

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Appreciation is extended to the members of the General Public Relations Policy Committee for their valuable contribution in the development of the written school board policies for the school system. The work by members of this committee is represented by the policies that follow. Members of the General Public Relations Policy Committee were as follows:

Rae Ann Aderholt
Chris Bolen
Bob Hagood
Ronnie Poole

Shane Black
Barry Hamilton
James Lucas

DATE OF EFFECT

This is to advise that the policy statements contained in this manual were officially adopted on the date displayed on each respective statement. However, in order to promote consistency and fairness in their implementation, the policies displayed in this section will become effective throughout the school system on the date shown below. Pursuant to Section 16-1-30 of the Code of Alabama, the applicable local employees' professional organization was consulted prior to the adoption of these written policies. Further, the general public relations policy statements contained in this manual hereby supersede all other general public relations policies previously adopted by the Athens City Board of Education.

Signed _____

Dr. Orman L. Bridges, Jr. Superintendent

Date ____________

K - GENERAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

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| KB | Public Information Program |
| KB-R | Press Releases, Interviews, and Communications with the Media |
| KD | Staff-Community Relations |
| KH | Gifts to Schools |
| KJ | Advertising/Selling in Schools |
| KK | Public Use of School Records |
| KL | Public Complaints |

PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

The Board shall make every attempt to represent the people according to the best interests of their children and in keeping with laws of the State and Federal government. Therefore, the Board shall attempt to:

- A. Keep its members and public informed regarding the policies, administrative operations, objectives, and successes or failures of the School System.
- B. Provide the means for furnishing full and accurate information concerning the School System operations, favorable and unfavorable, together with interpretations and explanations of the School System's plans and operations.

The Board encourages a policy of sound public relations with the press and other communication media in the community. The Superintendent shall develop and implement a plan (see procedure KB-R) for the release of information to the press and other communication media which will provide information to the community concerning its schools and various phases of the Board's program.

All local news media representatives shall be welcome to attend all regular, special and annual meetings of the Board.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL
ADOPTED: November 29, 1994; REVISED: July 21, 2011

PRESS RELEASES, INTERVIEWS, AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

The Board recognizes the need to provide accurate, relevant, and current information concerning the operation of the School System to parents, students, employees, and the public. Such information can, in many instances, best be disseminated in a timely manner through mass media; therefore, School System personnel shall seek to work cooperatively with all regional mass media sources. To accommodate the media sources and the educational and operational goals of the School System, the following procedures shall be applicable in reference to the release of such information through the print and electronic media:

1. All press releases and communications to the media relative to the administrative and educational operations of the School System and local schools shall be coordinated through the Superintendent. The basic purpose of the coordination effort is to ensure as much as possible that accurate, reliable, and current information is released and available for interested persons.
2. All requests for interviews with employees and/or students during school hours by print and/or electronic media concerning the administration and operation of the School System shall be coordinated through the Superintendent. The basic purpose of the coordination shall be to limit disruption of the educational environment as much as possible and to protect the educational interest of students.
3. Requests for the release of written information related to the administration and educational operation of the School System shall be coordinated through the Superintendent. The basic purpose of the coordination shall be to ensure the confidentiality of nonpublic records.
4. Information releases and interviews relative to local school extracurricular activities and athletic programs may be released through the local school principal or designee(s).

STAFF-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

While the primary responsibility of a teacher is the education of young people, teachers and other staff members should be constantly aware of the part good public relations plays in the implementation of an effective educational program.

Good communication with parents and other citizens living within the area served by the School System is essential to a smoothly functioning organization.

Staff members are requested to take advantage of all opportunities to inform the public about the activities and functions of the School System and its schools and to promote better understanding of problems and goals. Personal contacts, use of mass media, PTA meetings, and participation in civic organizations are some of the ways through which such public relations can be accomplished.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL

ADOPTED: Oct. 5, 1978; REVISED: Nov. 29, 1994; REVISED: July 21, 2011

GIFTS TO SCHOOLS

The Board may accept any donation that may be made for educational or literary purposes. Administration of a gift or donation of property must be under conditions which are acceptable to the donor and the Board. The Board shall review carefully all gifts and bequests offered to the School System prior to their acceptance. Such review shall be conducted to determine the following:

1. The educational value to the School System.
2. The financial value to and/or financial obligation to the School System.
3. The donor's conditions under which the gift or bequest is being offered, and
4. The School System's financial liability associated with acceptance of the gift or bequests.
5. The School system's legal liability associated with acceptance of the gift or bequests.

Upon completing the review, the Board may accept or reject the property and/or donations. In such instance where the property or donations are accepted, the manner in which the property shall be administered and the object to which it or any part thereof, or the revenues from the same, shall be applied shall have been agreed to in advance of acceptance by the Board. Under no circumstances shall the Board agree to accept gifts or bequests when the administration of such would be in violation of any known laws.

