Community Meetings: (Source: SCC Handbook II, 2008)

Community meetings provide for public accountability, opportunities for input, collaboration, and communication with members of the School Community. The purpose of these meetings is to encourage the sharing of ideas and providing input to the school on the Academic and Financial Plans. SCCs should hold two community meetings each year, one near the beginning of the development of the Academic and Financial Plans, and one when it is near-final draft form. SCC members and school volunteers can play an important role as meeting facilitators.

The following guidelines provide direction on roles, responsibilities, and strategies.

Guidelines for Community Meeting Facilitators

How to increase clarity at information sharing meetings

- Present information in multiple formats to increase retention and to address different communication styles and language diversity.

- Allow time for people to ask questions and/or express ideas in both small and large groups.

- Ask people for written and/or verbal feedback about what was clear about your messages and what questions they have that are still unanswered, or issues/solutions they have that they feel were not recorded.

Break-Out Model

You have an important job as a break-out group facilitator. In your group you will:

- Help the school gather important input from parents and community members
- Help group members feel comfortable sharing their ideas.
- Keep the group focused on the task at hand.
- Ensure that records accurately transcribe people’s comments.
- Ensure that recorders accurately transcribe people’s comments.
- Here is what you should do when you are in your group:
  - Introduce yourself and your recorder. Explain your role in accurately gathering input and making sure everyone has a chance to speak.
  - Ask participants to introduce themselves. Go around the group asking each participant to introduce himself and give his children’s grade level.
  - Pass out handouts. Review the established ground rules quickly
• identified by parents and other stakeholders. Explain that some people may have issues or concerns that will not be covered in our conversation. Point to the Issues Bin and say that to make sure these issues are addressed, we will add them to the Issues Bin to be dealt with another time. Participants should write their issues, and possibly their name and children’s names and their phone number on the card. Explain that because time is short, you might ask a participant to put his comment in the Issues Bin rather than spend too much time on it in the group. Tell participants this will help us stay focused on our task of getting ideas to make our school a better school for our children.

• Consider using the “issues bin” process. Hold up the cards/post-its that list issues

• Discuss each question. To begin, read the question and ask if anyone would like to make a comment. Facilitate the conversation keeping these things in mind.

• Try to keep track of who is NOT talking so you can return to that person and ask if he has something to add.

• When a person makes a comment, try to repeat it for your recorder. Make sure the recorder is keeping up. Ask participants whether what the recorder has written is correct.

• If more than one person makes the same comment, ask the recorder to make note of how many people agree.

• If someone is talking more than others, remind him of the ground rules and your job of making sure everyone has a chance to talk. You might say, “What you are talking about is very important but remember that everyone needs a turn to speak and our time is short. Did the recorder get the main idea of your comment down before we move on to someone else?”

• If there are issues that one or more person keeps bringing up use the Issues Bin cards. Remind participants that these issues will be dealt with but this just isn’t the right time or place.

• Try to avoid debates! Some participants might feel they have to defend their positions or ideas. Or, some might just start complaining or telling others their ideas won’t work. If this happens, remind participants of the ground rules again. No interrupting or put downs. Also, remind participants that we are only gathering input now and not evaluating them. You might say, “Please remember that we want everyone to feel comfortable sharing ideas. One of our Ground Rules is no put downs. Tonight, every idea is possible. You don’t have to defend your ideas. Let’s just get as many ideas as we can down on paper. When we write the Action Plan we’ll look at these ideas more carefully.”

• Select the most notable comments. With about 10 minutes left, ask participants to look at each question and select the comments that your group should share with the larger group.

