

P2100 SCHOOL, COMMUNITY AND MEDIA RELATIONS

BOARD POLICY:

The school, community and media relations program is a responsibility of both the Board of Education and the total school staff. Within the bounds of legal and ethical responsibilities to students, the school district will attempt to keep the community well informed about the operations and needs of the school district. The school district recognizes the necessity of involving citizens in the work of the district and its schools, and of two-way strategic communication with internal and external audiences. Communications strategies may include publications of print, audio, video, digital and social media, media relations, and various face-to-face communication activities.

Administrative Implemental Procedures:

1. Two-way Communications. The school district shall maintain two-way communications with its many publics by (1) providing an information program to aid public understanding of the schools, and (2) continuously attempting to assess public opinion as means to assist the Board of Education in policy determination and to assist the professional staff in operation of the schools.
2. Citizen Involvement. The Board and staff shall seek ways of involving citizens in the work of the schools to foster community understanding and a sharing of responsibility for the quality of education.
3. Liaison to News Media. Strategic Communications shall serve as a liaison with news media and shall provide assistance to school personnel in working with news media.
 - a. Strategic Communications staff members shall maintain continuing contacts with local news media. They shall develop news and feature material for the news media, being guided by the informational needs of the community and of the total school district.
 - b. School staff members are encouraged to inform Strategic Communications of educational projects and activities that might be of interest to the total community.
 - c. School and administrative staff members who are directly contacted by any news media on items concerning the Wichita Public Schools shall inform Strategic Communications.
4. Parent and Community Support. The Parent and Community Support Network will coordinate efforts with all other district departments to assist, educate, create awareness, and empower parents, students, community, and district staff to resolve issues related to educational concerns. (See P2200 - Parent and Community Support Network policy.)
5. Emergency Crisis Situations. The following guidelines shall apply to emergency crisis communication at a school building. (See P2300 – Crisis Management and Response.)
 - a. During a period of crisis, a principal should notify security communications and call upon Strategic Communications to assist in media, staff and parent communications efforts.
 - b. Strategic Communications shall oversee all statements released publicly from a school or the district during times of crisis.
 - c. The spokesperson for all crisis incidents shall be the Division Director of Strategic Communications or designee.
6. Compliance with FERPA. Release or disclosure of information contained in student educational records must be done in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, as amended, and its interpretive regulations, 34

C.F.R. § 99.1, et seq. (See P5501 - Privacy of Student Records and the district guidelines for FERPA.). Directory Information, such as student name, grade and school, can be released without a parent's prior written consent. The definition of Directory Information is located on the back of the annual School Year Calendar.

- a. Before disclosing directory information such as student names and pictures, district employees must ascertain whether the parents and/or eligible students (18 years or older) have filed an objection to the disclosure of directory information with the district. Parents must submit a written Request to Withhold Directory Information to the school if they do not want their student's information published.
7. Consent. The District may request that news media representatives provide parents and/or eligible students (18 years or older) with the opportunity to consent, in writing, to the release of student information necessary for the District to substantively respond to news media inquiries.
8. Permission to Release Information. The Publication Consent Form (Policy 2100a) must be completed if there is a request to release student information that goes beyond what is defined as directory information. Strategic Communications should be contacted to determine if the Permission to Release form is necessary. The Publication Consent form should not be used as part of the school enrollment packet and does not need to be completed to release directory information.

Board counsel has approved this policy as to legal form and content.

Administrative Responsibility: Strategic Communications

Latest Revision Date: January 2019

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