

**West Central School District 49-7
Media Relations Policy**

Media Relations

Positive relationships with the media are developed and maintained by providing accurate and helpful information to reporters in a timely manner. To insure that information provided to the media is accurate, comprehensive, and complete, and to insure that reporters have appropriate access to the best sources of information, a protocol for providing information to the media has been established and outlined in this policy.

School District employees shall not release information which is private or confidential as identified by law and Board policy or administrative regulation.

Spokespersons

The Superintendent serves as the primary spokesperson for the School District on all matters of District wide interest. The Superintendent may delegate Principals/Directors/Supervisors to serve as primary spokespersons for their areas of responsibility.

Administrative Responsibility

Each building administrator is authorized to keep parents and others informed about a school's programs and activities. News releases that are of concern to only one school, or to an organization of one school, are the responsibility of the principal. Publicity regarding students shall always be evaluated in terms of the effect on the children.

All school district employees shall notify the Superintendent's office whenever they are contacted by the media. If the topic is sensitive or significant, the employee will notify the Superintendent directly and immediately.

Employee Responsibility

District employees are encouraged to cooperate with media representatives, yet they will need to direct most inquiries through the appropriate administrative channels. Issues of curriculum, social justice, and items of district-wide focus should be directed to the Superintendent.

When a School District employee is contacted by a representative of the media for a comment or interview on a subject related to the employee's area of expertise, the employee shall respond in a manner that is accurate and factual. If the employee is not able to respond accurately or the inquiry does not relate to the employee's area of responsibility, the employee shall refer the inquiry to the appropriate administrator.

In all cases, the employee shall:

- Attempt to inform his or her supervisor of the media request prior to releasing information. In the event it is not possible to reach the supervisor before release of information and to accommodate the media in a timely manner, the employee shall notify the supervisor immediately following the media contact.
- Make it clear that he/she is expressing a personal viewpoint unless the employee has been designated to speak on behalf of the District.

Nothing in this regulation is intended as a restraint on the expression of personal opinion by any employee of the School District.

Media access to schools

The media will have access to all school events to which the public has been invited. Approval from the principal is not required to interview, film, or photograph staff or students at public events such as athletic contests, dramatic productions, music concerts, and graduation ceremonies.

When members of the media enter schools to cover events other than public events, they must have the approval of the school district administration before interviewing, filming, or photographing staff or students. Group shots that do not identify individual students by name—either still photos or video—may be taken in classrooms, hallways, and on the playground with the administration's permission.

Before individual students are interviewed, taped, or photographed, the administration shall obtain parental permission. A signed form giving parental/guardian permission for use of the student's image in video print, or broadcast will be kept on file at the school. Parents have the right to request that their child not be interviewed or photographed individually for video, print, or broadcast.

Adopted 11/2006

WEST CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT