APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Revised Sept. 2012

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INTRODUCTION:
The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) strives to engage Catholic and community stakeholders, ratepayers, and all involved in Toronto Catholic schools to contribute their input to the ongoing development and strategic direction of the TCDSB.

This handbook has been developed under the direction of the Board of Trustees of the TCDSB's to support its inclusive public engagement policy. The goal is to deeply engage stakeholders in setting directions for the board and to participate in the governance of their school board by contributing their views on important issues, such as board goals, strategic planning, and student accommodation.

Community members have both the right and the responsibility to be involved in decisions that will affect them. Meaningful input from our community members is integral to ensuring initiatives, policies and practices reflect the school board's mission and meet the needs and expectations of the communities served by the TCDSB.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is committed to community engagement opportunities that are open, honest, transparent and accessible to all, and that value the input obtained in its decision making.

OBJECTIVE:
The objective of the Community Engagement Policy is to:
- bring about ongoing stakeholder engagement;
- build and strengthen the relationship between the School Board and it's communities;
- provide guidelines on suitable methods of engagement and guidelines on groups to engage, in current and emerging trends and concerns in Catholic education
- improve the Board's decision-making processes
- facilitate input and feedback from community members and the general public on the Board´s activities
- ensure that the Board is able to take into consideration the views of all community members in making policy decisions
- facilitate an ongoing exchange of information and feedback among the Board, its communities and the public.
- engage community members and the general public in meaningful ways, to allow deeper conversations about values, beliefs and concerns, to emphasize the desired future, appreciate the positives and build on past successes and create effective networks.

PURPOSE
Community engagement:
- demonstrates living our values
- directly impacts and improves student achievement and well being
- increases public confidence
- contributes to community members feeling that they are an integral part of the Board's decision-making process.

Community participation contributes to the Board of Trustees' decision-making processes by identifying new and emerging issues; providing feedback and recommending improvements to existing Board services, programs and policies; and participating in visioning, developing, implementing and monitoring Board plans and strategies.

EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the policy will be determined by measuring the following:

1. Catholic schools and the TCDSB are accessible and welcoming to parents and other community members;
2. Community members and the general public have open access to information and a growing understanding of educational policies, programs and services;
3. Community members play a meaningful role in the policy and strategic planning of the TCDSB.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The implementation of a comprehensive Community Engagement Policy requires leadership, resourcing, data management, communication and reporting systems. Building the capacity of Staff within the TCDSB is also required.

LEGAL IMPACT

Liability insurance required for all locations where engagements are conducted on an in-person basis.

ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR A SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT
A well-run engagement process is comprised of five key stages. These stages are implemented based on the principles outlined below.   To achieve the goals and objectives of the engagement, and to help the process run smoothly, engagement must be well planned. The Board's engagement plans will allow sufficient preparation time for meaningful participation by community members.

The design process allows Staff to develop strategies to implement the engagement in manageable stages, while simultaneously working with community members so that everyone's needs are met.

The stages in an engagement process are as follows:

Stage 1: Preparation

- Determine if there is a need for engagement by identifying the issue, its scope and the public environment.
- Identify the objectives of the specific engagement.
- Determine how communications will be managed before, during and after the engagement process.

Stage 2: Design

- Propose an appropriate approach to involving community members based on the information collected during the preparation stage, and consistent with the scope and the scale of the issue.
- Identify what information will be needed to support the engagement process and how this will be shared with community members.
- Define and clarify the approach by testing the ideas with the intended community members.

Stage 3: Implementation

- Implement the engagement plan that was developed during the preparation and design stages.
- Adapt to changing circumstances and unanticipated challenges. Communicate any changes to community members.

Stage 4: Feedback and Follow-up

- Provide participants with information concerning how their ideas and comments will be used in the decision-making process.
- Share progress reports and the results of the engagement publicly with community members in a timely fashion.

Stage 5: Evaluation

- Assess whether the process met the objectives set out in the design stage.

