



Modified From Parent Organization Equity and Inclusion Tool “DOs” and “DON’Ts”

This is a self-guided tool designed to help parent organizations and leaders within those groups pursue equity and inclusion, and to disrupt practices that support racism, classism, and other isms, whether intentional or unintentional.

Accessibility-

- Childcare
- Mobility - use of elevators and spaces - classroom spaces? - main floor -
- Language - documents - translations
- Times of day - days of week - varying
- Census - research - engage community to determine barriers and preferences
- What are the ways we can fully engage
- Workshops - how to include all members of community
- Climate surveys to determine ways to ensure involvement **How often?**
- How do we include more dads/male staff -
- Agendas in advance to ensure access
- Providing a meal (provide options other than pizza - food restrictions? Cultural sensitivity
- Covid - ideal? Continue format to provide virtual options so that families can join
- Engaging people who are in the room - virtually or otherwise - break out rooms great option
- Share purpose and plan of the meeting to increase interest and involvement
- School council portal? Not everyone on FB - all information shared in newsletter - website with links?
- Preference for website over FB - bowmore needs to revamp for sharing communication

- Signage at front of school to keep people connected
- Twitter, facebook, website
- Sharing information; making accessible
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Meeting

Dos

- Virtual Meeting Option
- Meeting Minutes Translated when shared
- Process to put forward a topic for a discussion in a Non intimidating way
- Acknowledge heritages - learn from the announcements
- Leave open space for people to speak/be anonymous
- Explain the process, terminology

Don't

- Let the opinion of a few reflect the group as a whole
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COMMUNICATION Group 1

DO reach out to families early and often in their preferred channels -

- This could include email, phone calls, letters home, etc.

DO communicate in all major languages spoken by families.

- You can find caregivers' preferred languages by using the census data, as well as surveying the community.

DO reach out to parents whose race, class, language, nationality, education, abilities, gender, and backgrounds are different than your own.

- You can do this by introducing yourself to others during pickups and drop offs or in small group conversations in person or online.

DON'T only communicate with parents via email or listservs.

- Some parents do not check their emails frequently and some families do not have access to computers and/or the internet.

DON'T assume everyone can read and write in their home language.

- Communication and translation options should be delivered in multiple formats including written and verbal.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DON'T assume that all parents will be able to learn how to use the virtual platforms on their own, or after attending one session.

Remember: The effort to reach across the community is worth it.

What could this look like at Bowmore?

Voice messages

Families directed to methods of translation

Survey how / when families want to be contacted

Teacher and School Council Rep identify how to communicate

Connect with admin to increase access (consider abilities)

How the school and the council communicates (acronyms,jargon etc.)

MEETINGS Group 2

DO an interactive icebreaker at the beginning of each session.

- Icebreakers are quick activities that help people get to know each other. This could be things like, “share your name and your favourite food” or “share what support looks like to you”. Ideas: <https://www.icebreakers.ws>

DO pay attention to the times of meetings – who can come and who cannot?

- Offer parent engagement activities and meetings at alternating times and days throughout the year can be more inclusive.

DO create meeting agendas with all parents in mind and include agenda items that address needs and desires across the community.

- Share the agenda in advance through preferred methods.
- Allow parents to send in or share items, or always having an “any other business” section may be helpful.

DO pay attention to who speaks the most in meetings – and who does not – and deliberately structure meetings to ensure equitable participation across race, class, language, abilities, gender, nationality, and education.

- Set up rules like, “after speaking once, allow three more people to speak before contributing again”.
- Ask parents how they feel most comfortable contributing (verbally, written, during session, after session, in small groups, in large groups, etc).

DON'T assume that people are uninterested because they did not come to the meeting

- Remember many families have different schedules, priorities and barriers that may impact their ability to participate in sessions and meetings.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DO schedule regular training to support community members in learning how to use the platforms through phone or in person wherever possible if using virtual platforms like Zoom or Google Meet for engagement.

DO record sessions (with permission) and make them accessible to parents and community members who could not attend.

Remember: Approach ALL parent meetings as important community building sessions.

What could this look like at Bowmore

PARTICIPATION Group 3

DO assume that all families in the school have something to contribute, and they are more likely to participate if they feel welcome, are included, and if they are asked directly.

- Having parents directly invite or encourage other parents who have not attended in the past can be more effective than a global message.

DO listen to what parents across the community say should be done for the group to be more inclusive and representative.

- This can happen by sharing during sessions or sending out forms or surveys for parents to contribute before final decisions are made.

