

## **Communication with the Public and Media**

### Responsibilities of Board Members and School Personnel

New avenues should constantly be sought to improve relations and communications with all segments of the community and to expand such efforts with audiences not presently engaged. In Board matters requiring public reactions, an effort should be made to include staff, parents, and students.

School Board members are encouraged to become familiar with the entire Manchester Public School community. In order to establish and maintain connections and communication links with students, parents, families, teachers, and school community members, individual school board members are assigned certain schools where they can serve as a liaison.

### **School Liaison Protocols**

- A liaison shall be assigned to each school.
- Each school liaison is responsible for familiarizing him/herself with the school's program, principal, and parents and for providing information on School Board proposals so that the school community can successfully bring its needs and concerns to the attention of either the Superintendent or the School Board.
- School liaisons will attend one school event in the fall (Open House, PTA or Parent Council meeting); one school event (fundraiser, concert, athletic or extracurricular event) in the winter; and one event (reading in schools, field day, promotion or graduation ceremony) in the spring.
- When possible, school liaisons will visit the school while class is in session at least twice per year.
- School liaisons will make every effort (in person or by phone or email) to welcome every family that is new to the school (either individually or in groups).
- The school liaison does not serve as a direct advocate for the school/program on issues.
- The school liaison does not involve her/himself in administrative/operational matters but instead refers concerns to the appropriate staff.

For each designated school, the liaison shall:

- provide information to individuals/groups (e.g. PTA, civic associations) on how best to communicate to the Superintendent or full School Board specific needs/concerns, acknowledging that all operational matters should be routinely referred to appropriate staff or the Superintendent;
- keep Board Members and the Superintendent informed of concerns or issues that may develop at the school over the course of the year;
- provide information to individuals/groups on upcoming issues that may impact the school/community;
- return citizen phone calls made to the School Board office or to the member's home regarding that particular school/community;

All school personnel and Board members are encouraged to be informed on Board of Education policy, school policies, and programs in order that they may better advance public understanding of the schools. Board members are reminded that they have no individual authority unless the Board of Education is in session.

### News Media and Public Relationships

Schools are public institutions serving the educational needs of the community. Therefore, it is important that information be disseminated concerning programs, activities, and significant school events. In matters regarding the dissemination of information, it is the responsibility of each Board member, as well as each employee of the district, to exercise care when answering questions about the public schools. All school personnel should answer questions only when they have full and complete understanding of the point about which they have been asked. If the employee or Board member is not prepared to answer accurately and fully, he/she should refer the inquirer to a staff member who would have the appropriate information.

To ensure that this publicity be given wide coverage and coordinated with a common effort and purpose, the following procedures shall be followed with the news media:

1. News releases of a system-wide nature, or which pertain to established school system policy, are the responsibility of the Superintendent and will be issued through his/her office.
2. News releases, which are of concern to only one school or to an organization of one school, are the responsibility of the respective building principal.
3. The Director of Communications shall advise on all district communications including news releases.

The Board recognizes that members of the public have the right to tape-record any meeting of the Board of Education and there is no requirement that any person making such a recording ask permission or notify the board. However, any person recording the proceedings is required to handle such activities as inconspicuously as possible and in such manner as not to disturb the proceedings of the public agency.

Board meetings to which the public has access may be photographed, broadcast, or recorded for broadcast by any newspaper, radio broadcasting company, or television broadcasting company, subject to the following guidelines:

1. News media personnel who intend to photograph, broadcast, or record for broadcast the proceedings of any public meeting of the Board of Education shall provide appropriate identification, if requested, to the Superintendent of Schools, prior to said meeting of the Board.
2. Only news media personnel employed by a newspaper, radio, or television broadcasting company, or personnel of a recognized student news medium assigned to cover the proceedings of a Board of Education public meeting, shall be permitted to photograph, broadcast, or record for broadcast, such proceedings.
3. Any photographer, broadcaster, or news journalist authorized by an employer, or a student news medium, may photograph, broadcast, or record for broadcast, proceedings at a public meeting of the Board of Education. Any personnel associated with said photographer, broadcaster, journalist, or student, shall photograph, broadcast, or record for broadcast proceedings of said meeting as inconspicuously as possible and in a manner that will not disturb the proceedings.
4. If, in the judgment of the Chairperson of the Board of Education, the presence of any photographer, broadcaster, news journalist, or student at a Board meeting, causes such disruption that the orderly conduct of the public business becomes not feasible, access by these individuals may be limited to the extent necessary to remove disruption.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes  
1-226 Recording, broadcasting, or photographing meetings.  
Policy adopted: December 8, 1975  
Revised: September 12, 2016