Levels and Methods of Engagement

LEVEL	METHOD
1. **Inform**	**Communication Plan** o Utilize current structures ie. SEAC, CPIC, CSAC, CSLIT, Parish bulletins, contacts with partner groups, board email exchange, communication protocol, to inform community members o Post Announcement on website o Include information to community members in the Director's Voice o Direct emails and/or printed letters/brochures to community members and through principals to forward to community members
2. **Consult**	**Face-to- Face and Electronic** o Utilize current structures ie. SEAC, CPIC, CSAC, CSLIT, to receive input from stakeholder groups on a specific policy or initiative o Direct email request to individual stakeholders for input o Posting of policy document or initiative with request for input on board website
3. **Involve**	**Ad Hoc Focus Groups** o Invite interested community members to be part of a focus group to provide input on a specific policy or initiative
4. **Collaborate**	**Representative and Integrated Development Team** o Ensure involvement of representatives from community members, especially those stakeholders who will be most impacted by the policy, issue or initiative are involved in the development process o Establish suitable timelines in development process to allow representatives to share with their community members and provide meaningful input and feedback during

	the development process o Share initial proposal or draft document with the system and community members and request feedback o Respond to feedback by including suggestions or explaining why suggestions are not feasible
Consensus	**Facilitated Workshop** o Community members, staff and trustees work together in a facilitated workshop session with shared understanding of goals and related success criteria to reach a consensus that aligns with the articulated mission, vision and values of the board
Empower	**Culture of Respect and Responsibility** o A culture of respect, responsibility and ownership establishes at the board level that models and supports community members collaboration in initiatives and policies at all levels of the system

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SECTION B
Creative Problem Solving Techniques

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Problem Solving Techniques: Model #1

Separate the people from the issues

Separating the people from the issues allows the parties to address the issues without damaging their relationship. There are three sources of people problems that need to be addressed: differences of perception, emotions when people feel their interests are threatened and ineffective communication. Usually the best way to deal with people problems is to maintain a good relationship, think of each other as partners in negotiation rather than as opponents. Try to understand the other's case even if you are not in agreement.

Focus on interests rather than positions

Defining a problem in terms of positions means that at least one party will "lose" the dispute. When a problem is defined in terms of the parties' underlying interest it is often possible to find a solution which satisfies both parties' interests. The first step is to identify interests and discuss them together. If a party wants the other side to take their interests into account, they must explain their interest clearly. Parties should keep a clear focus on their interest, but remain open to different proposals and positions.

Generate options

Brainstorm for all possible solutions to the problem. Wild and creative proposals are encouraged. Suggest partial solutions to the problem. Only after several proposals have been made should the group turn to evaluating the ideas. Avoid falling into a win-lose mentality by focusing on shared interests. The key to reconciling different interests is to look for items that are of low cost to you and high benefit to them, and vice versa.

Use objective criteria

Usually there are number of different criteria which could be used. The parties must agree which are best for their situation. Criteria should be both realistic and practical. Each issue should be approached as a shared search for objective criteria. Ask for the reasoning from the other party. Each party must keep an open mind and be willing to reconsider their positions when there is a reason to.

Leadership Toolbox for Problem Solving and Managing Conflict: Model #2

1. ***A Common Vision: The commitment to consider all sides of the issue.***

Key questions:

• Can you see your whole board, school or district?

• Can your colleagues see the whole, too?

• Are you all holding the same picture in mind?

Considering all sides takes practice. Stay open-minded to all sides of the issueTry to understand the issue and the history behind it.

2. ***Systems Thinking: Stay focussed on the important parts of the issue and how they link together.***

Key questions:

- How do the parts of your school system (teachers, administrators, trustees, parents, students, community members, central office) fit together?
- When does hot or cold conflict prevent these parts from working smoothly as one integrated system?

School board leaders and trustees need systems thinking to manage an organization effectively. Because every sizable organization has departments or divisions that develop their own self-interest, an over-arching perspective - sometimes called "going to the balcony" - is essential. Leading "our" side against "their" side is thinking like a manager. Forming a "third side" that can build a bridge and transform the conflict is thinking like a mediator.

3. ***Presence: Use all our mental, emotional and spiritual resources to assess and transform the conflict.***

Key questions:

• Are you fully present in most, if not all, of your leadership roles?

• Do strains, stresses or distractions hinder your effectiveness?

• If so, where is your effectiveness compromised and what steps are you taking to obtain support in these areas?

No matter how much we may want to see the whole and think about it systemically, we cannot do so if we are not right here, right now. Presence is an expression of our capacity to apply all our personal resources to assessing and transforming the conflict.

4. *Inquiry: A way of asking questions that gets to the real information that will help to transform the issue.*

Key questions:

• Do you ask the right questions of the right people at the right time?

