

The Portland Empowered Guide to ...

PLANNING AND HOSTING A SHARED SPACE CAFÉ



PORTLAND EMPOWERED
CHAMPIONING VOICE IN EDUCATION

YCE
YOUTH & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

WHAT IS PORTLAND EMPOWERED?

Portland Empowered champions student and parent voice with a specific focus on engaging those who have historically been under-represented. We reduce barriers and create opportunities for emerging youth and adult leaders so that youth in Portland public schools are successful in school and beyond.

Portland Empowered strives to ensure that student and parent voices are reflected in policy and practice within Portland Public Schools. Students and parents are experts on what they need to be successful in education, and our youth and parent leaders are critical assets to education reform in Portland and beyond. We also share the knowledge and tools Portland Empowered develops to deepen the impact of student and parent engagement initiatives in Greater Portland and across the country.



THE STUDENTS, PARENTS, FAMILIES, STAFF, AND PARTNERS OF PORTLAND EMPOWERED WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER TO:

Create Platforms for Authentic Engagement

Portland Empowered creates shared spaces for shared results among families, students, and schools. For parents, families, and students to really be engaged in education, they have to first be involved and acquire enough information and tools to make meaningful decisions

Develop Leaders

Portland Empowered offers trainings and creates conditions for students and parents to recognize and develop their leadership abilities.

Portland Empowered nurtures emerging youth and adult leaders to promote equity and excellence for all learners across racial, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and other backgrounds.

Share Resources

The need for equity extends beyond our own community. Portland Empowered shares its tools and learning with other individuals and schools with similar goals across Greater Portland and the country.

Students and parents can be the best teachers about the innovative community engagement strategies that they help to develop.





Make Connections

Relationships are at the foundation of Portland Empowered. Portland Empowered builds alliances within the community and builds bridges between families and educators. Relationships that develop over the long-term help build a strong team and maintain momentum.

WHAT IS THE PORTLAND EMPOWERED "WAY"?

There are many ways to engage the community, many ways of making change. Portland Empowered cares deeply about the way we engage with each other. If the process of working towards equity is not equitable, we are doing something wrong.

HERE ARE SOME OF PORTLAND EMPOWERED'S CORE TENETS AND BELIEFS

-  In education, the best strategies and solutions result from centering voices of students, parents, and other family members.
-  In order to design an education system that works for all, we need the perspectives of those who the system is not working for in particular.
-  Fostering collective learning and shared expertise among underrepresented students and parents is an essential step in collaborative work to transform the existing education system.
-  Creating intentional space for underrepresented students, parents, and other family members to bring their whole selves, learn from each other, build community, and develop as leaders allows for collaborative work with partners to transform existing systems.

Because of these beliefs, we work in a way that centers relationships first, allowing for face-to-face interaction and change. Portland Empowered parent organizers connected with parents across the city in many different languages to develop the Portland Empowered Manifesto (an important document and set of ideas that will help you to keep in mind what is most important). **See for yourself at portlandempowered.org/manifesto**

THESE POINTS ADVOCATE FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES IN WAYS THAT:

-  Value and encourage face-to-face relationships.
-  Create safe spaces where everyone is welcome and valued as an expert in their role.
-  Encourage families, schools and communities to work together to improve student success.
-  Enable a range of voices to be heard by decision-makers.
-  Are accessible to parent and community leaders from diverse backgrounds.
-  Devote sufficient resources to parent engagement and community outreach.

“For the first time, I was able to sit with groups of parents, small and large, and be able to really have some important dialogue and for them to see that the school was committed to having that dialogue and listening to their voice was extremely powerful.”

Caitlin LeClair, Principal, King Middle School, Portland, Maine



WHY SHARED SPACE?

Parents and families need to be in contact with their children’s school and to understand the school system enough to make an impact on education policies, practices, and decisions. Portland Empowered’s Shared Space Cafés disrupt the usual power dynamic from one in which schools present one-way information to parents to one in which parents and schools are in dialogue about education and the changes required.

