



Central Islip Union Free School District

Board of Education & School District Policy Book

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Section	Section Title	Type
1100	Public Information Program	Local
Policy	Policy Title	
1130	News Media Relations	

The Board of Education welcomes the participation of all forms of mass media, print and electronic, in publicizing the cause of good education, as well as student, administrative, faculty and staff achievements in the district. It is recommended that the manner in which this is achieved be guided in accordance with the procedures set forth in these regulations. The Board and Superintendent shall make every reasonable effort to cooperate with the media by providing accurate information about district operations, to the extent permissible by statute and regulation.

Spokespersons

The Superintendent of Schools, School Board President, and Public Relations & Communications Consultant are designated as spokespersons for the district. In the absence of the Superintendent and/or Board President, their designees acting in their capacities shall officially speak on behalf of the district. No member of the Board will speak for, or in the name of the Board, unless given explicit direction by the Board of Education. Board members and employees can only speak as a private citizen unless they have been authorized by appropriate designated authorities, and cannot address facts and topics learned of when in the employ of the district.

Only Building Principals or their designees are authorized to speak on behalf of their buildings. This should be carried out with full pre-disclosure to the Superintendent if time allows.

When the Media Shows up to the District Unannounced

If a member of the media/press arrives unannounced at the administrative office or school buildings, security or the greeter shall retain the press at the entrance until the Superintendent of Schools, Board President, Public Relations & Communications Consultant, or Building Principal and/or designees have been

notified. At no time shall any member of the media, including still and electronic photographers, be permitted in the buildings or on school grounds unless they are accompanied by authorized designees.

Press Conferences

Press conferences are offered for a variety of reasons ranging from positive events, to communicating incidents of crisis to the community. The Superintendent of Schools, School Board President, and Public Relations & Communications Consultant shall determine when and where to hold a press conference or media event. These decisions are made on an event-by-event basis.

All press conferences shall be coordinated by the Superintendent of Schools and the School Board President, and if time allows, in consultation with the Public Relations & Communications Consultant. The administrator of the corresponding building shall be notified with as much advanced notice as possible in preparation of an organized media event. The building administrator, in concert with the Superintendent of Schools, School Board President, and Public Relations & Communications Consultant shall organize the forum for which the media would be directed. Building security will be notified by the building administrator of anticipated media arrival, and where to direct the press. All media shall be escorted to and from any staging area for any press event or conference by school or district personnel.

Press/Media Telephone Calls

When a member of the media calls the district, the secretary will take the individual's name, affiliation, contact number, and reason for the call. This procedure would give authorized personnel an opportunity to prepare how to present a coordinated response to a media telephone inquiry.

When the Press Places a Call to a School Building

If a school receives a telephone call by the press, the secretary must take the individual's name, affiliation, contact number, and reason for the call. The message should be forwarded directly to the principal or his or her designee as quickly as possible. The principal should then relay that message to the Superintendent of Schools and/or the Public Relations & Communications Consultant for direction. A coordinated response will be developed, where it will be determined who shall return the call.

Responding to the Press/Media

The Superintendent of Schools and his or her designee, School Board President, Public Relations & Communications Consultant, or Building Principal shall return calls to the media. If the purpose of the call relates to a crisis event and district officials are in the process of addressing the situation, authorized personnel should return the call to the media with a general statement, for example, that articulates: "The district is taking steps to address the situation, and more information will be forthcoming as this situation develops, and as we implement appropriate measures . . ." This affords the district the opportunity to speak to the press without the reporter stating that the district had "no comment" or did not return telephone calls. Any "no comment" or failure to return calls suggests to the community a negative connotation that the district is not taking appropriate steps to address the situation. The district representative must remain vigilant to protect confidentiality and the facts of an ongoing investigation. When unsure, the decision should always be to protect rights rather than comply with full disclosure.

Media Attendance at School Board Meetings

The media may attend school board meetings. District officials reserve the right to limit access within the venue in which the meeting is being held. For example, if a meeting is held in the gymnasium and the Board desires for photographers not to take pictures from the stage, the media must comply with the request. Assuming reporters and/or photographers are not causing a disturbance, it is permissible for them to attend the meeting and ask questions following the adjournment.

Staff Contacting the Media

All staff intending to release information to the media must notify and gain permission of the Superintendent of Schools, or the Public Relations & Communications Consultant, who shall then effectuate appropriate procedures for the request. Examples are: a photo and corresponding caption, or inviting a reporter into a school to cover an event. If the request warrants inviting the media into the district to cover an event, the Public Relations & Communications Consultant shall contact the Principal and/or the Superintendent of Schools for authorization to coordinate, organize, and disseminate information.

Media Relationships

It is understood that reporters want to get their stories, thus getting to know some members of the media on the beat may assist in forming relationships between the district and the press that may be beneficial to the district.

Communications and dialogue with the press are encouraged on an ongoing basis by the district Public Relations & Communications Consultant. As the media becomes acquainted with the district, they are apt to contact officials for positive research-based stories. Therefore, the district's fostering cautiously-crafted communications with the press will be beneficial to the school community and the media.

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