

Administrative Procedures for News Media Relations
(Attachment for Policy No. 911)

Purpose

The School District of Philadelphia (“District”) believes that a strong, collaborative relationship with local and national media outlets is a vital part of an overall communications strategy to consistently provide our students, families, employees, and school communities with timely, accurate, and important District news and information. These procedures are designed to provide guidance on how District staff shall efficiently respond to and engage with media while maintaining safe learning and working environments.

Procedures

All District staff are required to adhere to the following guidelines. When in doubt, contact the [Media Relations Team](#).¹ Feel free to contact any member of the Media Relations Team if you have any questions, concerns, or need assistance.

News Media Requests for Information or Access

Media

All media must request permission in advance from the Media Relations Team to conduct interviews or take photos/video on school grounds.

Inquiries are to be directed to the [Media Relations Team](#) at the central office via email or telephone.

Media wishing to conduct student interviews or gather video footage must make a request with the Media Relations Team to ensure that the student has media clearances and parental authorization.

Media should reach out to the Media Relations Team which will contact the school or department prior to media arriving to ensure students with the proper media clearance are pre-identified and available for interviews and/or photographs.

Requests by the media to shoot "b-roll" of students walking through hallways, in the cafeteria, etc. on a school site must be approved by the Media Relations Team in advance. All such recordings must be done in such a way that no one student can be identified in order to protect those students without media releases.

Staff

All media requests directed to the school level shall be referred to the [Media Relations Team](#). The Media Relations Team will review the media requests and either respond or provide

¹ The Media Relations Team webpage is available at <https://www.philasd.org/newsroom/>

approval for a school-level employee to respond on behalf of the District. A member of the Media Relations Team will assist the media and follow up with staff as needed to provide information, or coordinate any dates, times, and locations for interviews or photographs, depending on the request or inquiry.

Media on School Property

Media should not be on school property without prior approval from the Media Relations Team.

All media are required to check in at the main office or security station prior to any media activity.

Media who wish to (1) conduct random parent/guardian interviews or (2) get video footage of District buildings are asked to do so outside of District buildings (with appropriate permissions), in order to not disrupt the learning environment and/or block any entryways, unless otherwise arranged with the Media Relations Team.

Students' Right to Privacy

Principals or their designee shall distribute and collect [student media release forms](#),² signed by the student's parent/guardian, and maintain the forms on file at their school.

Principals shall not permit media interaction while at school with any student who has not submitted a release form authorizing the interaction. Media interaction involves any time student images, voices, videos, work, and/or names are requested to promote or represent the District, District programs, and/or District events in the news media including, but not limited to, television, print, and on the web.

Schools may post information about a student on District websites and official District social media pages (Facebook®, Twitter®, YouTube®, Instagram®) **only in accordance with [Policy 815.1 - Internet and Media Presence](#).**

Student photographs, video, and interviews on school property may only be conducted by media with the permission and at the discretion of the Media Relations Team in collaboration with the principal or their designee.

The Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and individual parent/guardian authorization for release must be observed at all times, as set forth in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Notice for Directory Information and Release of Directory Information Opt-Out Form.

² Student media release forms are available at <https://www.philasd.org/communications/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/11/PermissionForm.pdf>

Interacting with the Media

All employees should be courteous and professional when addressing the media. When engaging with members of the media, staff are essentially ambassadors of the District and a reflection of our students, staff, and school communities. Employees should be mindful of this and make every effort to remain as professional as possible.

Emergencies

Media are not permitted in a school or on school grounds in emergency situations where a school site is secured or locked down.

The Media Relations Team is responsible for fielding questions and inquiries or identifying a District official to speak with media during emergency situations. All other staff are to refrain from commenting.

A media staging area will be identified by the Media Relations Team and/or emergency officials near the site and communicated with media.

The Media Relations Team's first priority is to meet with the incident point of contact to collect pertinent information as quickly as possible. Once information is collected, the Media Relations Team will be present at the staging area to update media as necessary.

Maintenance Schedule

The Office of Communications will review these procedures annually.

Related Information:

[Media Relations Team webpage](#)

[Policy 815.1 - Internet and Media Presence](#)

[Student Media Release Form](#)