DO identify barriers to participation on an annual basis, and consistently attempt to address barriers.

- Consider relationship building, time and location of meeting, virtual supports, childcare, food and refreshments, bus tokens, etc.

DO have a speakers list and make sure that those who dominate the conversation share the space with others.

- how
- Have alternating members or chairs responsible for creating and following the speakers list.

DO allow people the opportunity to pass or just listen during sessions. They may choose to do so for a number of reasons such as members being new and getting comfortable and familiar, others may not want to express themselves during particular meetings, etc.

DON'T ignore or depreciate the ways in which families already participate or contribute to the school. **DO** recognize that forms of participation and contribution can look different than how you might expect, and take steps to demonstrate how all forms of engagement are valued

- Remember all parents are active in their child's life and contribute to their schooling in diverse ways, even if it is not

publicly visible.

DON'T assume that families of diverse race, class, language, ability, gender, nationality, or educational identities have not contributed to the school in meaningful ways.

- If you have noticed that particular groups of parents are not active, reflect on or ask what changes need to be made to support inclusion.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DO make sure there are alternative options such as phone-in opportunities.

DON'T assume that all parents have access to computers and WIFI.

Remember: Formal parent organizations are not the preferred way for many parents to participate at school. All contributions that parents make to their children's education are valuable.

What could this look like at Bowmore?

Bowmore is very white, and reaching out to diverse families is important. Speaking directly to these families may have merit. Social media in particular may not appeal to everyone, and the use of email is in decline. We should invite individual families to engage at a level they feel comfortable with. And our meetings should have a dial in number.

People should be able to contribute via email as well or text or other. We should perhaps try a tool like Miro. Options are important. Or Parabol. People should be able to contribute anonymously.

Post-meeting surveys would help.

A virtual option should always be available, even post covid.

We should say in the invitation that diverse voices are needed, welcomed and encouraged and to ask people if they can't come why and if there is anything we can do to help them attend or feel seen and heard and safe.

GROUP DYNAMICS Group 4

DO welcome parents who are showing up for the first time before you move forward with an agenda.

- Acknowledge verbally at the beginning of session.
- Also follow up with new attenders at the end of each session to check in about their experience.

DO actively seek to encourage, follow, and respect the leadership of lower-income families and racialized families.

- Valuing diverse voices and experiences is important. Validate when community members share, even if it is an opinion that is different from the majority of others. You can say things like, “thank you for sharing,” “I haven’t thought about it that way”, “that’s a great addition”.

DO pay attention to how race, class, language, ability, nationality, and education are represented in meetings and decision-making

- Consider who is here? Who is missing? Which voices are heard? Which are silent or silenced? What do we need to change?

DO provide opportunities for group members and leaders to get to know each other across race, class, language, ability, nationality, and educational background.

- Starting meetings with get to know you games, mix groupings during small group conversations, have a variety of parent engagement events with both formal and informal meetings, small group chats, topic-based workshops, task focused groups and committees.

DO recognize the diversity in your community, openly discuss intentions to be inclusive, and encourage people to voice their concerns.

- Have annual or monthly conversations on equity and inclusion, start the meeting with ground rules that centre the importance of inclusion.
- Have an anonymous box at the school and/or virtually where parents can express questions, comments or

concerns.

DO anticipate that issues of fundraising and how to spend money are likely to cause tension.

- How money is raised, how it is spent, who can afford to contribute, and the cost of fundraising can unintentionally exclude members of the community. Think about how these conversations will be handled, the decision-making process you will follow, and the creation of alternatives to supplement that may be more accessible to all.

DON'T continually utilize one person or a small group of people to make the parent organization seem more representative of the school (i.e., tokenism).

- Recognize that the diversity of voices is important. If there is one or a small group of parents who are reflective of an identity group, but many others are missing, you should still be thinking about ways to reach out to broaden the representation and participation in meetings and events.

DON'T Exclude or ostracize people for raising concerns. Take time to listen and reflect on the concerns before responding. continually

- Sometimes when people express concerns, it can feel like an attack. Understand when someone expresses a concern, they are sharing their own experience and it is the duty of the collective to take all concerns seriously and address matters accordingly.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DO pay attention to the chat functions and members who are contributing this way. Someone should be responsible each session for monitoring the chat, and verbally sharing thoughts and opinions in the chat box.

Remember: Relationship building is key to breaking down walls and barriers.

What could this look like at Bowmore?