• Are you missing vital information that you need to lead your board effectively because you are not asking questions?

It is difficult to understand complex systems or conflicts without asking questions. No matter how much knowledge we might have in our heads, sooner or later we need to draw on the wisdom of others. If we don't, our analysis almost certainly will be incomplete. Whether you are a teacher in a classroom, a principal managing a single school or a superintendent managing an entire district, asking questions is a critical early step in transforming conflict.

5. *Active Conversation: The awareness that we are free to choose how we speak and listen.*

Key questions:

• Are you aware of the full range of communication options available to you?

• Do you know when to use each one for maximum impact?

• Is your board's "meeting culture" well designed?

Being aware of the options for speaking and listening and knowing when to use them most effectively can immediately improve productivity and prevent unnecessary conflicts. Conscious communication also can save a school system's most precious resource: time.

6. *Dialogue: An inquiry-based, trust-building way of communicating that helps to bridge thoughts and ideas and to be innovative.*

Key questions:

• Are school and board leaders stuck in debate mode?

• Do members of your board and senior leadership team waste valuable time and energy trying to prove that their decisions are right and others' decisions are wrong?

7. *Bridging: The process of building relationships that cross the divisions in an organization.*

Key questions:

• What relationships in your board, school or school district are not functioning at optimal levels?

• Do you and your colleagues know how to bridge these differences to achieve better results?

We have many words for the construction materials from which these invisible bridges are built: trust, social capital, respect, healing, empathy, understanding, courage, collaboration. The energy must change in order for conflict to be transformed into synergy. When this shift occurs, what was impossible before now becomes possible. The stage is now set for a breakthrough. The stronger these bridges can be built, the more confident students and their parents feel about the education process.

8. ***Innovation: The creative, educational breakthrough that creates new options for moving through conflicts.***

Key questions:

• Are the human relationships in your board designed to produce maximum innovation?

• How is innovation rewarded - or punished - in your board culture?

There is no guarantee that conflicts can be transformed into resolutions. The breakthrough can be an innovation. This innovation - a new way of doing things that perhaps could be imagined but not achieved until now - brings hope. It points the way toward resolving or transforming the conflict so education not only survives, but becomes stronger.

Adapted from Mark Gerzon, Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Conflict into Opportunity

Conflict Partnering: Model #3

Sister Donna J. Markham, Prioress of the Congregation, of Adrian Dominica Sisters, challenges us to a new model of leadership for our Catholic schools that clearly emphasizes: relationships, connections, community, compassion and awe. She states that "lack of the connections is the breeding ground for violence." She believes that "Catholic leaders are obligated to stand in the tension of difference."

- Understand that community is the practice of the reign of God.

- Communicate and connect without agreement

- Commit to work toward understanding

- Commit to sustaining the dialogue

- Understand that maintaining the relationship is more important than winning the argument

Adapted from Sr. D. Markham's address to T.C.D.S.B. principals, Friday, March 31, 2006

Proposed Method for Ethical Decision Making: Model #4

1. Identify the core issue or issues involved

2. Make sure you understand the facts

3. Identify the main players in this issue and see if you can identify their interests

4. List the values and ethical tensions at stake or in conflict in this matter

5. Critically reflect on the possible options and their likely consequences

6. Choose the option you think best caters for the values and ethical standards you believe to be important

7. Give reasons (to yourself or others) why you have chosen this option and show why it is a better resolution of the issue then the other options

8. Make the decision but look for honest feedback and keep an open mind

9. Take action carefully.

10. Reflect and learn.

Adapted from Education Leadership: Key Challenges and Ethical Tensions, Patrick Duignan

Appreciative Inquiry: Model #5

Appreciative Inquiry is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms, **Appreciative Inquiry** involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the "unconditional positive question". In **Appreciative Inquiry** the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiralling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design.

