**Purpose/Background**

Strong community partnerships are integral for building strong schools and strong communities.

Opportunities will be provided for communities to be involved. Communities need to be engaged through ongoing effective communication and dialogue, and the level of consultation will be made clear to community members.

**Definitions**

Community Engagement: A process by which the values, needs and concerns of the public are considered in decision-making.

Community: Individuals and groups who have and interest in student success, i.e., staff, parents, students, business and community members.

**Procedures**

1. All school community members play a major role in fostering an atmosphere of broader community collaboration.

2. Information is to be shared with school councils, students, staff, parents, and the community to enable them to offer input into the programs, policies and procedures of the Division and the schools.

3. To enable appropriate consultation please refer to the Appendix, which outlines the levels of community engagement that may be applied in a consultation process.

*Reference:*

- RVS AF150-A Request to Present to the Board of Trustees
- Section 33, 52, 53, 55, 67, 68, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225, 256 Education Act
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

**Appendix A – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LEVELS**

**Purpose/Background**

Community engagement is a process by which the public's concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into decision-making. Community engagement or participation involves two-way communication with the overall goal of improved quality of decisions, supported by the public. Participation processes may be a single event or they may be embedded in long-term system activities or partnership processes. Adequate public information is always a central element in any community engagement program.

Community engagement increases the level of transparency and may help to improve actualization of policies and procedures by:
- Informing and educating participants;
- Incorporating public values, assumptions and preferences into decision-making;
- Increasing the substantive value of decisions;
- Bringing into the discussion the expertise, perspectives, and ideas for alternative actions of those directly affected;
- Helping administrators balance opposing interests;
- Identifying unintended effects and practical problems; and,
- Providing a quality check on the administration's assessment of costs and benefits.

Community engagement processes also can enhance voluntary compliance for two reasons: first, because changes are announced in a timely manner and there is time to adjust to changes, and secondly, because the sense of legitimacy and shared ownership developed through consultation may motivate affected parties to embrace the ultimate decision. These processes can be instrumental in improving the knowledge and understanding of the issue. Community engagement processes offer the opportunity to develop the skills of both the public and Board/administration and enhance the credibility of both parties.

1. **Guiding Principles for Engaging the Public**

   1.1    Public(s) and the Division are capable and willing to participate.

   1.2    Processes represent the highest standards. The purpose of the community engagement process, the design of the process, the role of the participants, and the level of decision-making are all made explicit. The process enables participation and builds competency of the participants.

   1.3    All participants have equal access to relevant, accurate information and support a mutual learning environment.

   1.4    All participants respect the diverse values, interests and knowledge of the parties involved in the community engagement process.

   1.5    All participants are accountable for feedback and communications to their members and to the process that they have agreed to.

ADMINISTRATIVE
PROCEDURE
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**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

General Administration

ROCKY VIEW
SCHOOLS

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1.6    All participants promote shared ownership of the process.

1.7    The Division uses input from the public as it said it would do.

## 2.    Levels of Participation

The levels of participation are described below. For each level, the objective and the communication flow are described. Who makes the decision is also delineated. The lowest level is characterized by one-way flow of information, while interaction and two-way information exchange characterize the higher levels.

| Level | Aim | Pledge |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Inform | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | The Division will keep the public informed. |
| 2. Consult | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | The Division will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. |
| 3. Involve | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | The Division will work with the public to ensure that concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. |
| 4. Collaborate | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | The Division will look to the public for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate the public's advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. |
| 5. Empower | To place final decision-making in the hands of the public. | The Division will implement what the public decides. |

### 3. Division Community Engagement Framework Procedure

Before embarking on a community engagement consultation, a number of questions need to be answered as each participation process is considered. These steps include:

**Step 1:**
Determine if the Issue is Consistent with the Framework
- Can the situation or issue that needs to be addressed be defined?
- Check if the issue is within the scope of the Division community engagement framework.

**Step 2:**
Determine if a Community Engagement Process is Warranted
- Have the potential benefits of involving the public been identified?
- Has the decision already been made or can the public still make a difference?
- Does the public understand the external aspects of the situation?
  - Will the decision be perceived as significant?
  - Is the issue a source of contention?
  - Will there be public or media interest?
  - Is there emerging legislation, litigation or policy that could affect position?
- What are the community interests or positions?
  - Who will be affected by this issue?
  - Who represents those various groups being affected?
  - Which group(s) or members of the public are likely to garner media attention?
  - What are some of the relevant questions or positions of the community?
  - Identify those individuals or groups that have the potential to disrupt or promote issue/project.
- What are the implications of not involving the public?
- Specify who should be involved, and the level or participation being sought.
- Do the resources and time exist to undertake a meaningful community engagement process?

**Step 3:**
Develop a Detailed Plan

If the overall analysis in Steps 1 and 2 leads to "yes", then a community engagement plan must be developed.
- Outline the methodology for conducting the participation process including objectives, issue, publics, decision-making role, process and methodology, activities and timelines. The values and guiding principles are to be reflected in the methodology.
- Outline the evaluation process and ensure that it is linked to the outcomes.
- Describe the resources and potential budget necessary to undertake the plan.

**Step 4:**
Seek Approval

Submit proposal to appropriate decision-making body (i.e. Board, Senior Executive).