



## **Equity in Action: Communication and Engagement Plan**

This resource stems from a 2020/21 Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) West project, *Equity in Action*, in which five California district equity teams engaged in an equity-focused process—learning, reflecting, collecting data, analyzing data, and planning—to address racial inequities in the district. While engaging in the eight-month project, the district equity teams developed capacity to apply new skills and knowledge toward changing inequitable district policies and practices.

**Purpose:** This resource will help teams create a communication plan that reflects appropriate messaging and levels of engagement with different stakeholder groups for your equity-focused project.

**Intended Audience:** The equity team should complete this activity at multiple points throughout the equity change process.

**Description:** Especially for systemic change that challenges long-held beliefs and policies, communication needs to be two-way and may include getting input or feedback from stakeholders and engaging stakeholders as partners in the implementation and monitoring of the changes. This two-part tool contains a framework, guiding questions, and worksheets for developing a communication and engagement plan with different stakeholder groups.

# EQUITY IN ACTION: COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN<sup>1</sup>

---

**Purpose:** Create a communication plan that reflects appropriate messaging and levels of engagement with different stakeholder groups for your Equity in Action project.

**Framework:**

Often, communication is considered as one-way; responding to questions such as how do we send messages or deliver information and to whom. However, especially for systemic change that challenges long-held beliefs and policies, communication needs to be two-way and may include getting input or feedback from stakeholders and engaging stakeholders as partners in the implementation and monitoring of the changes.

The [communication plan framework](#)<sup>2</sup> identifies four ways to communicate with and engage key audiences:

- ❖ **Inform:** Communication includes timely, accurate, and actionable information to ensure stakeholders know the purpose and goals of the project, and if appropriate, the timeline, and how it will be implemented and monitored. Tools for informing may include postings on websites, newsletters, presentations, and memos.
- ❖ **Inquire:** Communication includes gathering input from stakeholders to learn about their experiences and their views so these can be used to help shape policies and programs prior to or throughout the change process and to obtain feedback once the change is made. Tools for inquiring may include surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other feedback mechanisms.
- ❖ **Involve:** Communication includes proactively enlisting stakeholders throughout the change process in shaping policies, programs, and practices. Stakeholders learn skills of advocacy, collaboration, and decisionmaking. Structures may include advisory committees, task forces, and leadership teams.
- ❖ **Inspire:** Communication includes proactively partnering with stakeholders in the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies, programs, and practices. Tools may include shared governance committees and will vary depending on the needs of the project.

---

<sup>1</sup> Resource provided during presentation: Browder, E., & Van Houten, L. (2021, June). *Equity in action: Targeted improvement efforts toward racial equity in five school districts* (presentation materials). Arizona Leading Change Conference.

<sup>2</sup> This communication plan builds on and is adapted from the Reform Support Network, "From 'Inform to Inspire': A Framework for Communications and Engagement." Retrieved November 16, 2020, from <http://www.bscpcenter.org/communications/assets/framework-communications-engagement.pdf>

# PART 1: IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS AND LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

**Step 1.** Identify all the stakeholder groups in your district that will need to be aware of the Equity in Action project at any level and list these in the stakeholder column in the table under Step 2. Add additional rows if needed. Possible stakeholders are listed below.

- Superintendent’s cabinet
- Family members
- Students
- Site administrators
- Board of Trustees
- Teachers
- Teachers’ union leadership
- Community members
- Classified staff
- Behavioral health staff
- Counselors
- School resource officers

**Step 2.** For each stakeholder group, decide what level of communication is needed (i.e., inform, inquire, involve, and/or inspire; for some groups it might be multiple levels). Make a checkmark or brief notes in the appropriate box(es).

EQUITY IN ACTION LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHEET<sup>3</sup>

Stakeholder Group	Inform Provide information	Inquire Get input & feedback	Involve Enlist in shaping policies, programs, & practice	Inspire / Buy-In Engage in supporting implementation

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd.

## PART 2: COMPLETE A COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

---

For each of the stakeholder groups, complete a communication plan<sup>4</sup>. Depending on which level of communication will be needed, discuss the communication needed using the questions below. Refer to the description of the framework for more information about each level of communication to inform your conversation. Write your answers in the table below.

For stakeholder groups that you will **inform**, consider the following questions:

- a) What information will you provide to inform them? How will you craft the message so it addresses the specific needs of that stakeholder group?
- b) How will you provide that information (e.g., email message, report at a meeting, or another way)?
- c) When and where will you provide that information?

For stakeholder groups with whom you will **inquire**, consider the following questions:

- a) What information or feedback from these stakeholders will be most helpful?
- b) How will you get this information or feedback from these stakeholders?
- c) When and where in the change process will you get this information or feedback?

For stakeholders that you will **involve**, consider the following questions:

- a) Which policies and practices will you enlist these stakeholders in shaping?
- b) How will these stakeholders contribute to shaping the policies and practices?
- c) When and where will you engage these stakeholders in shaping policies and practices?

For stakeholders that you will **inspire**, consider the following questions:

- a) In which aspects of the design, implementation, and monitoring of a systemic change will you inspire or partner with these stakeholders?
- b) How will you inspire or partner with these stakeholders in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a systemic change?
- c) When and where will you inspire or engage these stakeholders in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a systemic change?

---

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from the *Comprehensive School Assistance Program* at WestEd.

## STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Stakeholder Group & Level of Engagement	<b>Inform:</b> Key messages & information, method of communicating <b>Inquire:</b> Input & feedback to solicit, mechanism for gathering information <b>Involve:</b> Contribution to policy or practice change process <b>Inspire:</b> Contribution to designing, implementing, monitoring systemic change	Timeline	Person Responsible for Coordinating
<hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inform <input type="checkbox"/> Inquire <input type="checkbox"/> Involve <input type="checkbox"/> Inspire			
<hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inform <input type="checkbox"/> Inquire <input type="checkbox"/> Involve <input type="checkbox"/> Inspire			
<hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inform <input type="checkbox"/> Inquire <input type="checkbox"/> Involve <input type="checkbox"/> Inspire			
<hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Inform <input type="checkbox"/> Inquire <input type="checkbox"/> Involve <input type="checkbox"/> Inspire			