• Share your groups’ comments. Each facilitator in turn will share out the comments that the group decided were most notable. Keep your sharing to about two minutes.
• Thank everyone and clean up. After the principal has made closing remarks, thank the remaining participants in your group for coming and for sharing their ideas. If necessary, remind some participants to add their comments to the Issues Bin. Collect the chart paper, markers, leftover cards, etc. and take them to a central location. Be sure your name and recorder’s name are on the chart paper in case there are any questions when the comments are tallied.
## Community Meeting Agenda (Sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Introductions</td>
<td>Round the room for introductions.&lt;br&gt;Present and Clarify&lt;br&gt;Validate importance of community participation.&lt;br&gt;Remind people of the vision and values for the school.</td>
<td>10Min</td>
<td>Agendas printed in appropriate languages.&lt;br&gt;Agenda posted clearly in front of the room. Post school vision and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Outcome &amp; Process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex and School Priorities</td>
<td>Present priorities, their source, value and specific meaning.&lt;br&gt;Address questions for clarity.</td>
<td>1Min</td>
<td>Handout: Priorities&lt;br&gt;Chart of priorities in front of room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Overview and timeline</td>
<td>Present&lt;br&gt;Describe benefits.&lt;br&gt;Emphasize the intention of addressing improving learning for all students.</td>
<td>10Min</td>
<td>Handout: Overview of Academic and Financial Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Groups</td>
<td>Break into small groups.&lt;br&gt;Introduce facilitator and their role.&lt;br&gt;• Allow some time for individual reflection&lt;br&gt;• Share ideas in small groups</td>
<td>30Min</td>
<td>Chart paper for each group to record questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>Each group presents a list of their key issues/solutions.&lt;br&gt;Quickly categorize key themes from small groups&lt;br&gt;Check for agreement&lt;br&gt;Review Next steps for Stakeholder Involvement.&lt;br&gt;Ask for feedback on meeting. Thank everyone for participation.</td>
<td>20Min</td>
<td>Quick Meeting Evaluation Cards to distribute and collect at end of meeting. Chart at front of room with next steps with a matching handout for participants to take home after the meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Meeting Objectives
- To understand the State Priorities for all schools.
- To understand the process the School Community Council will use to review plan and budget.
- To gather a list of initial issues/solutions you want the Academic Plan and Financial Plan to address for next year.

### Focus Questions
1. What do you think is working at our school to prepare your child in the reading, writing and math?
2. What do you think our school can do to increase parental involvement?
3. Based on your own experiences and your perspective as parents, what suggestions do you have for improving student achievement?
4. (If applicable) What ideas do you have to address the tardy/attendance problem at our school?
School Name ______________________
Observer Name ____________________

**Community meeting #1:**
The purpose of this meeting is to gather input from the community regarding priorities for the school’s academic and financial plans.
The meeting should take place at a time that is convenient for families. Families should be made to feel welcome and comfortable (e.g., by providing child care, translation, etc.) and there should be ample opportunity for community members to express their opinions.

Observers: Please attend the meeting and then have a conversation with the principal about the issues below.

Please comment on the following:

**Representation:** Approximately how many members of the community are present? Is it a diverse group, reflecting the population of the school?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Substance:** Is the discussion focused on the academic plan priorities? Is student achievement serving as a primary basis for discussion? Did the meeting produce desirable outcomes (e.g., decisions, clarification of future direction)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Opportunities for input:** Is it clear (from the agenda or other sources) what the purpose of the meeting is? Is an effort made to have everyone’s opinions heard and recorded? Where applicable, is there translation to ensure that non-English speaking parents are heard?
________________________________________________________________________
School Name _________________

Observer Name _______________

**Community meeting #2:**
The purpose of this meeting is to give the community an opportunity to provide input on the draft academic and financial plans developed by the school. The meeting should take place at a time that is convenient for families. Families should be made to feel welcome and comfortable (e.g., by providing child care, translation, etc.) and there should be ample opportunity for community members to read a draft plan and give feedback on it.

Observers: Please attend the meeting and then have a conversation with the principal about the issues below.

Please comment on the following:

**Representation:** Approximately how many members of the community are present? Is it a diverse group, reflecting the population of the school?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**Substance:** Is the discussion focused on the academic and financial plan? *Is there a draft plan available for review by community members?* Did the meeting produce desirable outcomes (e.g., decisions, clarification of future direction)?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**Opportunities for input:** Is it clear (from the agenda or other sources) what the purpose of the meeting is? Is an effort made to have everyone’s opinions heard and recorded? Where applicable, is there translation to ensure that non-English speaking parents are heard?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________