

Regulations Follow

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9120 PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

The Board of Education believes all reasonable means should be employed to keep the community served by the school district informed on matters of importance regarding district programs, finances, personnel, policies, and operations.

The Board will determine which of its official actions have sufficient community impact and interest to warrant special release; the district School/Community Relations Coordinator will release to the media information about those matters of importance. The Board President may release information regarding Board actions of lesser importance as they have been recorded in the minutes of the Board meetings and upon the request of media representatives. The release of all other publications, images, and documents depicting the accomplishments of the pupils and staff of the district shall be approved by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

The school district will not release or publish images or release other personal identifying information of an individual district pupil if parents or legal guardians have indicated non-consent on the annual Acknowledgement of Required Information Form. Acknowledgement forms indicating non-consent from each parent(s) or legal guardian(s) or adult pupil will be obtained by the Principal or designee for the pupils in their school building. These non-consent forms shall be maintained by the Principal and the School/Community Relations Coordinator.

The Superintendent shall direct an information program designed to acquaint residents of the community and the public generally with the achievements and the needs of the schools. As a minimum, information shall be made available regarding the district's educational goals; the district's guarantee of equal educational opportunity; the district's programs for basic skills improvement, special education, bilingual education, and English as a second language; and summary reports of the administration of statewide assessment tests. Every effort shall be made to foresee and avoid problems caused by misunderstanding or lack of information.

The public information program includes the creation and updating of a district website and social media sites, meetings with parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and interested residents, a presentation and interpretation of the proposed annual budget, periodically distributed calendars and notices of events, the Superintendent's summaries of Board meetings, and a pupil handbook, as well as the release of news and images of school activities for print, electronic and broadcast media. Notices, publications, and other written materials may be prepared in languages other than English when necessary and appropriate for understanding.

The Board of Education adopts the following strategies to minimize the cost of public relations as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-9.3(c)14 in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.2.

School district publications shall be produced and distributed in the most cost-efficient manner possible that will enable the school district to inform and educate the target community.

The school district will not distribute, via mass mailings to the district community at large, publications that include the image(s) of any members of the Board of Education within ninety days before any election in which any Board member is seeking any elective office or any election relating to school district operations held in the district. Any publication(s) distributed by the Board via mass mailings to the district community at large within sixty days before any election in which any Board member is seeking any elective office or any election relating to school district operations held in the district must be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent for review prior to distribution to ensure that the public funds are being expended in a reasonable and cost-effective manner.

Public relations activities, such as booths at Statewide conferences, marketing activities and celebrations for opening schools and community events, and TV productions that are not part of the instructional program or do not provide information about district or Board operations to the public, that are excessive in nature are prohibited. All activities involving promotional efforts to advance a particular position on school elections or any referenda are prohibited.

Nothing in N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.2 and this Policy shall preclude the school district from accepting donations or volunteer services from community members, local private education foundations and local business owners to conduct or assist in public relations services. Examples include, but are not limited to: providing school district flyers, newsletters, or other materials containing school-related information of public concern to local businesses, public meeting places, or other local organizations to display or make available for dissemination; making school district related information of public concern available to local newspapers to publish related articles; and utilizing volunteered services of local community members, district employees, members of parent organizations or local businesses with expertise in related areas such as printing, advertising, publishing, journalism, or web services.

N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.2

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R 9120 PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

A. Standards of Presentation

1. Material released in the district's public information program should:
 - a. Be factual, topical, newsworthy, and consistent with the educational goals adopted by the Board of Education;
 - b. Represent the activities at all grade levels, subject areas, and schools and not favor one school population or activity over another;
 - c. Strive to interpret the educational program to the lay public and avoid the use of professional terminology; and
 - d. Present an integrated district-wide picture of district-wide programs rather than fragmented information.
2. Information regarding an individual pupil, in addition to directory information as per Policy 8330 (Pupil Records), may be released unless the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) or the adult pupil had prohibited such release, or if such release is otherwise prohibited by law. Pupil "information" includes verbal and photographic material, whether or not the pupil depicted is individually identified.

B. Preparation of Information for Public Distribution

1. Information will be released in a systematic manner to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.
2. Information planned for general public consumption should first be reviewed by interested district employees.
3. News bulletins issued by individual schools or departments within the district must identify the issuing school or department as a part of the school district. Thus all letterheads, bulletins, and publications must carry the full name of the Westfield Public Schools.

