

dialogue))) framework



**Calgary Board
of Education**

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Decision-Making – Guided by Our Mission, Values... and You

The Calgary Board of Education's (CBE) **mission** is to ensure that our students develop the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their full potential. The decisions we make seek to achieve our mission and are based on our **values**:

- Students come first.
- Learning is our central purpose.
- Public education serves the common good.

We know we make better decisions for our students and staff when we listen and work together to solve problems and find solutions. When we do, our students are better equipped to become successful citizens who contribute their ideas, passion and energy to society.

That's why we developed *Dialogue*.

What is *Dialogue*?

Dialogue is our approach to community engagement. It was developed considering best practices in community engagement and reflects community input gathered during its development.

Applied consistently and effectively across our system, *Dialogue* is a mutually respectful exchange of ideas that acknowledges and celebrates the diversity within the CBE community. It represents our ongoing commitment to involve people in decisions that affect them.

There can be no *Dialogue* without you. Be a part of it.

When is Community Engagement Appropriate?

Some situations require community engagement while others do not. Sometimes the distinction between community engagement and communications can get blurry, which is why the first step of the *Dialogue* process involves a thorough assessment of the situation.

Engagement is needed when these are both true:



**There is a decision
to be made**



**There is an opportunity
for those affected to
influence the decision.**

There may also be instances when there is a decision to be made and those affected can influence the decision, but community engagement will not be an effective or productive means of decision-making. This includes situations where two communities would be pitted against one another or situations where the timeline for decision-making does not allow for adequate engagement.

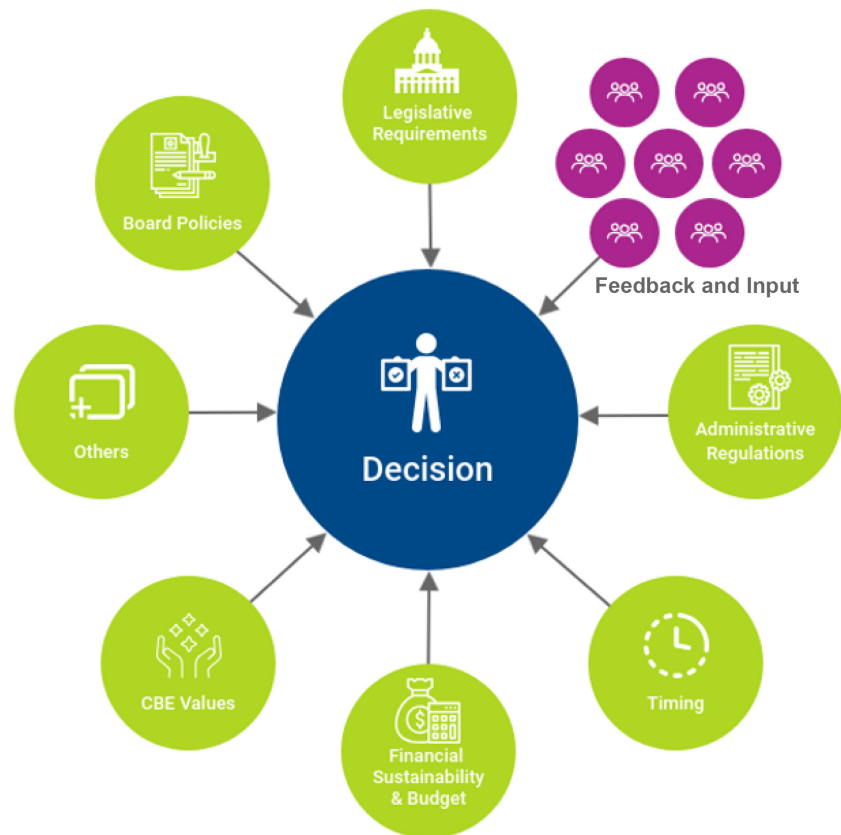
In times when there is no decision to be made or when those affected are not able to influence the decision, communicating and involving communities remains important to build understanding and acceptance.