Shared Space Cafés bring together parents, teachers, and administrators in a safe and friendly atmosphere where barriers are broken down and student success can become the focus of open discussion. Cafés are organized around a question that is designed by parents, in consultation with school partners. Attendees are broken up into small groups organized by language and interpreters are provided for English speakers, usually school staff. Staff and parent leaders facilitate group discussions. After group discussions, parents and staff mingle and there is time to address questions one-on-one.



With Shared Space Cafés, parents plan, design, lead, and facilitate conversations in their native languages in small groups that include both other parents and school staff. Recruitment is typically face-to-face and person-to-person, reflecting the principles in our Parent & Family Engagement Manifesto.

A SHARED SPACE CAFÉ IS NOT...	A SHARED SPACE CAFÉ IS...
A ONE-WAY PRESENTATION	MUTUAL EXCHANGE
A PLACE TO TELL PARENTS WHAT THEY NEED TO DO	A SAFE SPACE FOR SHARING
AN ENGLISH PROGRAM TRANSLATED INTO OTHER LANGUAGES	A MULTILINGUAL PROGRAM TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

These in-person meetings give parents a convenient, safe space for freely expressing their concerns, defining problems and working together to find solutions. Unlike traditional school events where one person with authority is speaking from a stage in a one-way fashion, Shared Space Cafés reorient people towards a mutually reinforcing space where everyone is equally equipped to give their input, ask questions, and contribute to the discussion.

Efforts made to address accessibility of the space increase parent empowerment and the exchange of ideas. The cafés create a defined gathering place for parents, students, and community members to network and feel heard.

There are many things to remember in planning and facilitating a successful Shared Space Café. Let's turn the page and dig in! ■

EVERYONE
IS AN
EXPERT
AT THIS
TABLE



BEFORE YOU START PLANNING, WHAT SHOULD BE IN PLACE?



PARENT INPUT

Portland Empowered has an organizing team made up of parents but you could have 1 or 2 parents who provide input, reality checks, etc.

A TEAM TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

You can right-size this depending on capacity, time frame, and budget, but in general **at a minimum you should have:**



Includes school administrators, parents, and staff from school or intermediary organization

PLANNING TEAM

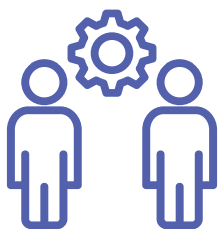
Planning team that can come together periodically to determine date, focus, overall topic, and to assess general progress – this should include representatives of parents/community members, school and district administrators, and educators.



Includes parent organizers from target communities

ORGANIZERS

Organizers, typically parents from the communities from whom input is sought, who can get the word out.



Includes staff from the school or intermediary organization

ADMIN OR STAFF SUPPORT

Someone needs to be on deck to worry about things like buying paper plates for the food, setting up chairs, and managing other details to make the event successful

WHEN YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO DO A SHARED SPACE...



Convene planning team weekly to prepare for facilitation, inform design of questions and event, and check in continually about recruitment.



Contact your district/school community engagement liaison about space needs and to identify contact people (including reserving space for dialogue, childcare space, prayer space, chair/table needs, set up timing, technology needs)

Design flyer and registration form (See sample in appendix) or approval by planning team.

Translate flyer and registration form into relevant languages.

SETTING A DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

When picking a date and location, it is important to remember a few key elements:

- 1** The culturally-appropriate meal should last for 30-45 minutes, especially after 5 pm. Having a meal allows time for parents to filter in.
- 2** The date should not fall on any major religious holidays observed by parents in the district (e.g., Ramadan).
The location should be close to the parents who will attend. If the school is distant from where parents live, consider finding a more central location or one near convenient transit lines.
- 3** There should be adequate space for both small (6-8 people) and large group discussions. Parents should feel comfortable in order to share fully and some may feel more at ease with fewer participants.
- 4** Check with a cross section of parents to make sure the date, time, and location you have chosen works for them!

FOUR WEEKS OUT...