The Appreciative Inquiry Process consists of five main steps:

1. **Definition:** establishing the focus and scope of the inquiry.
2. **Discovery:** eliciting stories of the system at its best - this is started in pairs, with the stories then shared with larger groups.
3. **Dream:** collecting the wisdom and imagining the future - this includes graphically visualizing the desired future.
4. **Design:** bridges to the future based on the best of the past and the present - groups work to use assets discovered in the second phase to design a plan to create the desired future.
5. **Destiny:** Making it happen.
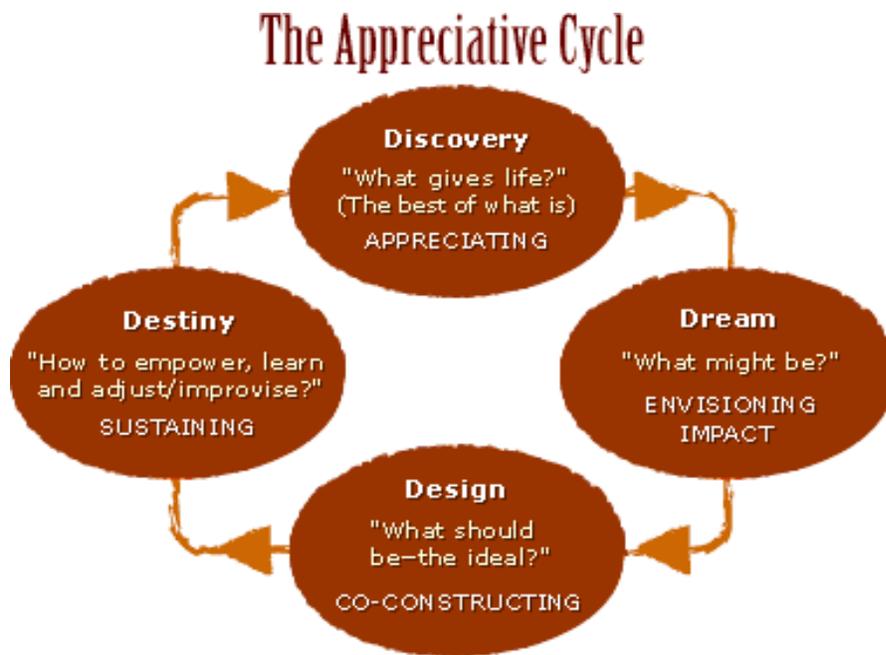
Adapted from A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry by David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney.

SECTION C
Helpful Criteria for Choosing a Physical Location

1. Is it a central location readily accessible by public transportation?

2. Is it accessible for individuals with mobility issues?

3. Is there adequate parking?

4. Does the venue have the necessary seating capacity appropriate to the anticipated size of the gathering?

5. Does it have 'break- out' rooms if there is a need for small group discussion?

6. Is the venue equipped with an internet connection and screen to facilitate the technological resources that may be needed?

7. Is there the necessary on-site support for the technology?

8. Does the venue allow for off-site participation through technology?

9. Is there an appropriate and proximate room for the provision of baby- sitting services if required?

10. Is there fresh water available for speakers?

11. Is there a budget for light refreshments?

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SECTION D
How to Conduct a Public Meeting

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Planning for Public Meetings

Successful public meetings first and foremost require planning. Meetings not planned well often leave participants feeling frustrated and believing that attending the meeting was a waste of time. Listed below are some ideas for how to prepare for a successful public meeting.

Determine the purpose of the meeting.

One of the first steps in planning a public meeting is to know its purpose. For example, is the meeting intended to inform, consult or involve the public? Are there other more efficient and effective methods including digital media that could be used instead?

Is the meeting intended to offer an opportunity for collaboration or consensus building with the public and community members or to create a culture of empowerment with the broader community? Another important point to consider is whether the purpose is best achieved through a public meeting. If it is decided that a public meeting should be held, then the reasons for it must be articulated to the public. The purpose of the meeting should be reiterated at the start of the meeting to set the parameters for those in attendance.

Prepare and Share an Agenda

Before any meeting takes place, an agenda should be developed. This agenda should be presented to the participants prior to the meeting or at its beginning. The participants should revise it at the beginning, if deemed necessary. This agenda is very important because it serves as a guide for the facilitator to keep the group moving toward accomplishing their goals. In preparing the agenda, the convener or facilitator of the meeting should focus on what, how, who, and when. The what of a meeting includes the issues to be discussed, the how includes the means or process through which the issues will be addressed, the who is the participant responsible for presenting or discussing the agenda item, and the when is where the issue or item is on the agenda and amount of time each item will be allotted.

Communication

Ensuring timely announcement of and invitation to the meeting in a variety of appropriate formats is critical. Another step in planning for public participation involves identifying and involving the key stakeholders. A successful public process will include a diversity of citizens who have a substantial interest in the outcome of that process. Diverse participation also ensures that relevant information about the particular issue is not overlooked. Diverse participation also can help to legitimize the final decisions or actions for the larger public.

