

Berkeley USD

Board Policy

Media Relations

BP 1112

Community Relations

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

Media representatives are welcome at all Board meetings and shall receive meeting agendas upon request in accordance with Board policy.

(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/Outsiders)

(cf. 3515.2 - Disruptions)

Staff may provide the media with student directory information, as defined in AR 5125.1, and with written parental/guardian permission in accord with the provisions of AR 5125.1. The district shall not release information that is private or confidential as required by law, Board 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 District 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 district shall not impose restraints on students' right to speak freely with media representatives at those times which do not disrupt a student's 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 public information office and the principal. At their discretion, parents/guardians may instruct their children not to communicate with media representatives.

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

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 principal 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 Superintendent or designee shall develop a proactive media communications plan. This plan may include, but not be limited to, information related to district programs and needs, student awards, school accomplishments and events of special interest.

(cf. 0510 - School Accountability Report Card)

(cf. 1100 - Communication with the Public)

(cf. 1160 - Political Processes)

The plan shall specify the district'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 district include the Board president, Superintendent and public information officer. Other Board members and staff may be asked by the Superintendent or designee to speak to the media on a case-by-case basis, depending on their expertise on an issue.

The 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 Board recognizes the need to provide timely and accurate information to parents/guardians and the community during a crisis. The Board 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 district work together effectively, the 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 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>

Policy BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
adopted: June 23, 2004 Berkeley, California