- **Structuring meetings (breakout rooms, pairs, different combos, etc.) to support different voices being heard → facilitates meeting, getting to know each other**
- **Building in unstructured time for questions, etc.**
- **Making space for all voices (not just the loudest, well-known, quick-thinkers, etc.)**
- **Some linguistic capital is given more space → recognize not everyone speaks English**
- **Lingo around formal meetings → remember not all parents are familiar with formal meeting language**
- **Ableism → group meetings are often structured so that able-bodied individuals are included, how can we support more access?**
- **Making meetings accessible to parents who can't physically make it**
- **Seek feedback after meetings, follow-up on concerns, etc.**
- **Introduce yourselves as if it's the first meeting, every meeting**

DECISION MAKING POWER Group 5

DO have a formal/agreed-upon structure for decision making that is transparent. Revisit this annually in case members want to change the structure.

- For example, do decisions pass by majority? Consensus? etc

DO form relationships across race, class, nationality, abilities, gender, and language differences to build the influence of families underrepresented in decision-making

- Provide alternative decision-making structures by forming sub committees and providing more opportunities for small group discussions.

DO allow parents a chance to be a part of decision-making even if they are not in the parent organization or council

- Find alternative ways to gather parent feedback by offering surveys, using the newsletter and calling families before making important decisions. This can be done before meetings, if decisions need to be made by a specific date.

DON'T make decisions – even if it slows the process – without the voices and representation of diverse parent identities including race, class, language, ability, nationality, gender or education.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DO use options like Google Forms or Survey Monkey to support with the decision-making process

Remember: Pursuing equity and inclusion mean being clear about how injustice shows up, finding ways to confront it, and changing the systems that create and sustain it.

What could this look like at Bowmore?

FUNDRAISING

DO have concrete ways to utilize different kinds of monetary and non-monetary contributions. Value them equally.

DO choose events that come from and reflect the ideas, traditions, cultures, and strengths of families represented in the school, even if they are a small demographic within the school community.

DON'T disrespect parents or traditions by putting on nearly identical events, or not supporting fundraisers and events already taking place.

DON'T only recognize the actions of just a few event organizers or high-dollar donors.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Remember: Fundraisers and events should involve the entire school community to build and strengthen it across race, class, language, gender, ability, nationality, and educational background.

What could this look like at Bowmore?

ACCESSIBILITY Group 7

DO have translators if needed for parent engagement functions based off of requested languages.

- Schools have a budget for translators, so this request should go to the Principal.

DO recognize that people learn and retain information in different ways. It is helpful to have visual aids, graphics, pictures and agendas available as you are speaking.

- It is also helpful if any of this information can be sent out prior to the meeting for those who benefit from reading in advance and repetition.

DO make sure meeting rooms are physically accessible by ramps and/or elevators and have adequate space for people with physically diverse needs to move around.

- This should also include style of chairs and furniture. If the school does not have a physically accessible space, considerations should be made for a nearby accessible space.

DO have a way of collecting information about accessibility needs in a way that is sensitive, so that you can work to respond to the needs in setting up and facilitating meetings

- Have an open form or option and remind community members about it at the end of each meeting.

DON'T assume that parents do not need accommodations because they have not asked for them, or the needs are not visible. Think of ways you can gather this information anonymously, such as through google form or verbal surveys.

- It is not always comfortable to identify oneself as someone who needs an accommodation. Be intentional with gathering this information in advance and throughout the year to ensure you are structuring your activities and meetings in a way that caters to diverse learners and participants.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DO continue to provide online and alternative participation methods when returning to in person meetings and events.

DO use closed captioning of sessions if it is possible in the platform and approved through the organization.

Remember: Accessibility is a human right, and we must intentionally design meetings and activities to meet the needs of everyone.

What could this look like at Bowmore?

Note 1: With regards to family engagement in schools, Teaching for Change defines a parent as anyone who shares responsibility for the well-being of a child, including but not limited to: guardians, grandparents, a parent's partner, siblings, extended family members, neighbours, friends, mentors, or a combination of the above.

Note 2: Definitions: **equity** is providing people with what they need to be successful and takes into account historical and present-day injustices and inequalities. **Inclusion** authentically brings traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision-making. **Privilege** refers to the unearned, unquestioned, and often unconscious advantages, assumptions, entitlements, choices, and expectations bestowed on people based solely on membership in a particular social group. Examples include white privilege, male privilege, class privilege, heterosexual privilege, education privilege, etc.

Note 3: For further readings and resources on gentrification, parent organizations, and equity visit teachingforchange.org/equityinparentorgs.