



## Board Policy 2006

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Legal References: [Education Act](#)  
[O Reg 612/00 School Councils And Parent Involvement Committees](#)

Related References: [Community Engagement Plan](#)  
[WRDSB Community and Family Engagement Charter](#)  
[Board Governance Policy G300 - Policy Development and Reviews](#)  
[Board Policy 1017 - Human Rights](#)  
[Board Policy 2001 - Communications](#)

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### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is committed to being an organization that values community collaboration and feedback. The WRDSB will provide opportunities for consultation with the WRDSB community during decision-making processes.
- 1.2. This policy provides the guiding principles, requirements, and processes for the WRDSB to follow when undertaking community engagement. This includes clearly communicating to the community the purpose of the engagement whether they are being informed, asked for feedback, or invited to collaborate.

### 2. Definitions

- 2.1. Deliberative engagement practices at WRDSB are defined as those that specifically seek and enable the input of community to enhance decision-making or the development of a strategy, policy, plan, or project.
- 2.2. Community is defined as families, caregivers, students, staff, and community stakeholders.

### 3. Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for effective consultation are as follows:

- 3.1. The WRDSB recognizes the vital role of consultation and the importance of meaningful two-way communication. The WRDSB Engagement Charter (Appendix A) was created to formalise this commitment and provide stakeholders with a clear understanding of this commitment.
- 3.2. The WRDSB is committed to clearly communicating to the public the level of input or influence of the feedback in WRDSB decision-making. This will be communicated throughout this process. And the WRDSB will use the Engagement Continuum to help decide on how to engage with community members for specific issues. (Appendix B)
- 3.3. The WRDSB will ensure that its community engagement efforts are purposeful, accountable and respectful of all who participate, while focussing on the process' goals and priorities.

- 3.4. The WRDSB recognizes that consultation is sometimes not possible (e.g. time constraints) or appropriate (e.g. regulations) in certain situations.
- 3.5. The WRDSB will strive to create a cooperative and productive consultation environment that demonstrates respect for due process, appreciates the legitimacy of different opinions and recognizes the value of diversity and dialogue.
- 3.6. The WRDSB will collect all comments, feedback, and input and review the relevant contributions. The information collected through specific consultations will be used as inputs to the specific process. The inputs are reviewed for patterns, themes, gaps, and discrepancies which help us gain key insights. So although all participation is welcome and needed, specific inputs may not be reflected in the final report or plan.

#### **4. Application**

- 4.1. This Policy applies to all WRDSB trustees and all levels of staff when considering and undertaking engagement with families, caregivers and communities. Any engagement requires staff and trustees to ensure deliberative engagement practices are implemented as mandated by the Education Act, the WRDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP), WRDSB development plans and other WRDSB policies. Generally when decisions need to be made, community engagement will inform/shape/co-create actions and/or outcomes – including for strategies, projects, assets and/or services.
- 4.2. The WRDSB is committed to engaging with students, families, caregivers and community stakeholders when making decisions that impact students. The review and improvement of engagement processes are integral to empowering communities, building relationships, enhancing public confidence/trust and informing and improving WRDSB goals of improved student achievement and well-being.
- 4.3. The WRDSB will undertake deliberative engagement practices as required by the Education Act and/or where it has been determined as appropriate that decision-making or the development of a strategy, policy, plan, or project, be informed by such engagement practices.
- 4.4. To maximize the effectiveness of its consultation efforts, the WRDSB will engage in outreach activities using a variety of measurable consultation/engagement techniques to inform the public about key issues and promote input opportunities while respecting the contributions of all participants.

#### **4.5. Holding of Public Meetings**

- 4.5.1. The WRDSB encourages engagement at public meetings in order to facilitate communication between the Board and its constituents;
- 4.5.2. The WRDSB will differentiate clearly between meetings sanctioned by the Board and those held by Board members or staff in connection with their duties or responsibilities;
- 4.5.3. The Board will approve, by formal motion, all public meetings which the Board conducts, sponsors, or sanctions.

## Waterloo Region District School Board Engagement Charter

These new engagement plans reinforce our commitment to transparency, accountability and keeping families informed, as directed by the Education Act. To support this, the WRDSB has developed a charter to outline our commitments to students, families and community members.

As part of the current Strategic Plan, we committed to reporting back to those we serve about the long-term activities that support our Strategic Directions.


We commit to communicating in clear and accessible language with students and families about the work we are doing to meet the directions of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

We commit to engaging students, families and community members through various forms of consultation.

We commit to clearly stating the level of engagement, whether it is to inform, consult or collaborate. Regardless of type of engagement, the WRDSB will share information in a timely manner in advance of decision-making, when possible. We will establish patterns for communicating about long-term projects or issues and will prioritise engaging with those most impacted.

Our purpose is to fulfill our mandate from the Ministry of Education to improve student achievement and well-being. This is what underpins the WRDSB's strategic and operational goals. WRDSB is also guided by our commitment to improving outcomes for all students, especially those who come from historically marginalized backgrounds.

## Engagement Continuum



INFORM	CONSULT	COLLABORATE
<b>Goal:</b> To provide the participants with balanced, objective information to assist them in understanding the project/process/issue. To provide possible opportunities and solutions to participants.	<b>Goal:</b> To obtain participant feedback on project/process/issue, alternatives and decisions.	<b>Goal:</b> To work directly with the participant throughout the process/project/issue to ensure stakeholder concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered where possible.
<b>Participant Role:</b> The participants will be kept informed and be clear on the communication strategy.	<b>Participant Role:</b> The participants will be listened to, kept informed and concerns will be acknowledged as appropriate. The participants' feedback will be shared and may influence the final decision. The opportunity and process for providing input (and when) will be clear.	<b>Participant Role:</b> The participants will have their concerns and aspirations directly reflected in the solutions where possible.
<b>How:</b> FAQs, open houses, roundtable meetings, WRDSB website, school website, school/system communications	<b>How:</b> Public presentations, smaller focus groups, surveys, public meetings, social media	<b>How:</b> Focus groups, workshops, pilot projects, participant working groups

