

NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

As a public entity, the Waterloo Schools promotes an open-door philosophy that includes welcoming the news media to visit schools.

NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF SCHOOL NEWS

News reporters and photographers frequently are invited to cover student and staff achievement, as well as innovative programs in our schools, so the community will better understand and support our important mission of education. With the approval of the building principal or the Director of School & Community Relations, District staff may initiate contact with the media to encourage coverage of positive school activities or events.

Media requests for student or staff interviews or pictures or for video or audio recording in the buildings will be referred to the Superintendent or to the Director of School & Community Relations for approval. Permission to interview, take pictures or videotape on school property will be granted if the presence of the reporter and/or cameras will not be disruptive to the school environment or infringe on the privacy of students, staff members or their families. If a request from the media cannot be accommodated, an attempt will be made to work out an acceptable alternative.

Media personnel are expected to contact the principal/designee immediately on entering school premises. The Director of School & Community Relations or the principal/designee will supervise all media visits to the school, ensuring they are conducted in a way that does not disrupt nor detract from classroom learning and student welfare. The best interests of students always are a top priority during such visits.

Administrators will assist media representatives in choosing students to interview or photograph/videotape.

Groups of Students

In most cases, it is appropriate for the media to take the following kinds of student group photographs or video: walking in the school hallway, eating in the cafeteria, participating in a classroom lesson or listening to an assembly speaker. Administrators should identify any students who should not be included in such group photographs - those students whose parents have notified the school that they do not want them photographed - and point them out to the media. It is expected the media will honor the notice to exclude these students. It is the administrator's responsibility to enforce this restriction.

Individual Students

Only those students whose parents have not restricted their availability for interviews, photographs, videotaping, or audio taping may so participate with the media.

Parents will be notified of this regulation annually. Those who do not want their students to be interviewed, photographed or recorded by the media at any time, or for any reason, at school, should inform the principal of the school in writing by the second Friday of September. Parents will be asked to discuss with their students to avoid media in their building.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

During times of crisis, all media will be referred to the Education Service Center. All statements will be issued by the Superintendent or the Director of School and Community Relations. This will allow building administrators to direct full attention to the crisis situation.

In the event of a major disaster or catastrophic occurrence, a Crisis Communication Center may be set up at the Education Service Center. This may include:

- Press room for reporters. All statements will be issued from there.
- A totally separate area where Board, staff, families, friends, and clergy can be kept informed/updated.
- Staff to handle incoming calls and to direct persons to the appropriate areas.

Depending on the circumstances, it is possible the Crisis Communication might be set up at another facility, such as a hospital or in conjunction with another responding agency, such as law enforcement.

NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE AT BOARD MEETINGS

Members of the news media are encouraged and welcome to attend open Board Meetings. The Board President shall be the spokesperson for the Board, and the Superintendent shall be the spokesperson for the school district.

A copy of the Board Meeting agenda will be sent to representatives of the news media upon request.

At the Board Meeting, a table for media representatives will be provided.

All transactions approved by the Board in open session are public record. In the event a media representative is unable to attend a meeting, a summary of important Board actions shall be provided upon request.

Note: This regulation does not pertain to routine media coverage of athletic or fine arts events.

Cross Ref.: 506.4 Student Directory Information

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