

Board Development Topic: Community Engagement & Communication for Boards

Date of Board Meeting:

June 12, 2025

Strategic Priority:

- ☒ Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities

Quality Indicator(s):

- QI 2.4 - Ensuring the Division's achievement results are published.
- QI 2.5 - Compliance with all regulatory requirements with Ministry of Education and community expectations (i.e., annual report and community reports).
- QI 3.2 - Engaging in ongoing professional learning related to board governance.
- QI 3.3 - Providing recommendations and supports the Board in accessing governance training.
- QI 7.5 - Providing support to the Board regarding advocacy and lobby efforts on behalf of the Division.

Information for the Board (10 fast facts):

1. Engagement is not an event, it's a relationship. Dr. Deb Pushor emphasizes that authentic engagement is not about hosting meetings or collecting surveys. It's about cultivating ongoing relationships where families and communities are co-constructors of school experiences, not passive recipients.
2. Local voice matters—and must be invited. The SSBA Governance Handbook reminds Boards that legitimacy comes from responsiveness. Community engagement should be structured to amplify local voices, especially those historically marginalized or underrepresented.
3. Communication is a leadership function, not a task. Effective Boards set the tone for transparent, two-way communication. This means modelling openness, setting expectations for timely updates, and being visible and accessible in community spaces.
4. Trust is earned through consistency. Dr. Pushor highlights that families watch closely for alignment between what school leaders say and do. Boards must align values with practice, ensuring decisions reflect both stated priorities and community needs.
5. Parents are partners, not patrons. True engagement moves beyond volunteering or attending events. Parents and caregivers should be seen as knowledge-holders and decision-makers, invited into meaningful collaboration on school priorities and improvement planning.
6. Governance is grounded in the community. According to the SSBA, school boards exist because communities value local decision-making. Boards are stewards of that trust—and must nurture it through regular, inclusive, and honest dialogue.
7. Every contact communicates a culture. Whether it's a newsletter, a trustee conversation in the grocery store, or a board meeting livestream—each interaction shapes public perception. Boards should lead with empathy, clarity, and integrity.

8. Engagement is equity in action. Dr. Pushor stresses that inclusive engagement demands intentional outreach. Boards should consider whose voices are missing—and build strategies to reach them through diverse channels, accessible formats, and culturally responsive practices.
9. Shared stories build shared purpose. The SSBA Handbook encourages Boards to use storytelling to connect decisions to real-life impact. When the community sees how a policy helps *their* child, support deepens.
10. Feedback is not a threat—it's a gift. Boards must embrace criticism and questions as signs of an engaged public. Creating channels for safe, respectful feedback (and visibly acting on it) enhances credibility and strengthens relationships.

Respectfully submitted,

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Good Spirit School Division