

8.01 PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

The Board of Education believes that all reasonable means should be employed to keep the public informed on matters of importance regarding its actions, policies, finances, programs, personnel, and the details of its educational and business operations. The Board encourages study, discussion, and active participation by all concerned in the promotion of the best possible program of education in the community. It is the practice of the Board to utilize the advice and assistance of interested individuals and groups in the solution of its educational and financial problems. Therefore, the Superintendent shall direct an information program designed to inform the community of the achievements and needs of the schools that includes, at a minimum, annual reports of progress for each school and the District.

The School District's information program will:

- A. Encourage a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the School District.
- B. Be a planned, systematic, two-way process between the Board and the Superintendent and their internal and external constituencies.
- C. Use a variety of media including meetings, letters, circulars, seminars, publications, and personal contacts.
- D. Provide the channels necessary for resolving grievances and eliminating misunderstandings.
- E. Inform concerned persons as to their rights, privileges, and responsibilities.

A school's information program will:

- A. Encourage informal, as well as formal, methods of communication.
- B. Include the use of a variety of media including meetings, seminars, bulletin boards, publications, and personal contacts.
- C. Provide channels for resolving grievances and/or misunderstandings for students, staff, and community members.
- D. Inform concerned persons as to their rights, privileges, and responsibilities.
- E. Supplement and support the general communications program of the School District.

News Releases

It is important that information be disseminated on activities about and in the schools. In order that this publicity be given wide coverage and be coordinated into a common effort and purpose, these guidelines will be followed in giving official information to the news media:

- A. The Board President will be the official spokesperson for the Board, except as this duty is delegated to the Superintendent.
- B. News releases that are of a District-wide nature or pertain to established District policy are the responsibility of the Superintendent or a member of the staff whom he/she has designated.
- C. News releases that are of concern to only one school, or to an organization of one school, are the responsibility of the principal of that particular school. Statements made to the press by others representing themselves as staff members of the particular school must be cleared with the principal.

The Board expects the administration to maintain a vital and effective link with the media sources in the community.

While it is impossible to know how news releases will be treated by the press, every possible effort should be made to obtain coverage of school activities which will create and maintain a dignified and professionally responsible image for the School District.

Telephone Communications

The Board of Education is vitally interested in maintaining effective communication with parents, members of the community, vendors, and others who have dealings with the District. The Board realizes that, although advances in technology provide the possibility of enhancing communications, some innovations can also inhibit effective contact between the public and District personnel.

The Board directs that incoming calls during regular school hours to the central office and to each school and operations office be answered by a District staff member or volunteer and not by a computer-generated voice. This will ensure each caller's concern is dealt with in an expeditious manner.

If, under certain rare circumstances, it is not possible for a staff member or volunteer to be available to answer a telephone call to a main office number, a computer message may be substituted, provided the message instructs the caller how to access a District employee who can take some type of action in response to the caller's need.

Telephone calls to extension numbers within the District may be answered by voice mail provided the caller is provided the alternative of dialing 0 and talking to a staff member or volunteer.

The telephone system should operate in such a way that a caller is able to talk directly to someone who can be of assistance to the caller. Lack of effective telephone contact could be critical.