

SIP LISTENING CIRCLES

“We listen to ensure that the solutions we devise are shaped by voices at the margins rather than our projection of what people need”. (Shane Safir)”

Listening Circles provide us with semi-formal ways of gathering information/data from our parents/caregivers. They build trust and help create relationships between school and home that support students, educators, and families. Aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and emphasizing Community Engagement (PR 704), the aim is to have parents/caregivers as co-designers and collaborators in the creation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

A Listening Circle may take place in person or online. Parents/caregivers are notified of the opportunity to gather together with the Principal (or designate) to discuss a particular topic. Questions are made available ahead to time. For the SIP, you may choose to hold Listening Circles for each of the goals or just one or two meetings that cover all goals.

Efforts should be made to encourage participation of parents/caregivers “at the margins” - the people whose voice we rarely hear. Consider these questions:

1. Whose voices do I regularly hear?
2. Whose voices do I rarely hear?
3. Have any been silenced? What needs to change?
4. How are race, class, language, ability, nationality, and education represented in the parent/caregiver voices I hear?

Listening Circles are a good vehicle for reflecting on the ideas, traditions, cultures and strengths of the parents/caregivers in your school. It begins with building trust; listening and learning from each other; ensuring participants feel valued; using what you learn to influence SIP goals.

1. Introductions and Record-Keeping:

- Participants are invited to introduce themselves, including the note-taker and any accompanying staff.
- The purpose of notetaking is explained.
- Information on when and how the report will be available is provided.

2. Ice-Breaker* or Participant Introductions:

- Participants share their names and one proud moment of their child(ren)
- <https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/icebreaker-games/>

*Note icebreakers are optional

3. Overview of SIP Importance:

- Optional explanation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) importance for learning, particularly for those who haven't received the TDSB SIP brochure.

4. Question Posting and Goal Discussion:

- Questions are posted in the chat for online participants or made available in person.
- Brief discussion on the significance of SIP goals based on MYSP (Equity, Belong, Achieve, Thrive, Revitalize and Truth and Reconciliation) for student success.
[MYSP](#)
- Examples of staff committee work related to SIP goals are shared.

5. Guidelines and Discussion:

- Conversation agreements are established, emphasizing engagement, embracing discomfort, speaking truthfully, and accepting open-ended discussions.
- General group discussion ensues, with time awareness and encouragement for all participants to contribute.

*Note: SIP goals may be discussed collectively or in separate sessions.