

AP 1312: Media Relations

Background

Media play a key role in keeping the public informed about school or district activities and issues. This Administrative Procedure will help ensure the district can develop and maintain strong relations with the media based on openness, fairness, accuracy of information, and consistency.

Procedures

1. Delegation of Responsibility

- 1.1. The Superintendent, through delegation to the Public Engagement Manager, coordinates media relations for the district.

2. Spokesperson

- 2.1. As per Board Policy 140 - Communication Protocol for Trustees, the Superintendent will act as the official spokesperson for all matters pertaining to district operations.
- 2.2. District employees are not permitted to act as an official spokesperson unless designated to do so by the Superintendent.
- 2.3. If a public statement by the district is required, the Public Engagement Manager will work with the district senior management and/or principals to establish the known facts of the situation, summarize the district's position, and issue the statement.

3. Media Inquiries

- 3.1. All media inquiries pertaining to district schools or operations are to be directed to the Superintendent through the Public Engagement Manager. The district will respond to media inquiries as quickly as possible.
 - 3.1.1. District employees contacted directly by media shall redirect the inquiry to the Public Engagement Manager. Where applicable, employees are to contact the Public Engagement Manager as soon as possible with pertinent details of the request or issue, to help expedite the response to media.
- 3.2. Principals are to notify the Public Engagement Manager if media arrive on school property. If support is required, the Public Engagement Manager will coordinate with school staff to ensure support is provided.

4. News Releases

- 4.1. All news releases pertaining to district or school operations, programs, or students matters will be prepared by the Public Engagement Manager in partnership with staff, as needed, and approved by the Superintendent prior to distribution.

5. Filming and Photography Guidelines

- 5.1. Media are not permitted to film, photograph, or interview on district property without permission from the Superintendent.
- 5.2. Students under the age of 19 must have parental consent prior to being filmed, interviewed, or photographed on school property.
- 5.3. If media are filming, photographing, or interviewing on school property without permission, staff shall ask them to stop filming and direct them to the Public Engagement Manager.
- 5.4. If media interview, film, or photograph a student who's considered a minor off school property, district employees may wish to notify the parents; if they do not give consent, the parent can contact the media outlet directly.

6. Crisis/Emergency Communications

- 6.1. During a crisis or emergency, the first priority of the school administration is to ensure the safety of students and staff. However, the district recognizes the need to provide timely, accurate information to parents, and knows that the media plays an important role in relaying this information. Therefore:
 - 6.1.1. The Superintendent and/or Public Engagement Manager will assist the Principal by coordinating communication efforts, with a focus on known facts and required actions.
 - 6.1.2. The Superintendent will serve as spokesperson or designate a spokesperson if required. This allows the Principal to concentrate on the needs of the school community.

7. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

- 7.1. The district is committed to open and honest communication in all aspects of district operations and will provide information unless it falls within the restrictions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation or is considered confidential/sensitive information.
- 7.2. All students being photographed, filmed, or interviewed by a media outlet (for publication, broadcast and/or social media use) must have a signed media consent form. This also applies to any photos, videos, or personal information about a student being released to media by district and/or school staff (including, but not limited to, being identified in a news release).