Ground Rules

Another important outcome of building rapport with potential participants in advance is the ability to propose **ground rules** for how the meeting will be conducted ie. avoid talking while others are speaking, avoid personal attacks or accusations, and respect agreements about time. At the onset of any potentially contentious meeting, ground rules should be agreed upon. They should also be revised periodically throughout the meeting as needed. Engaging a skilled facilitator for a large public meeting is an excellent practice. If the issue is especially contentious it is helpful to have a facilitator who is seen to be 'neutral' in the matter. Neutral and trained facilitators do not have a strong sense of personal involvement in the issue at hand and, thus, are able to implement a process that is deemed fair by the participants.

Have a follow-up plan.

Another aspect of the planning process is to have a strategy identified for **following-up** once the meeting is completed. Following up with participants helps to prevent spending too much time reviewing what happened at a previous meeting, if additional meetings are required. Participants should be provided with the minutes of the meeting as soon as possible. Other materials generated during the meeting, such as anything written on flipcharts, should also be saved as records of the meeting and what actually occurred.

Some tips for conducting an effective meeting:

1. Define the meeting mission (purpose) and vision (future view).

2. Define the meeting facilitator and who will take minutes.

3. Define who will attend the meeting – consider representation from all parties needed to define and implement any decisions as well as who would be affected.

4. Define the meeting start and end times.

5. Define and pre-distribute the agenda that should include the meeting mission and vision, any relevant reports, start and end times, and attendees.

6. Ensure there is a process for registration or on-site sign up sheet to allow for follow-up with the participants.

7. Open the meeting with a prayer.

8. At the beginning of the meeting welcome everyone and if people in the room do not know each other (and if the number of participants is not too large) do a round table self-introduction.

9. State the ground rules of the meeting such as: this is a safe environment; no idea is a bad idea; everyone can openly disagree but opinions must be expressed with the reasoning behind them; the goal is define which ideas have the best chance to succeed.

10. Work though the agenda items inviting a dialogue of views and creative scenarios.

11. Write the ideas (not the names of who created them) on a chart visible by all. Gather consensus on which ideas have the least gaps and the greatest chance to succeed.

12. If follow up information is needed or if a decision has been made assign an accountable party to execute and bring a report back to the group.

13. Review the action items with the group and set those deliverable items at the beginning of the next meeting's agenda.

14. Provide fresh water for the speakers and if there is a budget for it, light refreshments.

15. Thank everyone for their participation.

Continuum Levels: Definitions and Descriptions of Responsibilities						
	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Consensus**	**Empower**
Purpose and Level of Engagement	To provide community members and the general public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and solutions involved in policy initiatives.	To obtain input from community members and the general public on policy directions and decisions.	To work directly with community members throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in the decision making process.	To partner with community members in the decision making process including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions.	To work together with community members when feasible to reach a decision through consensus.	To empower community members in having a deeper sense of responsibility and ownership of policy decisions.
TCDSB Responsibility	TCDSB Staff and Trustees will inform community members and the general public in an appropriate and timely manner, providing helpful information in accessible ways.	TCDSB Staff and Trustees will invite community members with diverse perspectives to participate and will listen and seek to understand all concerns.	TCDSB Staff and Trustees will ensure that the process is accessible and sustainable for the participating community members and will listen, understand and consider community input at every step of the process.	TCDSB Staff and Trustees will facilitate a process of collaborative dialogue and work with community members to incorporate their recommendations where feasible	TCDSB Staff and Trustees will strive to work with community members until a mutually acceptable solution is reached. This is not always possible given the breadth and depth of issues in a large urban school board and ultimately the final decision in policy rests with the board of trustees.	TCDSB Staff and Trustees through improved communications, transparency and ethical decision-making processes will empower community members to better understand, support and implement decisions.
Community Responsibility	Community members and the general public will be open to receiving and understanding information.	Community members and the general public will participate and provide input.	Community members will commit to providing thoughtful input throughout the process.	Community members will commit to the process and provide researched and representative input and collaborate to formulate alternatives and solutions.	Community members will work with TCDSB Staff and Trustees where feasible to work toward l a mutually acceptable solution..	Community members will actively participate and encourage others to do so, taking ownership and responsibility for the outcomes.

APPENDIX B