# Community Engagement Committee Board Memorandum

**General Background.**

The Community Engagement Committee is comprised of Cassandra Auzenne Bandy, Rolando Martinez, and Audrey Momanaee.  The Committee was appointed on March 6, 2024. The charge of the Committee was to prepare a preliminary recommended written community engagement action plan, including draft engagement timeline, list of identified stakeholders for engagement, model meeting agenda, and script. The Committee met on March 7, March 19, March 26, and April 1 to discuss the work of the committee, and to prepare the recommended documents to be shared with the Board.

This memorandum and its attachments are intended to preview the key recommendations at a high level in anticipation of the Community Engagement Training which is set for April 4, 2024. The Committee will share its work and recommendations at that time.  It is requested that the Board be prepared to provide feedback during that training, so that the Committee can complete the work to finalize its recommendations prior to the April 11, 2024 Board meeting.

**Recommendation 1 - Timeline.**

1. Consistent with best practice, the Committee recommends that the Board adopt an overarching community engagement action plan which will take the Board through the end of 2026.  Because the plan covers a multi-year period, it is important that adequate flexibility be built in to the community engagement action plan, though the general structure of the plan may be set by the Board at the outset (now).
2. The Committee further recommends that community engagement periods be set and occur at regular intervals, with intentional engagement periods in the Fall (approx. August-October) and Spring (approx. February-April) of each year. These engagement periods are called "Campaigns" in the attached timeline.
3. Prior to the end of the 2023-2024 school year, the Committee recommends a targeted event to engage with high school students at a unique event to be held in mid-May.

**Recommendation 2 - Structure of Committee Work.**

It is recommended that:
1. A new ad hoc Community Engagement Campaign Committee ("CECC") be created for each Campaign.
2. The first ad hoc CECC will be appointed once the community engagement action plan is adopted by the Board.  It is recommended that the first CECC be appointed by the President and will be comprised of Cassandra Auzenne-Bandy and Rolando Martinez who will serve through the Fall 2024 Campaign.
3. The CECCs will conduct the work outlined on the attached timeline in advance of, during and after the two Campaigns for which they serve on the CECC.
4. Each appointment of two Board members to a CECC will be for a period of one calendar year (or two Campaigns). Each CECC will dissolve upon its report to the Board following the second Campaign to which it is assigned, and its recommendation to the President of two committee members for the CECC for the following year.

**Recommendation 3 - Information Sharing and Feedback.**

Community engagement is intended to be a two-way communication. As such, each engagement event during a Campaign is intended to be comprised of a report out (progress towards goals and constraints) with feedback and an opportunity for sharing on the work of the Board (specifically, topics of governance or progress monitoring) with feedback.

Community engagement is recommended to be conducted by all Board members. Though the CECCs will outline the work of each Campaign, it is recommended that all Board members should participate in the implementation. It is the job of the CECC and each Board member to ensure participation.

It is important that the Board speaks with one voice during the community engagement work. As such, we have prepared a recommended script and presentation, which will be provided for board review at the 4/4/24 workshop. These are intended to be modified as appropriate by the CECC to meet the needs of the moment, within the structures of the community engagement action plan.

**Recommendation 4 - Stakeholder Engagement.**

The Committee has reviewed a list of stakeholders utilized in the community engagement work conducted in Summer/Fall 2023 in connection with the setting of the District's goals and constraints. It will provide a revised list of stakeholders for consideration by future CECCs.  The list is not intended to be a limitation, but a starting point for future CECCs.  The Committee recommends that the Board adopt a community engagement action plan that ensures that all stakeholders are engaged, including but not limited to students, teachers, administrators, parents, caretakers and families of students, and community members.  It is recommended that the CECCs pay special attention to ensure that all stakeholders - whether involved in organized groups or otherwise - are considered in the community engagement processes.

# Board-led Engagement and Outreach

Suggested Protocol for Executing Meaningful Community Listening Campaigns

Most boards of education rely on the hour or so of public comment during their board meetings as the sole mechanism for engaging with their community. This is problematic for several reasons, including:

1. Public comment is not meaningful two-way community engagement. Because of open meeting laws, there is no opportunity for back-and-forth dialogue.
2. The board represents the vision and values of the district's OWNER community. Most people attending a board meeting or sending comments to the board are not attending or doing so with the "ownership mindset." Rather, their concerns are customer-based.
3. Public speakers are generally self-selected and often not a representative sample of the community.

