

Community Relations

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 Superintendent or designee shall plan and implement a District public relations program that will: ¹

1. Develop community understanding of school operation.
2. Gather community attitudes and desires for the District.
3. Secure adequate financial support for a sound educational program.
4. Help the community feel a more direct responsibility for the quality of education provided by their schools.
5. Earn the community's good will, respect, and confidence.
6. Promote a genuine spirit of cooperation between the school and the community.
7. Keep the news media accurately informed.
8. Coordinate with the District Safety Coordinator to provide accurate and timely information to the appropriate individuals during an emergency.

The public relations program should include:

1. Regular news releases concerning District programs, policies, activities, and special event management for distribution by, for example, posting on the District website, using social media platforms,² e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc., or sending to the news media.
2. News conferences and interviews, as requested or needed. The Board President and Superintendent will coordinate their respective media relations efforts. Individuals may speak for the District only with prior approval from the Superintendent. ³

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ These objectives are examples only and should be customized for each district. The District Safety Coordinator is identified as the responsible person for compiling information and preparing communications covering an emergency or crisis (4:170-AP1, *Comprehensive Safety and Security Plan*). An alternative to the entire first subhead follows:

The Board President is the official spokesperson for the School Board. The Superintendent is the District's chief spokesperson. The Superintendent 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 platforms; and other efforts to reach all audiences using suitable mediums.

² District social media accounts are likely either *limited public forms* or *public forums*. See *Knight First Amendment Inst. at Columbia Univ. v. Trump*, 302 F.Supp.3d 541 (S.D.N.Y. 2018) (holding that the @realDonaldTrump Twitter account is a public forum under the First Amendment; therefore, (a) it could not exclude plaintiffs based simply on their views because excluding them on that basis is a violation their First Amendment right to petition their government, and (b) by purging critics from the @realDonaldTrump account, the White House deprived those who remained in the public forum the opportunity to hear the critics). Consider that school districts are different than the President of the United States 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.

3. Publications having a high quality of editorial content and effective format. All publications shall identify the District, school, department, or classroom and shall include the name of the Superintendent, the Building Principal, and/or the author and the publication date.
4. Other efforts that highlight the District's programs and activities. 4

Community Engagement 5

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.⁶

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

For each community engagement initiative:

1. The Board will: 7
 - a. Commit to the determined purpose(s) and objective(s), and
 - b. Provide information about the expected nature of the public's involvement.
2. The Superintendent will: 8
 - a. Identify the effective tools and tactics that will advance the Board's purpose(s) and objective(s),
 - b. At least annually, prepare a report for the community engagement initiative, and/or
 - c. Prepare a final report of the community engagement initiative.

The Board will periodically: (1) review whether its community engagement initiative(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 initiatives.

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³ In alignment with the IASB "Foundational Principles of Effective Governance," the school board president is the board's spokesperson (see 2:110, *Qualifications, Term, and Duties of Board Officers*) and the superintendent is the district's spokesperson.

⁴ Examples of such programs include senior citizens' brunches, realtors' luncheons, and building tours.

⁵ This section is optional. A board that includes this subhead should complete the work necessary to develop and implement a community engagement initiative. See *Connecting with the Community: The Purpose and Process of Community Engagement as Part of Effective School Board Governance (Connecting with the Community)* at www.iasb.com/IASB/media/Documents/communityengagement.pdf. This publication and other materials about community engagement are listed at: www.iasb.com/training/connecting.cfm.

The community engagement process differs from public relations (discussed in the **Public Relations** section, above) or public polling. Public relations push out information to the community. Public polling pulls information or opinions from the community. While most school districts understand how to push and pull information from their communities, the community engagement process is part of the two-way conversation for school boards that involves listening. Listening should not be limited only to the public comment period during board meetings. It is reaching out to the community and having conversations not only with parents but other community members, and then taking into consideration their thoughts and ideas as boards make their decisions. This method of listening must be purposeful for community engagement to work as intended.

⁶ Optional. This sentence applies the definition of community engagement to a board and its school district. See *Connecting with the Community*, pg. 9, at www.iasb.com/IASB/media/Documents/communityengagement.pdf.

An alternative introductory sentence that repeats the definition of community engagement follows: "For purposes of this policy, community engagement is the process that school boards use to actively involve diverse citizens in dialogue, deliberation and collaborative thinking around common interests for their public schools."

⁷ This action clarifies a board's reason(s) for engaging its community in an initiative and frames it to share with all participants in the process. *Connecting with the Community*, pg. 10.

⁸ See *Connecting with the Community* at pg. 10 for examples of resources that a superintendent could use to implement the board's purpose and objectives.

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

Section 8 - Community Relations

Community Relations

Policy 8:10

Connection with the Community

The Superintendent is the District's chief spokesperson and shall plan and implement a District public relations program that will:

1. Develop community understanding of school operation.
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3. Secure adequate financial support for a sound educational program.
4. Help the community feel a more direct responsibility for the quality of education provided by their schools.
5. Earn the community's good will, respect, and confidence.
6. Promote a genuine spirit of cooperation between the school and the community.
7. Keep the news media provided with accurate information.

The public relations program should include:

1. Regular news releases concerning District programs, policies, and activities, that will be sent to the news media.
2. News conferences and interviews, as requested or needed. Individuals may speak for the District only with prior approval from the Superintendent.
3. Publications having a high quality of editorial content and effective format. All publications shall identify the District, school, department, or classroom and shall include the name of the Superintendent, the Building Principal, and/or the author and the publication date.
4. Other efforts that highlight the District's programs and activities.

LEGAL REF.:

23 Ill. Admin. Code § 1.210.

CROSS REF.:

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

ADOPTED:

June 20, 2011