The Board, as donee, shall administer the property so entrusted in conformity with the directions contained in the act of donations and for its purpose the Board's vested with all the necessary powers of administration as approved by the State Board of Education.

Nominal Value Gift Acceptance

The Board authorizes the acceptance of gifts or nominal value from parents and citizens interested in the schools by school principals under the following conditions:

1. Equipment contributed to the schools becomes the property of the Board and is subject to the same controls and regulations that govern the use of other school-owned property.
2. Contributions of equipment or services that may involve major costs for installation or maintenance or initial or continuing financial commitments from school funds shall be presented by the Superintendent to the Board for consideration and approval.
3. Individuals or organizations desiring to contribute supplies or equipment will consult with school officials regarding the acceptability of such contributions in advance of the contribution.
4. All administrators in a position to receive gifts in the name of a school or the School System shall apply a test of "reasonableness" to the gift. Reasonableness may be defined as anything that might not be construed to influence the decision makers in the purchase of school-related goods and services.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL

ADOPTED: Oct. 5, 1978; REVISED: Nov. 29, 1994; REVISED: July 21, 2011

LEGAL REF.: The Code of Alabama, 16-3-29, 16-3-30, 16-11-11.

ADVERTISING/SELLING IN THE SCHOOLS

Advertising

Advertising in student publications which are published by student organizations, including, but not limited to, school newspapers and annuals, is permitted.

Advertising or use of the School System to promote the merits of any product by brand name or trade mark is shall not be permitted by the Board. This prohibition is not intended to apply to normal, acceptable standards and procedures of fund raising by individual schools and/or approved school-related organizations.

Selling

Selling of products by commercial firms shall not be permitted in school buildings or on school grounds or properties without the approval of the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall not approve such selling where it would interfere with the educational process.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL

ADOPTED: Nov. 29, 1994; REVISED: July 21, 2011

LEGAL REF.: The Code of Alabama, 16-11-9, 16-46-6.

PUBLIC USE OF SCHOOL RECORDS

The Board delegates to the Superintendent or his/her designee the responsibility of being the custodian of all records, documents, writings, letters, memoranda, or other written, typed, copied, or developed materials possessed, assembled, or maintained by the schools. These procedures shall be followed for the release of such records:

1. All requests for public information are to be forwarded to the Superintendent immediately upon receipt. The Superintendent shall, thereupon, make a determination whether or not the information requested is public in nature.
2. If the Superintendent finds the information to be public in nature, he shall direct it be released for reproduction on the premises. The party requesting the information shall be charged the cost of reproduction and any other expenses entailed in locating and retrieving the information. If the information is in active use or otherwise unavailable, the party requesting the information shall be notified immediately upon it's becoming available.
3. If the Superintendent is unable to ascertain whether or not the information requested is public in nature, he may request, on behalf of the Board, an opinion from the Board's Attorney concerning the nature of the information.
4. Student records shall not be governed by this policy, but by Policy LLD.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL
ADOPTED: Nov. 29, 1994; REVISED: July 21, 2011
LEGAL REF.: Ala. Code § 36-12-40 (1975).

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

The Board has confidence in its professional staff and desires to support their actions in order that they are free from unnecessary, spiteful, or negative criticism and complaint. However, constructive criticism of the schools is welcomed by the Board whenever it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational program or to equip the schools to accomplish their tasks more effectively. The Board advises the public that the proper channeling of complaints involving instruction, discipline, or learning materials is as follows:

1. Teacher, if applicable
2. Principal, if applicable
3. Central Office Personnel, if applicable
4. Superintendent, if applicable
5. Board of Education, if applicable

The Board will consider hearing citizen complaints when they cannot be resolved by the administration. Matters referred to the Board must be in writing and should be specific in terms of the action desired (assistance in preparing written statement may be provided). The Board will not consider or act on complaints that have not been explored at the appropriate administrative level. Therefore, whenever a complaint is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board member as an individual, it will be referred to the administration for study and possible solution.

Basic Complaint Procedure

When a parent/guardian/interested citizen wishes to address an issue related to School System administrative or educational matters, he/she should utilize the following basic procedures:

1. Contact the person directly associated with the matter for an appointment, i.e. the teacher if there is classroom problem; the principal if it is a school administrative matter, etc.
2. If a decision relative to the issue cannot be made, or if an unfavorable decision is made, contact the person's immediate supervisor for an appointment to discuss the matter at that level, i.e. if an unfavorable decision is rendered by a school principal, contact the appropriate central office personnel for an appointment to further discuss the matter.
3. The same procedure should be followed in securing appointments with the Superintendent and Board, but only after meeting with any appropriate teacher(s) and/or school administrator(s).

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL
ADOPTED: Nov. 29, 1994; REVISED: July 21, 2011