

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Mendocino County Board of Education recognizes that the media significantly influences the public's understanding of school/program issues and can greatly assist the County Office in communicating with the community about school/program needs.

The County Board respects the public's right to information and recognizes that the media has a legitimate interest in the schools/programs and a responsibility to provide the community with news.

Media representatives are welcome at all County Board meetings and shall receive meeting announcements and agendas upon request.

Like all visitors, media representatives may register in the school/program office when coming on campus during school/program hours.

Staff may provide the media with student directory information, including, but not limited to, the name of a student, school attendance, grade level, honors, and activities, unless the student's parent/guardian has submitted a written request that such information not be disclosed. The Mendocino County Office of Education shall not release information that is private or confidential as required by law, Board policy or administrative regulation. No other access to student records or personally identifiable student information may be provided without written parent/guardian permission.

Interviewing and Photographing Students

MCOE shall not impose restraints on students' right to speak freely with media representatives at those times, which do not disrupt a student's educational program. However, interviews of students may not create substantial disorder or impinge on the rights of others. Therefore, in order to minimize possible disruption, media representatives who wish to interview students at school are strongly encouraged to make prior arrangements with the program manager/administrator. At their discretion, parents/guardians may instruct their children not to communicate with media representatives.

In order to protect the privacy and safety of students, a media representative who wishes to photograph students on school grounds should first make arrangements with the program manager/administrator or designee.

When interviewing or photographing any student, written parent/guardian permission is required. For any special education student, they will not be identified as a special education student without prior written parent/guardian permission.

Media Communications

The County Superintendent and County Board of Education shall continually work with various media outlets to ensure information, services, and events are communicated to the public as stated in MCOE's external communications plan.

Crisis Communications Plan

During a disturbance or crisis situation, the first priority of school staff is to assure the safety of students and staff. However, the County Board and County Superintendent recognize the need to provide timely and accurate information to parents/guardians and the community during a crisis. The County Board and County Superintendent also recognize that the media have an important role to play in relaying this information to the public. In order to help ensure that the media and MCOE work together effectively, the County Superintendent or designee shall develop a crisis communications plan to identify communication strategies to be taken in the event of a crisis. The crisis communications plan may include but not be limited to identification of a media center location, development of both internal and external notification systems, and strategies for press conference logistics.

The County Superintendent or designee shall include local law enforcement and media representatives in the crisis planning process.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

32210 *Willful disturbance of public school or meeting*
32211 *Threatened disruption or interference with classes*
35144 *Special meetings*
35145 *Public meetings*
35145.5 *Agenda; public participation*
35146 *Closed sessions*
35172 *Promotional activities*

EVIDENCE CODE

1070 *Refusal to disclose news source*

PENAL CODE

627 – 627.10 *Access to school premises*

Policy adopted: September 16, 1991

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