



MEMO:

Date: Thursday, April 26, 2018

Topic: **Stakeholder consultation plan**

Here is a plan for stakeholder engagement for Park West School Division. It is adapted from the work of Jamie Vollmer who presented at the recent Manitoba School Board convention.

Jamie described *The Great Conversation* that is designed to encourage a positive, ongoing discussion between educators and the public. They produce an ongoing flow of positive communication that leads to the development of a community-wide culture committed to increasing student success.

The Great Conversation is easy to understand and undertake. No new money or personnel are required. The process is built to run on two separate but connected tracks – one formal and one informal.

An overview of each track is attached as well as suggested activities and a timeline for implementation. The proposal involves taking action immediately with the main implementation occurring during the 2018-2019 school year.

“Public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed.”
- Abraham Lincoln

The Formal Track

The formal track is a deliberate, organized, group action. It is designed to engage educators and the public in an ongoing discussion that leads to increased student success. The centre piece of the formal track is a scripted message that evolves over time in a series of distinct phases.

The most important feature of the formal track is that it takes place on the **community's turf** at the **community's convenience**. This must be understood: We are going to them.

The structure of the formal track is simple. It has seven components.

1. Map the Community

- In order to identify the community's turf and convenience, we must create a map.
 - **Action** - Trustees will complete an overview of key community organizations and groups for the May 10 Board meeting.

2. **Decide on the Message**

- One of the primary objectives of The Great Conversation is the building and strengthening of cooperative school/community relationships based upon shared interests and mutual respect.
- To that end, an effective initial message features four basic themes:
 - Promoting the district's success in all its forms
 - Explaining the reasons that schools and communities must work together to increase student success
 - Making it clear that everyone in the community will benefit from this work, even those people who have no children in school, and
 - Demonstrating our steadfast desire for feedback.
 - **Action** – At their April 26 meeting, Trustees will decide on the overarching message for the public.

3. **Develop a Script**

- Using scripts ensures that every audience will be exposed to the same message at approximately the same time. They also provide a written record of the message as the process evolves.
 - **Action** – At their April 26 meeting, Trustees will approve the basic script.

4. **Build Teams**

- The formal track is a group action. Teams, therefore, not individual presenters, should carry the message to the community. Almost any group of two to four reasonable people can form an effective team.
 - **Action** – For formal visits with community groups or organizations, our goal will be to have at least 1 divisional administrator and 1-2 Trustees present.

5. **Conduct a Communications Audit**

- Create an inventory of all the ways that the district (or school) “talks” to the public, directly and indirectly. Think broadly. Most channels are obvious, e.g., websites, newsletters, e-mails, newspaper columns, public access cable. Others are not, e.g., the physical appearance of district grounds and facilities, and student work displayed throughout the community. All these options send powerful signals to the community.
 - **Action** – This will be completed during a discussion with principals at their June 8 meeting.

6. **Create a Presentation Schedule**

- We define the community's turf when we create our map. We conform to the community's convenience when we schedule our teams to make their presentations when and where the people of the community normally congregate
 - **Action** – This will be completed for the May 10 board meeting, with at least two community visits scheduled for June. We will extend an invitation to local organizations to have divisional administrators or Trustees at their meetings so they may provide their perspective on educational issues.

7. **Launch Phase One**

- Once the first six steps have been completed, all that remains is to launch Phase One and have the teams make their first presentations.
 - **Action** – Formal community visits / presentations will begin by June. Also, stakeholder surveys will be distributed to parents and community members in November. Finally, there will be stakeholder involvement in the strategic planning in the spring of 2019.

The Informal Track

Like the formal track, the core activity is talking. Unlike the formal track, which is built around the scripted presentations of teams, the informal track is conducted by individual staff members talking casually with the people who populate their social networks—family, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances.

The action steps of the informal track are as follows:

1. **Shift your attention from the negative to the positive**
 - Choose to put our attention on the hopeful, encouraging, positive developments that occur within our schools, we become more positive.
 - **Action** – The Division will continue to expand our use of social media to communicate positively with stakeholders. Targeted platforms will include Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.
2. **Speak positively about our Division and its people in public**
 - All Trustees and divisional administrators will ensure that they speak positively about Park West and its people.
 - **Action** – Informal community visits / presentations will begin in September. This will be a Listen and Learn Tour. They will involve informal meetings with parents and community members to listen to their thoughts and comments, and hopefully answer any questions they may have about the Division. The conversations will be driven by those in attendance with most of the time going for questions, answers, and discussion on topics of interest to the parents and community members attending. Ideally, these will be scheduled as breakfast or noon-hour coffee sessions.
3. **Share something positive within our social networks**
 - We will develop an intentional plan to promote the positive things happening within our Division. The recounting of a hopeful moment with a student carries an uplifting message of hope. As the process unfolds, more staff members choose to add their stories. Soon, with almost no effort, the entire community is enlivened with good news about their schools, and everyone is energized in the process.
 - **Action** – We will develop positive messages regarding the division to run during the summer months on all school signs. They will include references to our custodial staff, our transportation system. We will also implement an *Everyday Evidence* initiative in September
4. **Monitoring our progress**
 - This step requires five minutes, once a week. In a quiet moment, each individual asks, “How many times did I share something positive about my job, my class, or my school?” Write the answer down, and pledge to add to the total in the coming week.
 - **Action** – Starting in June, Trustees will be asked to reflect at board meetings on a positive communication.