

Community Relations

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Governing Board respects the public 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.

(cf. 9322 - Agenda/Meeting Materials)

Media representatives, like all other visitors, are expected to register immediately upon entering any school building or grounds when school is in session. If media representatives display valid identification, they can access “common” areas on campus such as the front of school, student quad area, and parking lot. Media representatives will be accompanied by the site principal or designee while on school campus and cannot impose their interaction with students or staff.

(cf. 1250 - Visitors/Outsiders)

(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 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 students' educational program. However, interviews of students are not mandatory and appropriate school staff will notify students that the media 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

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MEDIA RELATIONS (continued)

school are strongly encouraged to make prior arrangements with the principal. At their discretion, parents/guardians may instruct their children not to communicate with media representatives.

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

Districts should consult with legal counsel before adopting a policy or practice that may limit the photographing of students by the media.***

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. This also allows the principal to notify parents and arrange for times that will not interfere with the student's class attendance.

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, designated media communication staging areas on school grounds as deemed appropriate by the district, 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 or designee. 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)

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MEDIA RELATIONS (continued)

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

adopted: April 14, 1997

Revised: May 22, 2007

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Visalia, California

PHOTOGRAPHING OF STUDENTS

Dear Parents/Guardians:

On occasion, students may be spontaneously photographed or videotaped by nonschool personnel (such as parents/guardians) while the students are involved in activities at school or on field trips which are open to members of the public.

There may also be occasions when students will be incidentally photographed/videotaped by parents/guardians or news media personnel while they are participating in activities which are not open to the general public (such as regular classroom instructional activities). The district intends to monitor such occasions so that there will be no undue invasion of individual student privacy or disruption of the instructional process.

If you object to the photographing/videotaping of your child while participating in nonpublic activities as described above, please so indicate by your signature below. If you object, every effort will be made to excuse your child from the activity in question. If you do not return this form with your signature, it will be assumed that you do not object to such photographing.

My signature below indicates that I do not consent to the photographing/videotaping of my child or children while participating in nonpublic activities during the school year 19__ to __.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

Name of Student _____ Grade _____

If signed, please return this form to the principal of the school your child attends.