Finalize key questions to guide small group conversations (see Topic box). Questions might look like, **What do parents need from the school to help their kids to be successful in school and beyond and vice versa?**

HOW TO PICK A TOPIC

Ask yourself:

- 1** What do you want to know?
- 2** Will the school be able to implement the feedback?
- 3** Do the words and concepts make sense to families? Are they easy to translate?



ORGANIZERS

Do face-to-face outreach with parents and community members.

Distribute flyers to parents and community members and/or make phone calls.

Collect registration forms to determine expected attendance numbers, dietary restrictions, childcare needs, languages spoken, etc.



ADMIN

Order or purchase any required supplies (e.g., nametags, flipcharts, pens, markers, etc.).

Update or create small group facilitator agendas based on discussion topic (see box).

TRANSLATION BASICS: A CASE STUDY

Translation means more than just translating words from one language to another. It also can mean that language or ideas that may be familiar to native English speakers will need to be presented differently in order to be understood.

Portland Public Schools work hard to reinforce Habits of Work and Learning in students, and commonly refer to these habits by their acronym, HOWLs. But when one Portland middle school spoke to multicultural parents about Habits of Work and Learning, they were met with skepticism about the relevance of HOWLs.

Yet when the school re-framed this concept in specific terms, clarifying that they sought to build respect, self-discipline, and accountability in students, parents expressed enthusiasm.

ONE WEEK OUT...



ORGANIZERS

Make confirmation calls to all registered parents and community members.

Post reminders and event details using Facebook and e-mail.



ADMIN

Hire interpreters according to registrations and small group needs.

Gather supplies (see supply checklist on page 12).

Confirm space logistics and time to arrive for set up.

Prepare flip charts with group norms, agenda, and key question(s) for each small group.

Pre-order snacks and dinner (see below).

Shop for dinner supplies such as cutlery, plates, napkins, beverages and any decorations.

Print Shared Space Café documents (i.e. sign-in sheets, photo releases, exit tickets, and registration list).

Create envelopes for facilitators. Include materials for note taking, a meeting agenda and exit tickets for participants.

Arrange for childcare. Organizers should get a sense of how many children will come in order to secure adequate help.



IMPORTANT THOUGHTS ABOUT FOOD

- **1** Make sure common dietary needs are met (Halal, Vegan, Gluten-free).
- **2** Providing culturally

appropriate foods helps participants feel welcome. Check with your organizers to make sure needs are met.

SAME DAY PREPARATIONS

Assemble all supplies and arrive early to set up.



PREP TASKS FOR SCHOOL OR INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATION STAFF



Post signs from parking or public transit leading to event

indicating which doors to enter through (ie., Front door as opposed to back door).

Make sure correct doors are open.



Set up food on tables away from registration.

Label food: Include notes about allergens such as nuts, coconut. Indicate whether or not: Halal, vegetarian, vegan, or containing pork.



Set up registration table.

Lay out materials at the registration table: sign-in sheets, name tags, photo releases, info about program, forms for next event, and any other forms or flyers.



Review roles and guiding questions with facilitators and interpreters as they arrive.

Distribute facilitator packets to facilitators.

Indicate group placement with signage.

Arrange groups facing presenter. Should be well-spaced for small group discussion. (6-8 chairs and 1 easel per group)

SUPPLY CHECKLIST

- Sign-in sheets (see sample in appendix)
- Blank name tags
- Photo releases
- Information you want to share
- Cups, plates, napkins, silverware
- Pens/Pencils
- Flip charts and flip chart markers
- Agendas (see sample in appendix)
- Exit tickets (see sample in appendix)
- Directional signs with event name and location
- Tape
- 1 notepad for each small group facilitator
- To-go containers for people to take food home after the event

DURING THE EVENT



WRAP UP/EVENT CLOSING

Have staff from school or intermediary organization or community parent organizer wrap up the event.

Bring youth back to their families and clean up the childcare space.

Buffet and mingling after the event. Provide to-go containers to attendees wishing to take leftovers.

Clean up: put away chairs, take down easel pads, collect facilitator envelopes with exit tickets, group sign in sheets, group notes, and any other items.

Remove any signs/flyers/balloons.

Exit.

AFTERWARDS!

WITHIN 1 DAY...

