

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SUBJECT: Media Relations

The County Board of Education and County Superintendent of Schools respect the public right to information and recognize that the media significantly influence the community's understanding of school programs. In order to develop and maintain positive media relations, the County Board and the County Superintendent desire to reasonably accommodate media requests for information and to provide accurate, reliable and timely information.

Media representatives are welcome at all County Board of Education meetings and shall receive meeting agendas upon request.

(cf. 9322 - Agenda/Meeting Materials)

Media representatives, like all other visitors, shall register immediately upon entering any school building or grounds when school is in session.

(cf. 1250 - Visitors)

(cf. 3515.2 - Disruptions)

Staff may provide the media with student directory information, including, but not limited to, the name of a student, school of attendance, grade level, honors, and activities, unless the student's parent/guardian has submitted a written request that such information not be disclosed. The County Office of Education shall not release information that is private or confidential as required by law, County Office of Education policy or administrative regulation. No other access to student records or personally identifiable student information may be provided without written parent/guardian permission.

(cf. 1340 - Access to County Office of Education Records)

(cf. 4119.23/4219.23/4319.23 - Unauthorized Release of Confidential/Privileged Information)

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

(cf. 5125.1 - Release of Directory Information)

(cf. 9010 - Public Statements)

(cf. 9321.1 - Closed Session Actions and Reports)

Interviewing and Photographing Students

The County Office of Education shall not impose restraints on students' right to speak freely with media representatives at those times which do not disrupt students' educational program. However, interviews of students may not create substantial disorder or impinge on the rights of others. Therefore, in order to minimize possible disruption, media

representatives who wish to interview students at school are strongly encouraged to make prior arrangements with the site administrator. At their discretion, parents/guardians may instruct their children not to communicate with media representatives.

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression: Publications Code)

In order to protect the privacy and safety of students, a media representative who wishes to photograph students on school grounds should first make arrangements with the site administrator or designee.

When interviewing or photographing a special education student, he/she shall not be identified as a special education student without prior, written parent/guardian permission.

Media Communications Plan

In order to help develop strong relations with the media, the County Superintendent or designee shall develop a proactive media communications plan. This plan may include, but not be limited to, information related to County Office of Education programs and needs, student awards, school accomplishments and events of special interest.

(cf. 1100 - Communication with the Public)

(cf. 1160 - Political Processes)

The plan shall specify the County Office of Education's and/or site's primary media contact to whom all media inquiries shall be routed. Spokespersons designated to speak to the media on behalf of the County Office of Education include the County Board president, County Superintendent and public information officer. Other County Board members and staff may be asked by the County Superintendent or designee to speak to the media on a case-by-case basis, depending on their expertise on an issue.

The County Superintendent or designee shall provide training on effective media relations to all designated spokespersons.

(cf. 9240 - Board Development)

Crisis Communications Plan

During a disturbance or crisis situation, the first priority of school staff is to assure the safety of students and staff. However, the County Office of Education recognizes the need to provide timely and accurate information to parents/guardians and the community during a crisis. The County Office of Education also recognizes that the media have an important role to play in relaying this information to the public. In order to help ensure that the media and County Office of Education work together effectively, the County Superintendent or designee shall develop a crisis communications plan to identify communication strategies to be taken in the event of a crisis.

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)
(cf. 3516 - Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Plan)

The crisis communications plan may include but not be limited to identification of a media center location, development of both internal and external notification systems, and strategies for press conference logistics.

The County Superintendent or designee shall include local law enforcement and media representatives in the crisis planning process.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

32210-32212 Willful disturbance of public school or meeting

35144 Special meetings

35145 Public meetings

35160 Authority of governing boards

35172 Promotional activities

EVIDENCE CODE

1070 Refusal to disclose news source

PENAL CODE

627-627.10 Access to school premises

COURT DECISIONS

Lopez v. Tulare Joint Union High School District, (1995) 34 Cal.App.4th 1302

ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINIONS

95 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 509 (1996)

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

911: A Manual for Schools and the Media During a Campus Crisis, 2001

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>