It is the board's responsibility to act on behalf of the whole, not just those who take the time or have access to lobby them. The community's diversity must not only be respected but intentionally sought. Further, the board must adopt a protocol to ensure that community engagement is done with a shared voice so that no section of the community receives inconsistent information.

**Suggested Protocol Includes:**

- **Engaging as Pairs-** Board members should facilitate conversations with a partner whenever engaging on behalf of the board. In fact, the board has a responsibility to be clear that individual board members aren't put in a position where their comments may be construed as an official board positon.
- **A Shared Script-** The board's shared voice should center the reason for the school system existing in the first place (improving student outcomes) with questions that elicit information about what the community wants its students to know and be able to do (vision/goals) and the non-negotiable community values that must be honored (values/constraints).
- **A Shared Definition of Community—**The board engages the community to have owner conversations about student outcomes. These conversations are about the organization's long-term alignment. The board should come to a shared agreement on who this owner community is comprised of.
- **A Common Mechanism for Feedback-** Demonstrating that feedback is taken seriously and acted upon shows transparency and accountability to the community.  It is critical that the community actually see the board use the information in the decision making process.

Boards who want to create a deliberate cadence of accountability with the community can do so by adopting a community engagement plan and timeline. This allows the board to set expectations with the community, staff, and each other as to how often and in what manner they can engage with the board.

In addition to a community engagement plan, the board should also use the recommended protocol to establish processes for consistent community outreach.

# Sample Community Engagement Script

Title: Enhancing Student Outcomes through Lonestar Governance: A Dialogue Between HISD Board Members and Community Focus Groups

[Scene: A conference room at the Houston Independent School District (HISD) headquarters. Members of the HISD Board of Managers, Board Member 1 and Board Member 2, sit at the head of the table. Representatives from community focus groups, including parents, teachers, students, and local leaders, are gathered around.]

Board Member 1: Good evening, everyone. We appreciate your presence today as we discuss how the HISD Board of Managers is dedicated to improving student outcomes by implementing the Lonestar Governance Framework. This framework guides our efforts to enhance school board effectiveness and, ultimately, student success. Before diving into more details, I'd like to introduce other board membersk here today. Other board members can be found on the screen. (references slide of all board members)

Board Member 2: Absolutely. The Lonestar Governance Framework emphasizes key behaviors proven to drive improvements in student outcomes. These behaviors include setting clear student outcome goals, establishing constraints for the superintendent, monitoring progress monthly, and implementing systems and processes that will cause the board to establish a culture prioritizing student success over adult convenience.

Board Member 1: Last Fall, the board met with people all over Houston for roughly four months to ensure that we engaged a representative cross-section of the community. This was a critical first step in ensuring we have a good pulse on the community's vision for students and values that must be protected along the way. We had to engage the community as district owners whose interests are on the long-term systemwide success of HISD.(Vision Statement on Screen) During these conversations, the following themes emerged:

Board Member 2: (Vision Statement and Goals on screen) Vision for improved student outcomes— The community wanted to see literate and numerate students with solid critical thinking and problem-solving skills who would prepare them for success after high school. This vision was used to identify a set of four student outcome goals.

(Share List of Goals)

# Sample Community Engagement Script

Board Member 1: (Superintendent Constraints on Screen) Values to be protected by constraints—The community clearly wants this intervention to end as quickly as possible, and they strongly desire to preserve a broad range of educational program options. These values were used to identify three constraints for superintendent behavior.

Board Member 2: These goals and constraints are the board's priorities. These are supposed to be the first stop for all resource allocations and strategic initiatives. Causing improvements in these areas is critical and requires focus. The more of these priorities that the board adopts, the less focused that the system is allowed to be.

Board Member 1: Certainly. One of our first steps is setting specific and measurable student outcome goals that align with our vision for academic excellence. These goals serve as a roadmap for our district's success and guide our decision-making processes.
For the second half of this gathering, we have about 3 questions that will guide our conversations . One of our Board Members will take notes of all your responses and at the conclusion of all of our sessions, we will identify themes that provide feedback on how well the board is doing in representing the vision and values of our community.

Board member 2.
Question 1: Turning your attention to the slide that lists these priorities (Goals on Screen), how aligned are these with your expectations for District. Are they attainable?

