

# Document Status: Draft Update

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

### 8:10 Connection with the Community

#### Public Relations

The Board President is the official spokesperson for the School Board. The Superintendent is the District's chief spokesperson. The Board, in collaboration with the Superintendent<sup>PRESSPlus1</sup> or designee, shall plan and implement a District public relations program to keep the community informed and build support through open and authentic communications. The public relations program shall include, without limitation, media relations; internal communications; communications to the community; communications to students and parents/guardians; emergency communications in coordination with the District Safety Coordinator; the District website and social media accounts<sup>PRESSPlus2</sup> channels; <sup>PRESSPlus2</sup> and other efforts to reach all audiences using suitable mediums.

#### Community Engagement

Community engagement is a process that the Board uses to actively involve diverse citizens in dialogue, deliberation, and collaborative thinking around common interests for the District's schools. Effective community engagement<sup>PRESSPlus3</sup> is essential to create trust and support among the community, Board, Superintendent, and District staff.<sup>PRESSPlus4</sup>

The Board, in consultation with the Superintendent, determines the purpose(s) and objective(s) of any community engagement initiative articulates the District's community engagement goals.

For each community engagement initiative:

1. The Board will:
  1. Commit to the determined purpose(s) and objective(s), and
  2. Provide information about the expected nature of the public's involvement.
2. The Superintendent will:
  1. Identify the effective tools and tactics that will advance the Board's purpose(s) and objective(s);
  2. At least annually, prepare a report for the community engagement initiative, and/or
  3. Prepare a final report of the community engagement initiative.

The Board will periodically: (1) review whether its community engagement initiative goals(s) are achieving the identified purpose(s) and objective(s); (2) consider what, if any, modifications would improve effectiveness; and (3) determine whether to continue individual initiativestactics.

CROSS REF.: 2:110 (Qualifications, Term, and Duties of Board Officers)

Adopted: June 10, 2020

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### PRESSPlus Comments

PRESSPlus 1. The board and superintendent should have a conversation regarding which objectives the board, superintendent, or both the board and superintendent together will implement. **Issue 117, October 2024**

PRESSPlus 2. Updated in response to the U.S. Supreme Court case Lindke v. Freed, 601 U.S. 187 (2024), which held that a government official's speech on social media is attributable to the government if the official: (1) has actual authority to speak on behalf of the government on a particular matter; and (2) purports to exercise that authority when speaking on social media. If an official's speech on social media is attributable to the government, then the official's social media posts will be subject to scrutiny under the First Amendment. Social media accounts of government officials that are clearly labeled as personal (e.g., "This is the personal page of [insert name]") or with a disclaimer (e.g., "the views expressed are strictly my own") are presumed to contain only personal posts, though that presumption can be challenged depending on the particular facts. The Court did not distinguish between elected or appointed government officials and employees, suggesting that the same test would apply to government employees. Making official statements through the district's website and official social media accounts, rather than through personal or "mixed use" accounts is a best practice and a strategy to mitigate First Amendment liability for board members and employees who communicate through social media platforms. Additionally, it is a best practice for board members or employees with social media accounts to clearly label their personal accounts as personal and limit district-related communications to official district accounts.

Because those who post on a district's social media accounts typically have authority to speak on the district's behalf, such accounts are likely either *limited public forums* (also referred to as *nonpublic forums*) or *public forums*. See, e.g., People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals v. Tabak, 2024 WL 3573661 (D.C. Cir. 2024)(finding the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) social media accounts were limited public forums because use of the accounts was limited to discussion of certain subjects; however, the NIH violated the First Amendment when it filtered out comments based on the plaintiff's viewpoints). Consider that school districts are different than federal government agencies and must ensure other duties to students, e.g., safety and security, which may require excluding certain comments from the district's social media accounts. **Issue 117, October 2024**

PRESSPlus 3. For training resources, see [www.iasb.com/conference-training-and-events/training/workshops/reflecting-on-communication-and-community-engagemen/](http://www.iasb.com/conference-training-and-events/training/workshops/reflecting-on-communication-and-community-engagemen/) and [www.iasb.com/about-us/publications/journal/2022-illinois-school-board-journal/september-october-2022/engaging-with-the-community-%C2%A0a-time-to-reflect-and/](http://www.iasb.com/about-us/publications/journal/2022-illinois-school-board-journal/september-october-2022/engaging-with-the-community-%C2%A0a-time-to-reflect-and/) **Issue 117, October 2024**

PRESSPlus 4. These statements are based on IASB's *Foundational Principles of Effective Governance*, principle #2, "The board connects with the community." The first sentence applies the definition of community engagement to a board and its school district. See [www.iasb.com/conference-training-and-events/training/training-resources/foundational-principles-of-effective-governance/](http://www.iasb.com/conference-training-and-events/training/training-resources/foundational-principles-of-effective-governance/). **Issue 117, October 2024**