

Relations With the News Media

Communicating With the Media During Emergencies

The Bismarck Public School District recognizes the responsibility of news media to provide information to the community concerning issues and events that occur in the District's schools. During emergencies, it is the District's intent to safeguard students and staff, as well as their families, while managing the safety and security of our schools. It is also our intent to cooperate with news media.

The following guidelines will govern the District's communication practices during an emergency:

1. The main focus of the District during any emergency will be on the security and safety of all students and staff. Our secondary focus is to return the school to its instructional program while supporting and meeting the emotional and physical needs of the members of our educational community.
2. District officials will work with local law enforcement to secure and manage the emergency, and to provide information to the community via the news media and other methods.
3. Spokesperson(s) for the District are the Superintendent or the Community Relations Director to provide information to news media. Only spokesperson(s) authorized by the District or law enforcement will provide official updates during an emergency.
4. A media staging area will be established to provide media access to information/updates. Potential sites include the board rooms at Hughes Educational Center, 806 N. Washington St., or the Tom Baker Room in the basement of the City-County Building, 221 N 5th Street, if it is available for live broadcasts. All media representatives are asked to show credentials and sign in with the district's community relations staff at the staging area. If adequate space for all media becomes an issue, some events may be handled by media pool assignment.

District officials will determine the access news media will be granted on school grounds. Media requests to interview/photograph students or staff in school during school hours must be made through the district's community relations office. Requests by students or staff to have a parent or school administrator present during the interview will be honored.

Media Access During Regular Operations

Any request to interview, film, videotape, photograph, or otherwise record students or District personnel on District property shall be submitted to the community relations office for approval unless the story is from the Office of Community Relations *Media Tip Sheet*. Requests may be made by telephone or in writing, must include specific details regarding the purpose and scope of the request, and should be submitted a reasonable time in advance, giving the District ample

time to assess the request and, in the event that the request is approved, notify relevant staff, students, and parents as deemed necessary.

The community relations office or Superintendent has the right to grant or deny any request for access to school(s) from the news media. Access will not be denied in an attempt to suppress a viewpoint but may be denied for at least the following reasons. Access would:

1. Compromise the safety of students or staff;
2. Disrupt the educational environment, disrupt district operations, and/or impede the ability of staff to perform their duties;
3. Breach confidentiality;
4. Be overly demanding on district resources.

When the community relations office or Superintendent denies an access request from the news media, the Superintendent or designee may be available for comment on the topic that news media had requested to cover.

In the event that the community relations office or Superintendent approves an access request, the requesting news agency shall receive notice of any rules and restrictions the District has placed on access to students or staff and/or videotaping/recording/photographing. Such rules and restrictions shall at least comply with the following criteria and contain further requirements developed on a case-by-case basis. The news agency shall agree to these restrictions as a condition of access.

The media, when receiving District approval to cover a story at a District school, is required to observe the following rules:

1. News media representatives must register in the school's main office before proceeding to other areas of the school building. Upon check-in, the building principal shall assign an escort to assist the news media representative(s) throughout the duration of their visit.
2. The media shall receive notice of and will be required to abide by all policies and rules related to visitors in schools with the exception of rules prohibiting visitors from videotaping, recording, or photographing students/staff.
3. When the community relations office or Superintendent approves an interview(s) by the media of a minor on school property or at a school-sponsored event, the reporter shall identify themselves to the minor, relay the purpose of the interview, and make the minor fully aware of what they are consenting to before beginning the interview.

Violations

Violations of school policies/ rules or behavior that is disruptive may result in the building principal or designee requiring such individuals to leave school property. Refusal to leave school

property when asked will be deemed to be a willful disturbance of school operations, and the District will contact law enforcement to assist with removing the violator from school property or the school-sponsored event.

End of Bismarck Public School District Administrative Rule KBA-AR1

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