

# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

No. 911

Section: 900 Community

Title: News Media Relations

Adopted: October 5, 2011

Revised: January 27, 2022

## 911 NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

### **Purpose**

The Board of Education (“Board”) recognizes the important role that local and national news media -- print (e.g. newspaper or magazine), digital (e.g. website/blog), and broadcast (e.g. radio or TV) -- play in providing students, families, staff, and communities with accurate and timely information about the School District of Philadelphia (“District”). As the traditional and new media landscape continues to evolve and information is shared at ever-increasing speeds, it is vital that we provide any employee speaking in an official capacity on behalf of the District with the guidance and support needed in the area of media relations. The purpose of this Policy is to provide direction on how and when to engage with members of the media in order to: support accurate information sharing; safeguard confidential and private student and staff information that is protected by law; ensure alignment with other existing Board policies or administrative procedures; and otherwise support safe learning and working environments for students, staff, and school communities.

### **Authority**

As authorized by the Pennsylvania Public School Code, the Board may adopt and enforce such reasonable rules and regulations as it may deem necessary and proper regarding the management of its school affairs. [1]

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The Board directs the Superintendent or their designee, through the Office of Communications, to develop administrative procedures regarding relations between the news media and the District, including a process for the media to request access to District facilities, staff, and students.

The Board shall have final approval for all procedures regarding relations between the news media and the Board. The Superintendent or designee shall have final approval for all procedures regarding relations between the news media and the District.

The Media Relations Team within the Office of Communications (“Media Relations Team”) shall work with members of the news media to encourage news coverage that is sensitive to the diversity of District families and staff, and is free of bias concerning race, ethnicity, education, income, sexual orientation, gender, religion, or disability.

The Media Relations Team will:

1. Be readily available to media representatives;
2. Keep media representatives informed of District news and information so that reporting will be done on the basis of a comprehensive and accurate overview;
3. Submit and suggest feature stories or articles of interest or relevance and otherwise connect with news media representatives to discuss coverage of the District;
4. Draft and disseminate news releases, advisories, and statements regarding District news with system-wide implications;
5. Maintain methods and programs to encourage students, families, employees, schools, and administrative offices to submit emerging issues as well as positive news and information that may be of interest to members of the news media; and
6. Provide appropriate supports and guidance to employees speaking in an official capacity on behalf of the District so they are empowered to confidently and accurately communicate with the media representatives.

### **Mandatory Regulatory Procedures**

The District endeavors to promote accessible and accurate communication and to support and empower employees to communicate with media about District matters, through coordination with the Media Relations Team and, therefore, should develop administrative procedures to guide District staff in relation to contacting media or sharing information to the public.

[2][3][4][5][6][7][8]

Similarly, the District also endeavors to provide accurate and timely communication to the media when it requests information from the District. Any media inquiry or request relating to any official school district business, including but not limited to the following topics, should be coordinated through the Office of Communications:

- Inquiries about District programs or initiatives, and funding except as outlined in the Administrative Procedures to this Policy; [8]
- Interview requests with Central Office/District staff, administrators, teachers, or contractors in their official capacity as District employees/contractors (note that this Policy does not regulate private speech); [8][9]
- District or individual school policies and procedures;
- Personnel matters; [10]
- Inquiries about specific students or information linkable to a specific student; [2] and
- Crisis or emergency situations regarding any school in the District.

For matters of public concern, or private speech, the District has an existing Policy on the First Amendment rights of its staff. [4][9] This Policy will be applied in a manner consistent with Federal, State, and local law.

The Media Relations Team shall make itself available to conduct information sessions with staff at Central Administration and school leaders to keep them aware of this policy.

**Legal References:**

1. [24 P.S. Sec. 510](#)
2. [Policy 216](#) - Student Records
3. [Policy 220](#) - Student Expression/Distribution and Posting of Materials
4. [Policy 300](#) - Employee Code of Ethics
5. [Policy 316](#) - Staff Use of Social Media and Electronic Communications
6. [Policy 317](#) - Employee Conduct and Reporting Requirements
7. [Policy 815.1](#) - Internet and Media Presence
8. [Policy 902](#) - Publications Programs
9. [Policy 320](#) - Freedom of Speech and Political Activities
10. [Policy 324](#) - Personnel Files