4. The Superintendent or designee will arrange for the preparation and availability of:
 - a. A district website that will include news and information, Superintendent's page, Board page and academic department pages;
 - b. An annual calendar of Board, district, and school events open to the public;
 - c. Announcements in school/PTO newsletters, to be issued on an ongoing basis;
 - d. Information about the proposed budget, in accordance with Policy 6230 (Budget Hearing);
 - e. News releases about Board activities and district-wide activities; and
 - f. A published summary of each Board meeting.

5. The Principal of each school will arrange for the preparation, availability and/or submission, of the following public information:
 - a. Website content pages to include:
 - (1) Homepage
 - (2) Principal faculty & staff contact page
 - (3) Teacher webpages
 - (4) Important district policies

 - b. A pupil handbook will be posted on the district website and on each school's homepage. The handbook may include, as appropriate to the grade levels in the school:
 - (1) The organization of the school;
 - (2) Rules for pupil conduct;
 - (3) Pupil rights and responsibilities;
 - (4) Information about school operations, health services, attendance, emergency closings, and the like;
 - (5) Descriptions of pupil activities and programs;
 - (6) The pupil grievance procedure; and
 - (7) Academic requirements.

- c. Calendar of school events will be distributed to all, parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and staff members.
- d. As appropriate to the grade levels of the school, a listing of course offerings and requirements will be distributed to all parents or legal guardians and pupils.
- e. Programs for specific performances and athletic contests will be distributed to attendees and participants.

C. Release of Information to the Media

- 1. In accordance with Policy 9120, information determined by the Board to be of particular community impact and interest will be released to the media only by the Superintendent or designee.
- 2. Information regarding Board actions of lesser importance may be released to the media by the coordinator of school-community relations.
- 3. Information regarding the activities of the schools and of individuals in the schools may be released to the media on the approval of the coordinator of school-community relations.
- 4. All inquiries from members of the media will be referred to the coordinator of school-community relations for response.
- 5. The Superintendent or designee must authorize in advance interviews between staff members and media representatives when the staff member is representing or speaking on behalf of the Board of Education or the school district.

A school district staff member not designated by the Superintendent or designee to assist in any of the media responsibilities outlined in this Policy, including speaking to a representative of the media, is not prohibited from doing so on their own behalf as a private citizen provided the staff member does not indicate or imply they represent or are speaking on behalf of the Board of Education or the school district and indicate they are speaking on their own behalf as a private citizen.

A staff member who is acting on their own behalf as a private citizen should be cognizant of their obligations to protect the privacy and confidentiality of pupils and school operations in accordance with Federal and State laws.

The Board of Education reserves its right to regulate the exercise of school district staff members' First Amendment rights of the United States Constitution in such situations to the extent that such exercise may interfere with the safe and orderly operation of the schools and the learning environment.

5. In the event of an unusual development in the school district that arouses substantial public interest, the coordinator of school-community relations will accommodate the needs of the media by establishing a temporary press center.
 - a. A room will be prepared, as close to the main office as feasible, and equipment and supplies as may reasonably facilitate the tasks of reporters and photographers.
 - b. Members of the media will be directed to gather in the pressroom, where they will hear and may question the district's spokesperson.
 - c. All information about the unusual development will be relayed through the designated district spokesperson, who should be given direct access to the information and people necessary to the gathering of accurate data.
 - d. School officials who are asked to give statements to the media regarding the development should seek the assistance of the coordinator of school-community relations in drafting their statements.
6. The coordinator of school/community relations shall utilize the district's electronic alert system to quickly and directly communicate information to parents/guardians and members of the public. In addition to providing the media with information, the coordinator will also post school district announcements on the district website, district social media sites, and the community cable TV channel.
7. The public shall be provided with the opportunity to contact Board members and the Superintendent to discuss Board actions. The coordinator of school/community relations will be responsible for the listing of names and e-mail addresses of the Superintendent and Board members on the district website. The coordinator will attend all Board of Education meetings and will assist the public in the proper procedure of addressing the Board.

D. Displays

1. Displays of the accomplishments of district pupils and the results of educational programs may be placed in locations that afford a high level of public visibility, such as in local commercial establishments, municipal offices, health facilities, libraries, and banks.
2. Any display must be approved in advance by the school principal, district supervisor or the coordinator of school-community relations.
3. The staff member planning the display will request the permission of the facility in which the display will be placed. The request will clearly indicate the duration of the display, the time when it will be installed, and any particular accommodations that are necessary to the display.
4. A letter of appreciation shall be sent to the facility after the display is removed.

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