Engagement Principles

Principles	Principles in Action
Accountable Outcomes and actions will be consistent with commitments made early in the process. 	■ Conduct activities in the best interests of students. ■ Develop plans with input from representatives of affected communities. ■ Training and resources are provided to employees involved in engagement initiatives. ■ Follow through on suggestions offered by community members impacted by CBE decisions wherever possible. ■ Outcomes are evaluated, measured and shared with key groups and communities.
Honest Communication and dialogue will be clear, candid and forthright. 	■ The purpose and limitations of community engagement are clearly communicated. ■ Information is presented clearly. ■ We will share what was heard, how input was considered and how that input did or did not influence decision-making. ■ We will provide an understandable rationale for decisions. ■ Engagement process will be transparent.
Inclusive Community capabilities and preferences for engagement and communication are reasonably accommodated, and barriers are addressed wherever possible. 	■ Everyone who wants to be involved has the opportunity to be included. ■ Efforts are made to reach people of diverse backgrounds, languages and needs. ■ Opportunities are provided for affected communities to participate in multiple ways (in-person meetings, online). ■ We will regularly seek input from affected communities on how they wish to be engaged. ■ Respect for divergent views.
Mutual Respect Dialogue will be conducted with respect for all participants. 	■ The roles and responsibilities of participants are clearly stated. ■ Participants are open, respectful and cooperative.
Responsive We are committed to hearing and understanding the views of affected communities. 	■ Engagement focuses on the concerns and aspirations of those impacted. ■ Timely information is provided in a variety of ways. ■ Participation is encouraged and communicated as early as possible in the process. ■ Participants are provided with appropriate information to provide meaningful input. ■ Gather information from participants.

How is Input Considered in Decision-Making?

It's important to identify which aspects of a decision affected communities can influence and which they cannot. We refer to this as defining the scope of the engagement. The scope of the engagement is always smaller than the scope of the decision because, along with community input, many other factors must be considered before making a decision. It is often not possible for affected communities to influence all factors related to a decision. The diagram below shows some of the factors that are considered when the CBE makes a decision.



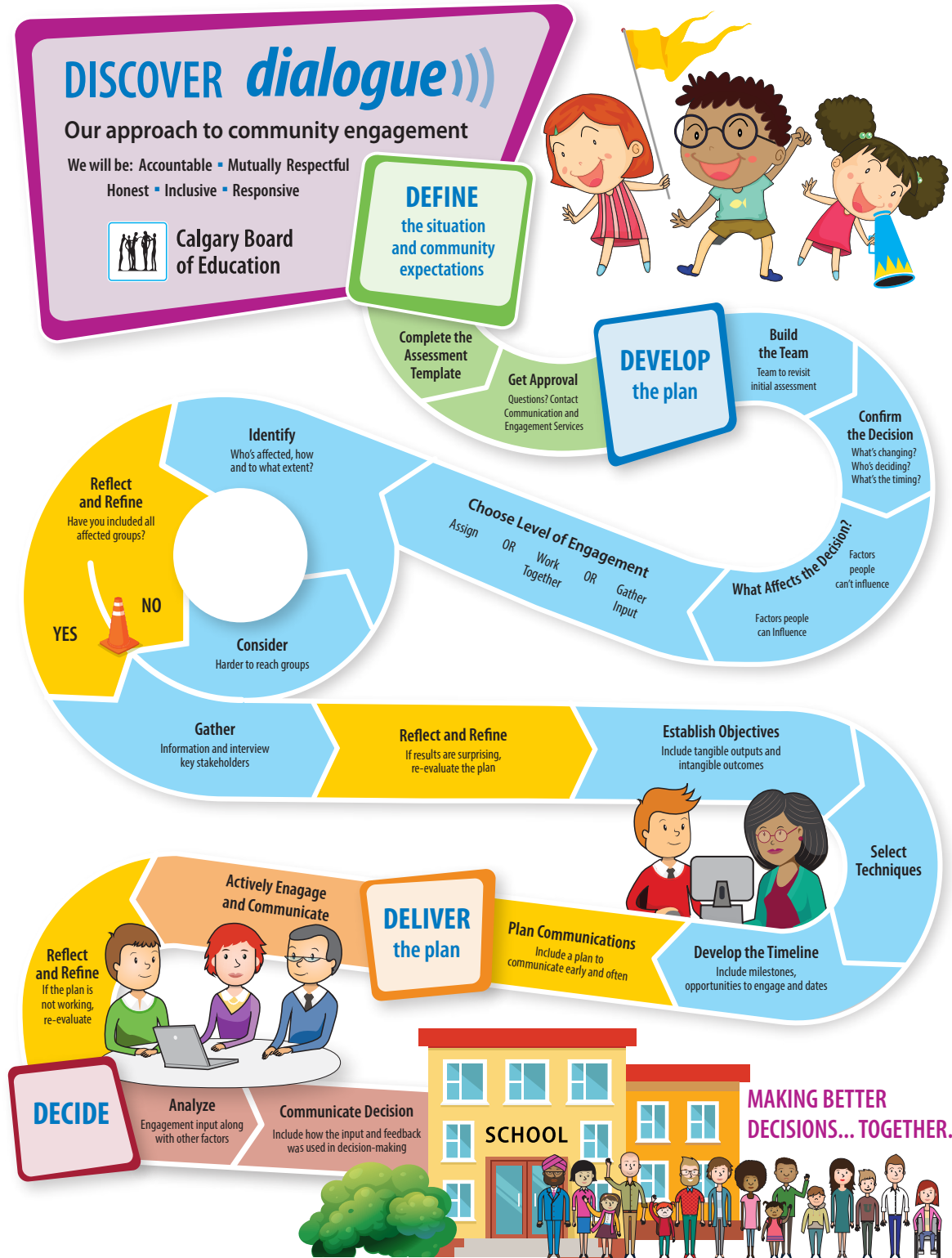
Levels of Engagement

At the CBE, every engagement initiative starts with the commitment to involve affected communities in the decisions that affect them. Each project is different and is assigned a level of engagement based on the impact of the decision and the influence affected communities can have. Below, are the CBE levels of engagement and our corresponding commitment to participants.

