

6150 MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY *New Policy

I. PURPOSE & PHILOSOPHY

The Weber School District (District) is dedicated to facilitating transparent communication with the media and interested third parties while protecting the privacy rights of students and employees. We understand and recognize the vital role the news media plays in disseminating information to the public, which may encompass a wide array of topics related to events, activities, recognitions, and investigations within our District. As an educational institution, we are obligated to uphold the laws safeguarding student and employee privacy while carefully striking a balance between providing information and adhering to privacy regulations. By thoughtfully managing media and third-party inquiries, we aim to minimize disruptions to the learning environment while ensuring the accurate and timely release of information.

II. POLICY

In an effort to be consistent in responding to these requests, the following policy applies to all employees while at work or when acting in an official capacity on behalf of the District.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "News Media" are forms of mass media that focus on delivering information on current events and analysis to the general public.
- B. "Third-Party" meaning but not limited to advertising, marketing, film-making, government agencies, vendors, non-profit or other companies, organizations, and groups not directly associated with Weber School District.

IV. SCHOOL PROPERTY

- A. Being a public entity does not mean the media has an unconditional right to be on school property. The District reserves the right to limit and restrict visitors on school campuses and District-owned properties. Although school campuses are open to the public for certain purposes, namely to conduct school-related business, there are certain areas within a school where there is an enhanced expectation of privacy. This includes classrooms and areas where students congregate.

V. MEDIA REQUESTS

- A. All media inquiries and interactions must be vetted and approved by the Community Relations Office to ensure the accurate dissemination of information, in consultation with the building administrator and/or District director.

- B. The District does not prohibit employees from engaging with the media representatives outside of work and on a personal level; however, if the interaction is related to their employment and/or it may be perceived that the employee is representing, then the release of any information must be authorized beforehand.
- C. Any invitation to the media to attend an activity or event, to be on school property, or to conduct interviews with employees or students, must be approved in advance by the Community Relations Office and the building administrator or District director. The following information should be submitted for review:
 - 1. Name of the media outlet;
 - 2. Name of the reporter and their contact information;
 - 3. Date and time of the interview or activity;
 - 4. Topic or nature of the inquiry; and
 - 5. Any measures to protect student and employee privacy to include signed parental release forms.
- D. An exemption to these provisions is extended to coaches and athletic directors who are speaking in relation to an extracurricular event involving the team or program they are directly involved in. An example of this would be a post-game news conference or interview. Coaches and athletic directors are only authorized to address specific school-related events and they are prohibited from speaking about District issues as a whole.

VI. MEDIA ACCESS

- A. The following guidelines will be applied when reviewing media requests in order to determine what information will be released and the level of access that will be granted.
 - 1. Is the request directly related to our curriculum, school event, activity, or other school-related function or operation?
 - 2. Is the request directly related to an employee and student's conduct while at work or school?
 - 3. Is there a clear nexus to the school?
 - 4. Have all privacy laws and policies been considered, including compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?
 - 5. Will the request require parental notification and consent?

6. Will the request create a disruption to the learning environment, and what efforts can be taken to mitigate any potential disruption?
- B. When filming inside a classroom or other area where students congregate, the following guidelines should be applied:
1. Is the inquiry directly related to a specific activity inside the classroom?
 2. Does the inquiry focus on a classroom-related subject?
 3. Does the inquiry highlight the teacher in relation to their teaching methods and what they are doing to help educate their students?
 4. Does the inquiry highlight a student's academic accomplishments and/or contributions to the school or classroom?
 5. Have all privacy interests been considered?

VII. PRIVACY

- A. The following must be applied before allowing any filming, photographing, or interviewing of students:
1. Review whether the student's parents have opted out of allowing the school to disclose their student's information that is considered Director Information under FERPA to ensure no students are involved where the parent/guardian has requested their child not be filmed or photographed. Even though a majority of parents don't opt out, the presumed authorization to use photographs/video of students only applies to representatives of the District for official educational purposes, and the right to use these materials does not extend to third parties or the media.
 2. Notify the parents/guardians in writing in advance that the media will be present and that their child may be filmed or photographed.
 3. Notify the parents/guardians in writing in advance that their child may be interviewed by the media, and obtain the parent/guardian consent in writing to allow the interview to take place.
 4. If a parent/guardian did not select the opt-out option upon registration, and they request their child not be filmed, photographed, or interviewed, or if they don't sign the consent/release form, the school has the responsibility to make sure the child is not involved in the story.

VIII. THIRD-PARTY REQUESTS

- A. In addition to the media, the District will often receive third-party requests to film, photograph, and interview students. Although these may be related to positive

events and occurrences within the District, the same standards of review listed in sections V., VI., and VII of this policy shall apply.

- B. The entity requesting access must also submit a formal request in writing to the Community Relations Office. If the request involves the photographing and filming of students, the entity must submit a consent/release form that will be reviewed by the District's legal counsel.
- C. Occasionally, requests are received from outside companies for employees to provide testimonials for certain programs or products. These testimonies are often used as part of a marketing campaign for a private party. The District strongly discourages employees from providing testimonials even when there is no compensation offered. Testimonials can be perceived as an official endorsement of an outside company or product. Governmental employees are prohibited under state law from receiving any type of compensation for providing a testimonial. [See Utah Code Ann. 67-16-1 through 15.](#)

IX. OPERATIONS

- A. Any time a member of the media or third-party entity is on school property to conduct operations, they should be accompanied by a representative from the Community Relations Office or their designee which may include a building administrator or District director.
- B. All members of the media or third-party entities are considered visitors and they must abide by school policies and procedures.
- C. The District reserves the right to end operations at any time and to ask visitors to leave school property.
- D. Extracurricular events and public meetings are considered public venues. Any event open to the public is also open to the media and outside parties.
- E. Employees and students are under no obligation to submit to an interview or be filmed or photographed by the media or an outside party, and they have the right to refuse to participate in such activities.
- F. Before filming is allowed in a classroom, the request must abide by this policy and be approved by the Community Relations Office, building administrator, District director, and the teacher overseeing the classroom. Every effort should be made to ensure the presence of the media or other outside entities doesn't interrupt or negatively impact student learning.

X. CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

- A. In the event of a crisis or emergency, the District will provide information to the media and public in an accurate and timely manner. Safety and the preservation of life will always take precedence over the release of information.

- B. The Community Relations Office will be responsible for coordinating the release of all information in crisis and emergency situations to ensure that communications do not jeopardize the emergency response, violate any privacy laws, and are consistent with the release of information by other parties involved such as first responders.
- C. The Community Relations Office will also be responsible for coordinating with the media to designate potential staging areas on school property, escorting the media on the grounds, authorizing and conducting interviews, and releasing pertinent information in the form of press releases or other official statements.
- D. All requests for information will be channeled through the Community Relations Office.

XI. RECORDS REQUESTS

- A. The release of any record must be in accordance with GRAMA and FERPA laws. See [6800 GRAMA Policy](#). 7i..
- B. Employees should not share any records with the media or other third parties without permission.

XII. SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. All content posted or shared through social media must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and is subject to the District's [Appropriate Use Policy](#) and [Employee Social Media Policy](#).

XIII. EXAMPLE OF CONSENT/RELEASE FORM

- A. This form may be used following approval from the Community Relations Office.

 Parental Consent/Release Form (Media)