No. 1160
SECTION: COMMUNITY RELATIONS
TITLE: SCHOOL VISITORS

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OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Board welcomes and encourages visits to schools by parents/guardians, community members, School Board members, or interested educators.

The Board recognizes that some school visits are planned and scheduled, while some are informal. Examples of informal visitations may include, but not be limited to: delivery of school materials or other items to students, visiting with the school nurse, meeting students for early release, or dropping off students for late arrival. Scheduled school visits may include, but not be limited to: teacher conferences, discipline meetings, IEP team meetings, or class observations.

In addition to scheduled school visits, the Board also recognizes that there will be visits to the school during special times such as American Education Week or other specifically designated programs.

To assure that the greatest benefit can be derived from such visits and to ensure safe order in the schools and the protection of the rights of students and staff, the following guidelines shall govern all school visitations.

DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY
The School Code provides that the sole responsibility to make regular visits to the various schools of the district is vested in the District Superintendent. Therefore, the District Superintendent has the authority and responsibility to implement these guidelines.

GUIDELINES
The Superintendent or building principal shall have the authority to permit or deny entry of any person to a school building of this district when the following procedures have been complied with:

1. Board Member Visiting Schools

   Members of the Board are encouraged to visit the district schools and supportive departments. Board members who visit schools of their own volition or by invitation have no more authority than any other citizen. Board members have authority only in regularly called meetings of the Board or when delegated specific tasks by Board Action. Such visits should be made in accordance with the following guidelines:

   a. Board members shall exert no authority while on such visits; they will visit as observers.
   b. Board members interested in visiting schools or classrooms will inform the Superintendent of such visits and make arrangements for visitations through the principals of the various schools.

Such visits shall be regarded as informal expressions of interest in school affairs and not as inspections or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by Board members will be carried on only under Board authorization and with the full knowledge of the staff, including the Superintendent, principals and other supervisors.

c. A Board member will not give directions or make suggestions to personnel during the visit. If a school visit leaves a Board member with concern, this concern should be addressed through appropriate channels, i.e., discussed with the principal and/or the Superintendent. All communications, policies and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the Superintendent; and the Superintendent will employ all such media as are appropriate to keep staff fully informed of the Board's problems, concerns, and actions.
d. A Board member may also visit as a parent/guardian. In these instances, the Board member should make it clear that s/he is visiting as a parent/guardian and not a member of the Board.

2. Reporting to the School's Designated Area

All visitors must report to the school's designated area before proceeding to their destination in the building regardless of whether prior approval for the visit has been given. The building principal or his/her designee will determine when an escort will be needed for each visitor taking into consideration the nature and duration of the visit. All escorts will be employed by the Oxford Area School District.

3. Scheduling Visitation

Visitors generally must have a scheduled appointment; however, there are a few instances in which this may not be necessary. Specifically, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, building programs where parents/guardians receive written invitations from the building administration and designated district wide programs are considered scheduled appointments. Exceptions may be made in the case of emergencies at the discretion of the building principal or his/her designee in matters that affect the safety of the students and staff.

4. Interruptions

Visitors may not interrupt any staff member carrying out his/her professional duties. Visitors are not to interrupt a teacher during preparation times or other related instructional duties unless an appointment has been made or other advance notice given according to the guidelines provided herein.

5. Conferences with Teachers

Conferences with teachers are encouraged. Such conferences may be requested by either the parent/guardian or the teacher and should be scheduled during the teacher's preparation time or before or after school. Unscheduled conferences will be at the discretion of the principal and teacher. Conferences shall only be granted to parents and/or legal guardians. During conferences, teachers should not discuss information about a student or his/her progress with visitors other

than a parent or legal guardian unless the parent or legal guardian is present.

6. Classroom Observations

Classroom observations by parents/guardians, community members or interested educators can be valuable, even though they may disrupt the class. It is believed that parents/guardians, other community members and educators can gain a better sense of the instructional process by observing teaching and learning activities. Visitors must adhere to #10 Disruptive Behavior, per this policy.

Observations will be considered when the parent or legal guardian submits a request, verbally or in writing, to the principal one (1) school day prior to the visit and receives approval from the principal either verbally or in writing.

The principal will consult with the teacher and subsequently notify the parent or legal guardian by phone to discuss the scope of the visit.

The principal will consider the following factors in the approval process:

a. The purpose of the observation.
b. The duration of the observation.
c. The classroom activities planned during the observation.
d. The number of previous observations of that particular class.
e. The needs of the children in that class.

There may be circumstances when an administrator will observe the class with the parent/guardian if permission to visit is granted.

Principals are encouraged to schedule parent/guardian classroom visits during American Education Week and other specially designated times.

7. Discussion of Students

Teachers should not discuss individual students or the performance of those students with any non-school persons except that student's parent/guardian or surrogate parent, without the written permission of such parent/guardian or surrogate parent. Exceptions to this policy may apply in connection with cooperation with law enforcement officials.

8. Non-Parent Attendance at Conferences

If a parent or legal guardian wishes to invite another individual to a school meeting regarding his/her child, the district requests that the parent/guardian provide the district with twenty-four (24) hours notice of who they intend to bring. Such notice, while not required, will assist the district in making arrangements for the meeting, such as the amount of space needed or additional information needed and help ensure a productive, child-centered meeting. Failure to provide such notice will not result in the rescheduling of a meeting. School employees may not discuss confidential information about a student with an advocate unless the student's parents/guardians are present.

If a parent or legal guardian intends to bring an attorney to any school meeting, it is required that they provide the district at least twenty-four (24) hours notice so that the district can consider the need for or arrange the presence of its legal counsel. Failure of a parent/guardian to provide notice of their attorney's presence may or may not result in postponement and rescheduling of a meeting for another time when the district can arrange for appropriate representation if needed.

9. Audio, Video Recording or Photographs

No visitor shall be allowed to photograph, record audio or videotape any person or any part of any building or to tape record any conversation of any kind without prior approval by the building principal. In general, only special education Individual Education Plan (IEP) conferences may be taped with one (1) school day prior notification to the principal and the availability of a Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative to attend the conference. An exception to this policy shall apply in the case of public meetings or works sessions of the Board.

10. Disruptive Behavior

It is policy of the Oxford Area School District to prevent disruptions to district operations and the instructional process. All persons, including but not limited to, students, parents/guardians, employees, visitors and members of the general public are prohibited from the use of foul, profane and abusive language, whether spoken or written, or for a tirade in any manner in the school buildings or upon school grounds. If any visitor threatens, verbally abuses or harasses a school employee, student or another visitor, a building administrator will direct the visitor to leave the property.

Visitors shall refrain from talking, eating and moving around the classroom or any other disruptive behavior during the instructional period in the classroom.

All persons are therefore warned that if a visitor refuses to leave district property voluntarily, s/he will be subject to removal from district property by district security or local law enforcement and be charged with trespassing for failure to promptly vacate the property upon notice or notification. In all cases, violators may be subject to appropriate laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.