersforeachandeverychild.org

3 SUSTAINABILITY: STICK WITH IT

Engagement efforts must begin at the earliest planning stages, continue throughout implementation in structured, regular ways, and occur at all levels (federal, state, and local).

How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Establish dedicated funding and staff positions to support these efforts.
- ✓ Continue to regularly convene stakeholder groups, and be transparent about when—and on what—you will continue to engage.
- ✓ Coordinate efforts and ensure robust information sharing across all levels.
- ✓ Create expectations for what continued engagement must look like.
- ✓ Ask for feedback to improve on engagement efforts over time.

4 COLLABORATION: MAXIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES

Work with outside partners to strengthen your engagement efforts. This can add resources, staff, intellectual capital, and new perspectives.

How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Work with trusted community partners to strategically convene events and conduct wide-reaching and targeted outreach.
- ✓ Build a movement around core and innovative ideas through coalition-building.
- ✓ Face challenging issues by partnering with trusted and equity-focused community partners.
- ✓ Honestly and directly address the impact of power and privilege.
- ✓ Work with external partners to help to record, analyze, and support your engagement efforts.

5 ALIGNMENT: DOUBLE DOWN

Aggregate and analyze community feedback from separate and parallel efforts to identify areas of agreement, amplify the voices of the underserved, and build support for reform.

How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Make equity the central focus of efforts to align funding and policy in support of underserved students and communities.
- ✓ Share stakeholder input across state agencies and respond comprehensively to stakeholder concerns.
- ✓ Identify the strengths of community partners and government entities, and coordinate efforts.