Share approved photos and short message on social media (Facebook).

THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUING PARTICIPANTS

A useful guiding principle is that “Whoever is in the room is who is supposed to be there.” Participants want to feel welcomed and heard as they share their perspectives, and disappointment from planners and organizers about who is not there will be apparent to participants. In order to build an environment of trust and mutual respect, planners and organizers should do whatever they can to make participants feel special.

Ultimately, there is no recipe for success with the Shared Space Café model. Instead, success is created by the chefs, not the recipe. Focusing on the relationships between planners, organizers, administrators, and the family participants and the wisdom they have to offer lays the foundation for a rich and fruitful Shared Space Café. ■

WITHIN 2 TO 3 WEEKS...

Celebrate a successful Shared Space Café with Organizers, Planning Team and Staff!

Review Exit Ticket feedback, analyze themes/feedback

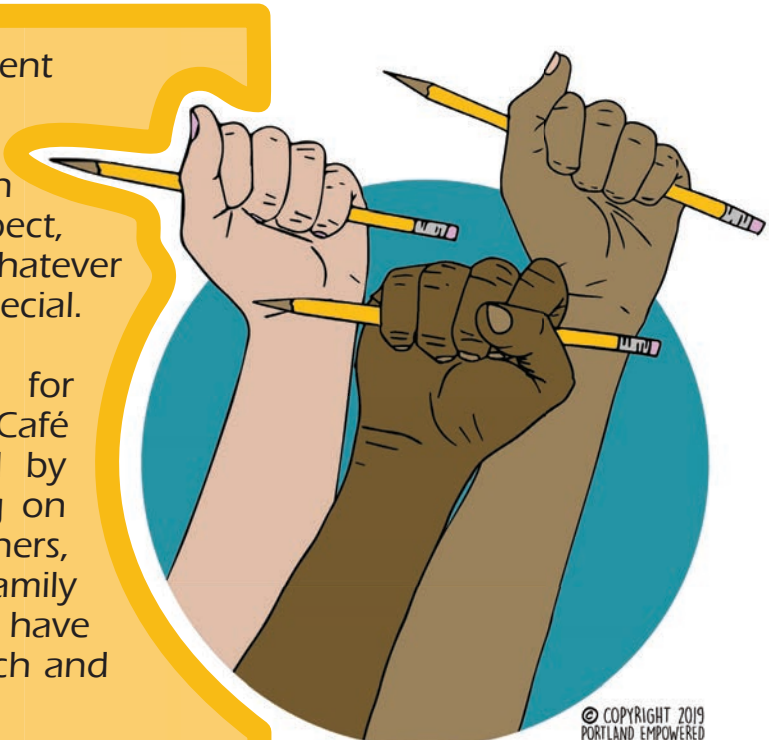
Type up discussion notes and identify key themes.

Follow up with the school to ensure that they have access to feedback, lessons, and themes.

BEFORE THE NEXT SHARED SPACE CAFÉ...

Identify what worked and what needs improvement with Organizers, Planning Team, and Staff.

Communicate with parent participants any changes implemented by the school as a result of the Shared Space Café.



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PORTLAND EMPOWERED



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Portland Empowered cordially invites you to attend:

Shared Spaces Café:

Building Bridges between Portland Public High Schools and Communities

Discussion
What it's like to be a teenager in Portland, Maine in 2018

DATE: Thursday, January 17th
VENUE: High School Library, Address
TIME: 5:00—7:30 p.m.

For more information, contact:
Lead Staff Person, 207.XXX.XXXX

~ Light Dinner, Interpretation, & Childcare Provided ~
Registration Required



PORTLAND EMPOWERED
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Shared Spaces Café

REGISTRATION FORM
THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018
HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY
5:00—7:30 P.M.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Email _____

Telephone/Cell Number _____

How did you learn about this event? _____

Native Language (if not English) _____

- I will require childcare at the event for _____ (#) children.
- I have a dietary restriction. Please describe: _____

CHECK IF NEED INTERPRETER!