As you answer this question, we want you to think about the you have had during your education. Regardless of whether those needs were met today, let's start out by naming them. What needs have you had to be successful as a student in HISD?

Let's regroup and share your thoughts. We will begin with group/table #1. (Board Member may need to ask to follow up questions or seek clarification)

Board Member 2: Accountability is key to our governance approach. We conduct monthly reviews to track our progress, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate successes. By regularly assessing our performance against our goals, we can make data-informed decisions that benefit our students and community.

Question #2.
In what ways has HISD prepared or not prepared you for life after graduation?
In answering this question, we also what you to think about how your peers would respond.
Let's come back and share your thoughts.
• Let's start off with elementary…
• Now, lets continue with middle and high school students.

(Board Member may need to ask to follow up questions or seek clarification)

(Share list of Constraints)

# Sample Community Engagement Script

Board Member 1: By implementing the Lonestar Governance Framework, we create a culture of clarity, high expectations, and student-centered leadership within our district. Our focus is on improving student outcomes and providing every child the opportunity to succeed academically and beyond.

Question#3. In what ways has the Board represented the values of the community as displayed on the screen well.

Now that you have had time to speak to each other, who would like to volunteer to share your thought?

(Board Member may need to ask to follow up questions or seek clarification)

Board Member 2: Thank you all for participating in this session. As noted earlier, your feedback will be gathered to identify area of success and improvement needed and shared with the rest of the board members.
Community engagement is vital to our success. We encourage parents, teachers, students, and local leaders to participate in our governance processes, provide feedback, and hold us accountable for delivering on our commitments. Together, we can ensure that every student in HISD receives a high-quality education.

Board Member 1: In conclusion, we are committed to leading with clarity, high expectations, and a relentless focus on student outcomes. We thank each of you for your partnership and look forward to working together to create a brighter future for the children of Houston.

# Quarterly Time-use Evaluation

| Board Authorized Public Meeting? | Meeting Type | Date | Public Minutes | SO Focused | Other Minutes | % Time Use |
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| **Month** | | | | | | |
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| TIME USE TRACKER | | | | QTR: | | Date: |
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| Framework Pillars | Student Outcome Minutes | Adult Behavior Minutes | The board tracks its time spent during public authorized meetings | Other Topic Minutes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Vision and Goals** | | | ← Minutes setting student outcome goals | |
| | | | ← Minutes setting constraints or theories of action | |
| **Progress and Accountability** | | | ← Minutes receiving, discussing, and voting on Student Outcome Goal Monitoring Reports according to the **board adopted** Monitoring Calendar | |
| | | | ← Minutes receiving, discussing, and voting on Constraint Monitoring Reports according to the **board adopted** Monitoring Calendar | |
| | | | ← Minutes evaluating the superintendent on student outcome goals, GPMs, constraints, and CPMs | |
| | | | ← Minutes performing board self-evaluations using the LSG Integrity Instrument | |
| **Systems and Processes** | | | Minutes discussing, debating, and voting on other agenda items (including consent agenda items) ⟶ | |
| **Advocacy and Engagement** | | | ← **Minutes hosting two-way communication meetings on student outcome goals, constraints, theories of action and/or progress toward student outcome goals** | |
| | | | ← **Minutes recognizing the accomplishments of students and staff regarding progress on student outcome goals** | |
| **Synergy and Teamwork** | | | Minutes fulfilling statutorily required public hearings, forums, and comments<br>Minutes fulfilling statutorily required or Lone Star Governance workshops<br>Minutes in closed session as permitted by law | |
| **Other** | | | Any time spent on an activity that does not meet the conditions listed above ⟶ | |
| **TOTALS** | | | | |

Use For Student Outcome and Adult Behavior Minutes Percentage Calculation: [ ] ÷ [ ] × 100 = [ ] **% Student Outcome and Adult Behavior Minutes**

Use For Student Outcome Minutes Percentage Calculation: [ ] ÷ [ ] × 100 = [ ] **% Student Outcome Minutes**

| Trustees Present | Trustees Absent | % Attendance | | Count of 'Other' Agenda Items | | Goals Discussed | Goals on Target | % on Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

| Consent Items | Consent Items Removed | % Remaining on Consent Agenda | | | | GPMs Discussed | GPMs on Target | % on Target |
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