

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Monterey County Board of Education (County Board) respects the public's right to information and recognizes that the media significantly influence the community's understanding of school programs. In order to develop and maintain positive media relations, the County Board and the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools (County Superintendent) desire to reasonably accommodate media requests for information and to provide accurate, reliable and timely information.

Media representatives are welcome at all County Board meetings and shall receive meeting agendas upon request. However, when school is in session, media representatives, like all other visitors, are required to register immediately upon entering any school building or grounds and shall be accompanied by a staff member. [Ed. Code 32212 and 35160]

(cf. 9322 - Agenda/Meeting Materials)
(cf. 1250 - Visitors/Outsiders)
(cf. 3515.2 - Disruptions)

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

(cf. 1340 - Access to District Records)
(cf. 4119.23/4219.23/4319.23 - Unauthorized Release of Confidential/Privileged Information)
(cf. 5125 - Student Records)
(cf. 5125.1 - Release of Directory Information)
(cf. 9010 - Public Statements)
(cf. 9321.1 - Closed Session Actions and Reports)

Interviewing and Photographing Students

The MCOE staff cannot impose restraints on students' right to speak freely with media representatives at those times which do not disrupt students' educational program. However, interviews of students should not create substantial disorder or impinge on the rights of others. Therefore, in order to protect the privacy and safety of students as well as minimizing possible disruption, media representatives who wish to interview or photograph students at school must make prior arrangements with the principal. At

their discretion, parents/guardians may instruct their children not to communicate with media representatives.

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

When interviewing or photographing a special education student, he/she shall not be identified as a special education student without prior, written parent/guardian permission.

Media Communications Plan

In order to help develop strong relations with the media, the County Superintendent or designee should consider developing a proactive media communications plan. This plan may include, but not be limited to, information related to MCOE programs and needs, student awards, school accomplishments and events of special interest.

(cf. 0510 - School Accountability Report Card)

(cf. 1100 - Communication with the Public)

(cf. 1160 - Political Processes)

The plan should specify the primary media contact to whom all media inquiries shall be routed. Spokespersons designated to speak to the media on behalf of the MCOE include the County Board president, County Superintendent and public information officer. Other County Board members and staff may be asked by the Board President or County Superintendent or designee to speak to the media on a case-by-case basis, depending on their expertise on an issue.

The County Superintendent or designee should consider provide training on effective media relations to all designated spokespersons.

(cf. 9240 - Board Development)

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 recognizes the need to provide timely and accurate information to parents/guardians and the community during a crisis. The County Board also recognizes 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 should develop a crisis communications plan to identify communication strategies to be taken in the event of a crisis.

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)

(cf. 3516 - Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness Plan)

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.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

32210-32212 *Willful disturbance of public school or meeting*
1040 *Duties and responsibilities: county boards of education*
35144 *Special meetings*
35145 *Public meetings*
35160 *Authority of governing boards*
35172 *Promotional activities*

EVIDENCE CODE

1070 *Refusal to disclose news source*

PENAL CODE

627-627.10 *Access to school premises*

COURT DECISIONS

Lopez v. Tulare Joint Union High School District, (1995) 34 Cal.App.4th 1302

ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINIONS

95 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 509 (1996)

Adopted: 05/01/13