

## **Public Information Program Procedures**

The superintendent shall authorize the release of information when the topic being covered involves more than one (1) building. Principals are encouraged to work with the communications office to arrange media coverage of their school programs/activities.

### **1. The board affirms the following objectives:**

- 1.1 to maintain an effective two-way communications system between the district and its various publics which assures:
  - 1.1.1 dissemination of accurate, timely information about school policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions, and critical issues;
  - 1.1.2 interpretation of decisions and actions;
  - 1.1.3 elimination of rumors and misinformation;
  - 1.1.4 provision through programs and practices of an open climate which will elicit ideas, suggestions and reactions from the community and employees alike; and
  - 1.1.5 relations with the news media which are effective;
- 1.2 to maintain a communications structure which will coordinate the district's communications efforts;
- 1.3 to develop and maintain an organizational environment where all district staff members are aware that they share the responsibility for communication of school policies, programs and activities to parents and members of the educational and other communities;
- 1.4 to maintain a written plan of communication of policies and guidelines which will be available to employees and to the public upon request; and
- 1.5 to support the establishment of a communications advisory committee to review and evaluate district-wide, two-way communication efforts.

### **2. The public information program shall provide for the following:**

- 2.1 news releases to the local media at appropriate times;
- 2.2 dissemination of information about and media coverage of school events and activities (except sports activities) in a timely fashion to the local news media;
- 2.3 assistance with regular direct communication between individual schools and the patrons they serve;
- 2.4 assistance to staff in improving skills and understanding in communicating with the public;
- 2.5 solicitation of community opinion through educational partnership committees, parent organizations, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, community forums, and other such events that bring staff and citizens together;

- 2.6 surveying instruments and questionnaires which may be developed to gain a broader perspective of public opinion;
  - 2.7 assistance in the researching of the school district's patrons, internal and external, on a systematic basis to gain a broader perspective of public opinion;
  - 2.8 assistance to school principals and other school staff in improving their communication efforts with their patrons, internal and external, by providing workshops or one-on-one (1:1) visits; and
  - 2.9 a central contact for news media so that their questions and/or concerns can be answered or directed to the proper person.
- 3. The following procedures relate to the public information program and the media:**
- 3.1 Media representatives shall be supplied factual information and will be kept fully informed on all aspects of the program, so that any reporting shall be done on the basis of a complete and accurate overview.
  - 3.2 Any photograph which is of a controversial nature or might invade an individual's right of privacy will not be sanctioned.
  - 3.3 The *Media Permission Form* should be used when photographs and or stories of any Yakima School District students under the age of eighteen (18) will be used by the media or when the students are:
    - 3.3.1 special education students whose handicapping disability is the focus of the story or who will be identified as having a handicapping disability through the course of the story;
    - 3.3.2 discussing socially controversial or potentially sensitive topics, such as teenage pregnancy, drugs, chewing tobacco, or poverty; or
    - 3.3.3 when the story or photo may be used commercially or for promotion of a special interest, such as a bond or levy, campaigns, or WEA.
- Media Permission Forms* are available from the communications office. A copy of all completed *Media Permission Forms* should be sent to the communications office.
- 3.4 Information on the availability of *Directory Information* forms, exhibit 3600.2X, is distributed through each school's newsletter every fall. If filled out and returned by a parent, this form requires schools to withhold all information about the child if the parent refuses permission on the form. This also notifies students and parent(s)/guardian(s) of their rights to inspect, review, and correct educational records. A copy of each *Directory Information* form must be sent to the communications office.
  - 3.5 Media representatives may attend school functions to which the public is invited.

- 3.6 During regular school hours, all media representatives must report to the building office for identification and authorization before going to any part of the building or contacting any individual.
- 3.7 Media representatives must have authorization from the principal and/or superintendent to cover activities or to photograph students under eighteen (18) years of age.

Unless the above restrictions apply, schools may release the following directory information about students: legal name, address, phone number, date, place of birth, major field of study, participation in sports and activities, weight and height of athletes, dates of entry and withdrawal, diplomas, awards received and last school attended. Photos of students engaged in school activities may also be used by the media without written consent providing that none of the above restrictions apply.

Date:  
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