

Implementing Your Community Engagement Board

Implementing your Community Engagement Board (CEB) involves clearly defining roles and responsibilities for volunteers and team members to effectively support the process of removing attendance barriers for students and their families. This guidance outlines how to create a welcoming and inclusive environment, set up the venue thoughtfully, maintain confidentiality, and foster open dialogue. The CEB meeting focuses on identifying attendance barriers and developing actionable steps to support improved attendance.

Establish Roles & Responsibilities

Identifying key roles and responsibilities of volunteers and team members is crucial in supporting the process of removing attendance barriers for students and their families. Key roles include:

Greeter

- Welcome families into the venue and thank them for taking the time to attend
- Answer questions that families may have
- Inform the board when a family has arrived
- Protect the family's privacy by avoiding the sharing of any identifiable information in common waiting areas
- Escort the family:
 - Walk family to their meeting location
 - Remind them of the purpose and goal of the CEB: to produce a plan to support student's increased attendance
 - Remind the family who is in the room
 - Introduce the family to the meeting facilitator

Facilitator

- Ensure introductions take place
- Keep participants on topic
- Help all voices to be heard
- Maintain the supportive role of the board

Notetaker

- Take notes
- Complete the Community Engagement Board Agreement
- Verify the agreement is actionable
- Read the Community Engagement Board Agreement



- Ensure there is student and family buy in
- Collect signatures from all who participated in the board meeting

Venue Setup

As families enter the meeting venue, it is essential to create an environment that fosters inclusion, support, and a sense of belonging. The following guidelines are recommended to offer a positive experience for everyone involved:

Seating

- Limit the number of CEB members to three – five board members. This is less overwhelming for a family and allows everyone to be heard within the allotted time
- Sit in a circle or at the same table to reinforce mutual respect and partnership. OSPI highly discourages CEB members from sitting apart from or above the student and their family
- Ensure the space is conducive to open dialogue and collaboration

Confidentiality and Inclusivity

- Be aware of your surroundings
- Show consideration of others who may share the space to ensure confidentiality

Welcoming Atmosphere

- Start the meeting with friendly greetings; acknowledge each participant by name and express appreciation for their attendance
- Encourage the student to introduce themselves and their family in a way they feel comfortable
- Use inclusive language throughout the meeting
- Encourage everyone to share their thoughts and ensure all voices are heard
- Practice active listening by providing full attention to the student and family when they are speaking and ask clarifying questions
- Recognize and celebrate small successes and contributions during the meeting

Plan for Incoming Families

- When inviting multiple families, have a clear plan for where they will wait before the meeting with the board (families may arrive early or previous board meetings may extend over)
- Have assessments available, or paperwork for the family to complete while they wait

Distribute the Agenda

It is recommended you share the agenda with all board members before the family arrives. This allows everyone to prepare, ask questions, and ensure alignment.

Conduct the CEB Meeting

Introductions

Upon arrival, the student and family will be escorted to the meeting room. The facilitator will introduce themselves — [see section on CEB Introduction Script](#) —and invite each board member to do the same. The student can introduce themselves and their family. The facilitator can explain the purpose of the meeting and ask an open-ended question — refer to section titled [Guidelines for Questions to Learn About Barriers to Attendance](#) — to encourage the family to share their attendance-related barriers.

Facilitating the Conversation

Active family participation is crucial for a successful CEB. The facilitator has a key role in keeping the conversation focused on attendance and related barriers. Other board members should ask clarifying questions to identify helpful resources and support the family's attendance improvement. By emphasizing the student and family's strengths and successes, the board can identify actionable steps for attendance improvement, including actions the student can take, ways the family can support attendance, as well as commitments and supports that the district, school, and/or community partners will provide.

Identifying a Caring Adult

OSPI recommends that the facilitator and the board member ask the student if they have an adult that they feel comfortable connecting with at school to enhance the student's success in attending.

The caring adult will:

- Check in with the student daily (or regularly) during the first two or three weeks after the CEB
- Celebrate the student's success when they attend school
- Refer the student to a counselor or administrator if they encounter rough moments or difficult days that require more support

If the student is unable to self-select the board or school can offer a connection to a safe person.

Meeting Conclusion

As the meeting concludes, follow-up steps for the student, family, and school should be identified. The board members should create a plan with the student and family's input for ongoing support that includes who will follow up with the family, when the check-in will be, and the expected steps for the follow-up.

Student Disclosure & Parents Knowledge

Students may have shared private information with trusted school or community professionals prior to the CEB and may not want that information shared with their parents ([Chapter 28A.604 RCW](#)). Only discuss what is brought up in the room at the time.

Community Engagement Board Agreement

The intention of a CEB is to allow a family and their student to share what they feel the barriers to attendance are. The school district has an opportunity to begin to reestablish a relationship with the family and student by identifying the goal to support increased attendance. After introductions, clearly establish with the family that an agreement will be completed as a part of the student's truancy file.

School districts can save time by pre-filling out the demographic information on the agreement for the student and their family. The student and parents can fill in their own information when completing the agreement. The school district can ask that the student and their family sign the agreement. It is recommended not to fill in the signature spaces for a family unless it is a virtual meeting, and physical signatures cannot be collected. If it is a virtual meeting, read over the agreement and ask permission to note that the family attended virtually.

See the [OSPI Community Engagement Board Agreement Template](#). OSPI highly recommends establishing in the agreement the commitments that ALL parties will make, not just the student and/or family.

It is recommended to provide the student and family with a copy of the agreement for their reference at the end of their in-person meeting; if the meeting is virtual, mail a copy to the student and family.

School districts should determine during the meeting who will follow up with the school, student and their family for the next steps to identify any necessary adjustments.

Community Engagement Board Introduction Script

Consider using the following script to start off your conversation with the family and student:

"Welcome to the (name of your board). We appreciate your attendance today as we discuss ways to support you and improve your school attendance. Our goal is to brainstorm solutions and explore resources that can benefit you. Please remember that this meeting is confidential, providing a safe space for you to share any concerns related to attendance. We will create an attendance agreement aimed at improving attendance. This agreement will become part of your school record and can serve as evidence of the support provided to reduce truancy. Our board members are volunteers dedicated to reducing barriers and preventing chronic absenteeism, which can impact academic progress and future opportunities."

Guidelines for Questions to Learn About Barriers to Attendance

Discussing barriers to school attendance during your board meeting fosters an environment that encourages open and honest communication. Here are some guidelines to help ask effective questions and respond thoughtfully to gain deeper insights into the challenges faced by students:

Open-Ended Questions

Whenever possible, use open-ended questions to encourage more detailed responses. For instance:

- "Tell us about your experiences with attending school"
- "Describe the difficulties you face when going to school"
- How do you feel about your school attendance?"

Clarifying Questions

If something is unclear, ask clarifying questions to gain a better understanding. For example:

- "Can you tell me what you mean by 'barriers' to attending school?"
- "Could you provide more context about your challenges?"
- "Can you tell me more about..."

Non-Judgmental Responses

Maintain a non-judgmental tone to create a safe space for sharing. Use phrases like:

- "I understand what you're saying."
- "Thank you for sharing your perspective."

Refer to [Community Engagement Board Questions Handout](#).

Read more about Supporting Students After Community Engagement Boards [here](#).

Contact

For questions, please contact Attendance@k12.wa.us.