

An Analysis of Engagement Between the D97 School Board and Our Community
For Discussion at 4/26/16 Board Meeting

Summary: The D97 School Board is committed to building even stronger connections to our community. Over the last couple months, the board has developed goals related to this effort and studied best practice from leading districts nationally. In addition, two board members with the help of a Board Fellow, completed an analysis of the current state of engagement between the D97 School Board and the community.

That analysis can be seen in the document that follows this one. Individual board member's responses to this analysis and recommendations for addressing the gaps identified are listed below.

Responses from individual board members:

1. The board as an entity is very limited by OMA as to how it can engage in meaningful two-way communication. Any board response needs to be either "obvious" or requires board discussion.
2. Community engagement must first "do no harm". We must design community engagement efforts so that there are mechanism to help the board avoid doing harm by overreacting to anecdotal information, avoiding the tyranny of the majority, and giving too much visibility to the squeaky wheel.
3. Effective community engagement has to clearly identify what level of feedback we're looking for so that expectations and reality are aligned. Unfortunately, people hear "public engagement" and oft times think that they input will be acted on (and not just that their input will be heard and considered).

Suggestions for improvement from individual board members:

1. Create better mechanisms for getting input from the "grass roots" via our large and diverse staff that interact with the entire parent community at a scale that board members alone could never do.
2. Be more purposeful about adding mechanism around board and central office communications to let the community know about planning for potential changes so that input can be solicited and incorporated into the early planning efforts well before recommendations start to be solidified and changes are unlikely to be able to be made in a timely and cost effective manner.
3. Annual meetings with the following organizations on an annual basis: Chamber of Commerce; OP Board of Realtors; senior center; Holly Court and other retirement homes; and meet and greets at the preschool, Parenthesis, and Children's Museum.
4. Be more purposeful about creating mechanisms to use our existing channels (5 Essentials, PTO, PTO Council, Community forums, etc.) and, perhaps more important, connect the dots for the community on how that input is being used.