

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Board of Education is committed to balancing its fiduciary role with enhancing community involvement in the school district. As such, the board is committed to the principle of public involvement in education and endorses open, two-way communication with its internal and external partners.

The Board of Education recognizes the importance of effectively communicating and engaging with our community for the purpose of sharing information, receiving feedback and discussing important issues facing the school district.

As part of the process, the district will provide information about practices, programs, policies and provide opportunities to contribute opinions and perspectives on decisions pending or made by the board regarding the operation of the schools and school district.

The Framework for Communications and Community Engagement outlines procedures for operationalizing communications and community engagement in School District No. 71 (Comox Valley).

Communications and Community Engagement Framework Desired Outcomes

Desired outcomes of adopting the framework include:

1. Improve public education through effective communication and engagement.
2. Improve internal and external communications between the district, its schools, staff, parents, students and community partners.
3. Identify and increase opportunities for engaging the community in a manner that is meaningful, timely and appropriate.
4. Identify and increase opportunities to share district information and to gain community insights about our district.
5. Determine how best to engage with the various audiences.
6. Identify and increase opportunities for developing relationships with the media and using this medium effectively.
7. Use social media to deliver key aspects of the district's message and to receive information from the community.

Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of the *Framework* is to present a clear and concise direction for communicating with the school district's community. The plan primarily addresses two (2) types of school district

audiences: internal (students, teachers, staff, unions, administration and school board) and external (parents, businesses, civic groups, and other members of the district's community) and considers the processes to be used to reach these audiences.

Through the development and implementation of this communications framework, the school district will:

1. *Inform*: Provide timely information about board and administrative decisions made, and activities and events across the division.
2. *Consult*: Increase the involvement of staff and community through consultative practices to obtain feedback on issues or decisions.
3. *Collaborate*: Partner with staff and or community in arriving at a solution.
4. *Foster* the exchange of information between the school district and the communities it serves.

Guiding Principles

The Board of Education believes that:

1. Meaningful decision-making and consultation processes are respectful of and use different ways to engage with our diverse educational partners.
2. District decision-making information are to be accessible, understandable, relevant and responsive to the needs of the community.
3. District-wide community engagement are to be authentic and meaningful.
4. Staff briefings to the board will include communication ideas and or recommendations (where appropriate).
5. The board will, as part of its deliberation process, consider if, when or how they will communicate or engage with the educational partners.

Engagement and Communications Continuum

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Provide internal and or external public with information.	Obtain public feedback on a future decision coming to the board and or planning for the board.	Work directly with members of the public (internal and or external) throughout the entire process that culminates with a board decision.	Work with the public from the inception of a project to the final decision by the board.	Places final decision-making in the hands of the public.
e.g. newsletters, web-pages, blogs	e.g. public meetings, focus groups, surveys	e.g. advisory groups, public forums, public hearings	e.g. Workshops, design charrettes	e.g. Plebiscite, working committee

Identifying the Appropriate Engagement along the Continuum

1. Moving from left to right in the framework, the communication processes becomes increasingly participative and the engagement level of the public in the process increases.
2. As policy and operational issues arise, the board will give consideration to the most appropriate level of engagement and the related strategies to employ.
3. Briefings to the board shall include a recommendation communications plan to most effectively engage the public based on a balance between time and importance of gaining public feedback on the topic.
4. Data and or other information collected through the engagement process shall be shared by placing it on the district webpage.
5. The data will be analyzed by staff and will be shared with the board as part of the decision-making process.
6. The board's eventual decision will be made public through the public-school board meeting process.

Framework for Regular Engagement Activities

The Board of Education will:

1. Hold regular meetings of the board in an open manner before assembled public and press who shall have the benefit of a publicized schedule of meetings. In order to protect the legitimate interests of individuals and the community, "in camera" or closed meetings in private session shall be reserved to discuss matters as defined in legislation and board policy.
2. Hold regular Committee of the Whole Meetings of the board periodically in various locations in the district.
3. Hold public forums in the district on educational issues as the need arises.
4. Provide the public with an opportunity to address questions to the board at each regular meeting.
5. Welcome delegations of students, parents, teachers, and others at regular board meetings.
6. Post agendas of regular meetings to the school district webpage and send, where appropriate, agendas to the associations representing the board's employees, to parent organizations in the district, and to groups and individuals requesting such agendas.
7. Publicize the deliberation and decisions of board meetings by distributing, via the district webpage an approved report of meetings.

8. Develop and maintain a regular community relations and information program which informs the community of the district's activities.
9. Establish a regular means of assessing the publics', parents', and students' needs and concerns regarding the district.

Legal Reference: Section 65, *School Act*

Adopted: September 2019