	 Gather Input	 Work Together	 Assign
CBE Commitment	We will consider advice in a meaningful and transparent way.	We will co-create solutions to address problems and seize opportunities together.	To the greatest extent possible we will implement your recommendations.
	Inform & Communicate: Every step of the way, we are committed to sharing, listening and learning to build mutual understanding and respect.		
What	CBE asks questions and the community shares their perspective.	The community and CBE collaborate to develop options in support of decision-making.	Based on clearly defined parameters, the community is assigned with specific parts of the decision.
Why	To gather input in response to questions or alternative approaches.	The decision is complex and will impact the community. A high degree of understanding between the CBE and community is required.	The level of impact is clear and there are opportunities for higher levels of engagement.
Example	Focus Group Interview Crowd Sourcing	Workshop World Café Charette Appreciative Inquiry	Advisory Committee Task Team Community Panel Community Jury

Dialogue Process Overview

This is the process CBE employees will follow when they consider and plan community engagement initiatives. Each situation is unique and requires its own individual plan.



Roles and Responsibilities

A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities helps people understand how their contributions may influence decisions within the CBE. There are a variety of roles that people may play in community engagement.

CBE

Most CBE community engagement initiatives are led by CBE Administration.

Communication and Engagement Services – This team leads system-wide community engagement initiatives. They also work with decision-makers, project teams, and internal and external communities to ensure community engagement practices are applied consistently and effectively across our system.

Principals – Principals lead engagement initiatives specific to their school communities, facilitating engagement activities with students, parents and community members. They also participate in and support system-wide engagement efforts. To allow them to carry out this work effectively, strong collaboration and communication is needed between service units, Areas and schools.

Employees – As a key CBE community, employees participate in community engagement initiatives when they may be affected by the decision. Initiatives may be system-wide or could be specific to their school or team.

Board of Trustees - The Board of Trustees lead very specific community engagement activities such as school naming, school closures and efforts related to board planning and student success, which may include the mission, values and Results. They may also seek input on the hiring of the Chief Superintendent of Schools and seek advice from school councils. On engagement initiatives led by Administration, trustees participate by listening to and understanding the thoughts and concerns of community members.

Public

The CBE has a diverse community, which includes many different perspectives about what is important for students and public education. At times, opinions are conflicting and wide-ranging. As a result, it's important for members of the public to make efforts to learn about opportunities to get involved in sharing their perspectives. It's also important that members of the public participate in a respectful way and have a clear understanding of the CBE's community engagement processes. This will help them to understand their role in each engagement initiative.

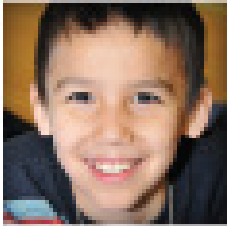
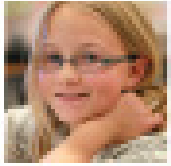
Community advisory groups

School Councils – School councils are legislated under the Education Act and are mandatory for all schools in the public education system. School council members work together to support and enhance student learning. They provide a way for members of the community to consult with and offer advice to principals and school boards. School councils can play an important role in supporting and facilitating effective community engagement within their school communities.

Parent societies – Parent societies are a formal group of parents, incorporated under the Societies Act for the purpose of raising funds for the school. A society is a separate legal entity from the school council. Parent societies, along with school principals, may seek input and feedback from staff, students and parents on allocation of funds raised.

School-based student advisory groups – Many schools have student advisory groups, which provide advice and feedback to school leaders and staff about school matters. These groups can play an important role in ensuring student perspectives are considered in school decision-making.

Other advisory committees – There are many different groups and committees that provide advice and guidance to the CBE on various topics and initiatives. Some are school-based while others are focused on system-level initiatives.



Dialogue Toolkit

The CBE has developed the *Dialogue Toolkit*, a set of tipsheets, templates and other resources that ensure all CBE community engagement initiatives consistently follow the *Dialogue* process outlined on page 6.

Contact |

We strive to continually improve. If you have any thoughts or suggestions you'd like to provide about the *Dialogue Framework*, please get in touch with us.

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