Please choose one:

- My child attends _____ High School.
- I work at _____ High School.
- Other: _____

Please return this form to the person who invited you or
call Administrative Staff Person to register. 207.XXX.XXXX
For more INFO : Lead Staff Person 207.XXX.XXXX

SAMPLE FLYER



PORTLAND CHAMPION EDUCATORS

SCHOOL NAME
DATE
5:00–7:30

SAMPLE FACILITATOR'S AGENDA

SHARED SPACE CAFE

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS:

Building Bridges between the School and Families

A
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5–5:30 ARRIVALS

5:30 WELCOME

5:45 TRANSITION TO SMALL GROUPS

6–7 SMALL GROUPS

WHAT DO PARENTS NEED FROM THE SCHOOL TO HELP STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND?

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED FROM PARENTS TO HELP STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND?

7–7:30 DEBRIEF AND CLOSING



PORTLAND EMPOWERED
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EXIT TICKET

I AM A...

PARENT/COMMUNITY MEMBER

TEACHER/STAFF

OTHER _____

THE BEST THING ABOUT THE SHARED SPACE CAFÉ WAS...

ONE THING I LEARNED WAS...

NEXT TIME, I WANT TO...

SAMPLE EXIT TICKET



PORTLAND EMPOWERED
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SHARED SPACE CAFÉ SIGN IN

NAME	EMAIL	PHONE	IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST MEETING, HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US?	JOIN MAILING LIST?

SAMPLE SIGN IN



PORTLAND EMPOWERED
CHAMPIONING VOICE IN EDUCATION

PARENT LEAD ORGANIZER

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION
4 HOURS/WEEK, \$150 STIPEND/MONTH

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WHO ARE THE PARENT ENGAGEMENT PARTNERS?

The Parent Engagement Partners are parents, community members, and teacher allies who engage parents and families in district-level systems change within Portland's public schools. They strive to ensure that:

- Parent voice is incorporated into decision-making in the schools,
- Parent voice includes broad representation from traditionally under-represented parents, and
- Culture, policy, and practice shift in a way that removes barriers to authentic parent/family engagement.

LEAD ORGANIZER ROLE (4 HOURS/WEEK)

Lead organizers are parents or community members who want to take on an expanded role in improving education and community engagement in Portland's public schools and are able to devote extra time for an elevated leadership role in Portland Empowered's organizing activities. Lead organizers take on this role on a month-to-month basis as project and event needs dictate.

In between Parent Engagement Partners meetings and events, Lead Organizers work with Portland Empowered staff to plan logistics and outreach for meetings with parents in the community and/or larger meetings in which parents and school staff come together. Fluency in other languages and relationships in Portland multilingual communities is helpful. Lead Organizers often facilitate conversations in their native language(s) or in English with interpreters. Some knowledge of English is necessary to participate fully.

Lead Organizers meet regularly (typically once a week) as a group with Portland Empowered staff to determine organizing strategy, provide important feedback and plan and conduct outreach to parents of Portland Public School students. Lead organizers coordinate outreach to identify and support parents, community members, and school or district personnel who can ally with Portland Empowered, provide important feedback, commit to attending events, or otherwise contribute to Portland Empowered campaigns.

SAMPLE ORGANIZER DESCRIPTION



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Portland Empowered Staff

Pious Ali
Nathan Broaddus
Muntaha Mohamed
Sheri Moulton
Claire Schroeder
Emily Thielmann

Portland Empowered Lead Parent Organizers

Micky Bondo
Maria Cushing
Nolasque Isirabahenda
Nsiona Nguizani
Lucia Rico
Asha Suldan
Lisa Whited

Community Partners

Nellie Mae Foundation
Portland Public Schools
CYCLE

Portland Empowered's Shared Space Cafés bring together parents, teachers, and administrators in a safe and friendly atmosphere where barriers are broken down and student success can become the focus of open discussion. Shared Space Cafés disrupt the usual power dynamic from one in which schools present one-way information to parents to one in which parents and schools are in dialogue about education and the changes required. Learn about this model for multilingual, multicultural family engagement and build on Portland Empowered's approach within your own organization.