

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Media Relations

The best interests of the Okemos Public Schools are served when the district maintains a cooperative working relationship with local media external to the schools (newspaper, radio, television) to inform community members about issues relating to the schools. In doing so, the board acknowledges its responsibility for the protection of students' and staff members' privacy and confidentiality as is appropriate and legal.

The board will control media access to its facilities so that the media obtain necessary information in a manner that will not show favoritism to the media over any other member of the community.

The board authorizes the superintendent of schools to develop regulations to govern the district's relationship with the media that will balance the need to inform with the primary need of operating the school district in a manner that is considered safe for students and staff as well as protecting privacy and confidentiality as appropriate.

See Also:
Board Policy 5125: Student Records

Policy
Adopted: 12-15-03
Amended: 01-08-07
Reviewed:

The following regulations govern the district in its contacts with the local external media during normal operations and in times of emergency.

- I. Media who wish to cover events and activities should do so by contacting the appropriate building principal. Coverage of events and activities will only be allowed in a reasonable manner to be determined by the district. (The building principal will discuss the coverage with the Superintendent of Schools or designee for any needed direction.)
 - A. The school will not change its daily activities to accommodate the media.
 - B. Cameras will not be allowed in buildings without permission.
 - C. Before students may be used in any article, film, photograph or videotape, or before any student is interviewed at any time on school grounds, the district/school administration will confirm that the proper parental release is on file. This documentation will be the designation of non-disclosure of student information that is annually submitted by parents.
 1. At the elementary level, the non-disclosure designation is made on the student enrollment/emergency card;
 2. At the secondary (middle school and high school) level, the non-disclosure designation is made through completion of the Non-Disclosure of Information form.
 - D. Interviews with staff members on district property will require approval of the administration. Under some conditions, it may be possible to gain this approval through a phone call, but the district shall not be compelled by any media organization to do so on its behalf.
- II. In the event of emergency or crisis, communications with the media will take place only after it is deemed that the incident is under control; the district will utilize its staff and resources in dealing with the particular emergency as the top priority. The following guidelines will be used by the district in communicating with the media in times of emergency or crisis.
 - A. The superintendent or designee shall be the official spokesperson to the media.
 1. Interviews with students will not be allowed at any time on school grounds.
 2. Interviews with staff members on district property will require approval of the administration. Under some conditions, it may be possible to gain this release through a phone call, but the district shall not be compelled by any media organization to do so on its behalf.

- B. The media will be notified of an area to gather to receive a briefing on the incident. In most cases, and whenever possible, this location will be the district's boardroom at the administration building.
 - 1. A representative of the district will inform the media as they arrive what will take place regarding the briefing, when it will be done, and any other particulars regarding the briefing.
 - 2. If the meeting location is not at the central office, an administrator will be designated at the central office to provide information for those calling or coming to the central office informing them of the location of the briefing.
 - 3. Media that call for information prior to a briefing will be invited to attend the briefing or may be offered to have a press release faxed when ready.
 - 4. At the discretion of the superintendent or designee, media that call may be given a brief interview over the phone. These will be lower priority.

- C. The superintendent or designee will conduct the briefing.
 - 1. When possible and when time permits, a written press release will be provided.
 - 2. Names of students or those involved will not be released by the district during the time of the emergency or crisis. A determination will be made by the district how it will release such information once all parents and necessary parties have been contacted.
 - 2.1 The district will take direction and requests from the parties involved (including parents) regarding release of information.
 - 2.2 The district will take the position that any information that is to be given out that is considered "directory information" will only be released after a Freedom of Information request has been received.
 - 2.3 It is understood that any information of this nature gained from any other source outside the district cannot be controlled by the district.

- D. Throughout the course of the emergency or crisis, updates will be presented to the media. Updates will be faxed to all district buildings to keep personnel informed of the status of the incident.

- E. The district reserves its right to not allow any pictures, film, or video to be taken or interviews to be conducted inside its buildings or on its grounds at any time.

III: The central office administration will be responsible for the following regarding media contact during emergencies/crises:

- A. The superintendent or designee will be the chief spokesperson for the district.
- B. The deputy and/or assistant superintendent(s), will establish the briefing location, develop the schedule for the information plan, and be available to explain how information will be provided.
- C. Press releases will be developed using the standard “who, what, when, where, and how” model, with additional information provided at the approval of the district.

These guidelines will be used at all times in the district’s relations with media. The superintendent reserves the right to make changes in these regulations as emergencies dictate.

Regulations: 01-08-07